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MARXIST
GROUP

(BRITISH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL)

TRANSLATION OF THE REPORT
ON THE 3RD CONGRESS OF THE
LIGUE COMMUNISTE

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DECISIVE CONFERENCE FOR FRENCH TROTSKYISTS

The Ligue Communiste, French section of the Fourth International, held its 3rd Congress from 7-10 December. We reprint below a translation of the report of the conference published in Rouge, weekly newspaper of the Ligue.

At our first congress we declared our allegiance to the Fourth International. This decision signalled our commitment to the building of a revolutionary organisation; and called a halt to the fragmentation and demoralisation which followed the events of May '68.

At our second congress we broke with amateurish methods; recognising that we now had certain responsibilities and that we must provide ourselves with the means to respond to future developments in the class struggle.

This third congress marked a decisive step forward in the elaboration of a revolutionary strategy. It represents the synthesis and systematisation of three years of militant activity and experience.

We have grown in numbers, in abilities, and thus in responsibilities. From now on it is no longer sufficient to denounce the blind alleys into which reformist methods inevitably lead. It is no longer sufficient to say that the workers will not seize power that way. We now have to be able to point our own way forward - to construct an effective instrument capable of unravelling in a revolutionary sense the contradictions which are strangling capitalist society.

To build a revolutionary party which does not become a part of society as it presently exists; which does not become the opposition on the left of the left; which can provide the lever the masses need to finish once and for all with the power of the bourgeoisie - that was the purpose of the debate of the 22 theses presented to the congress.

These theses defined our tactics in constructing the party in light of the aims which we pursue. They deal with the need to gain an implantation in the new working class vanguard which has developed in the struggle. This is a vanguard which has not rejoined the Communist Party en masse after 1968, in contrast to those of 1936 or 1945. It now has to be shown the ways and means of doing battle with the reformist bureaucracies for the confidence of the mass of the workers, particularly in the trade unions. It is a question of building an organisation which can take advantage of bourgeois legality without becoming a hostage to it, remaining conscious of the fact that with regard to the laws of the bourgeoisie we are like outlaws who have been temporarily reprieved.

The adoption of the political resolution concerning the Union of the Left and the crisis of the bourgeoisie was equally important.

We have explained that, if the electoral campaign expresses the deep desire of the workers for unity around a common programme, we will have no hesitation in calling in the second round for a vote for the Union of the Left, while at the same time denouncing the bankruptcy of the perspectives which it claims to offer.

A group which was still small, incapable of exerting any direct influence on the course of events and concerned above all to educate its own militants and close sympathisers, might have been justified in taking an abstentionist position. We, however, are now in a position to pose the question in a different way. We think that even a limited electoral success for the Union of the Left would be seen by the working class as a favourable shift in the balance of forces between the classes, as an incentive to struggle; we think also that such a success could precipitate a political crisis among the Gaullists.

In these circumstances, we are ready to call in the Second Round for a vote for the Union of the Left because we feel that we ourselves are in a strong position. Aware of the fact that what is at stake is not a real solution, but a heightening of the present class tensions we are ready to answer for all the consequences through our determined participation in the struggle. We are ready to play a leading role in the sense of extending the struggle beyond the legal framework within which the Union of the Left is content to confine it.

We have to intervene with all our forces in the struggles taking place in order to develop and popularise examples of workers' democracy, of strike committees elected and subject to recall by the workers themselves, which constitute the most valuable experience of self-organisation for them on the eve of struggles on an entirely new scale. We have to show concretely, through support committees for example, how solidarity can be strengthened and cemented much more firmly in struggle than in the counting of votes in the ballot boxes.

We also have to support the experiences, even the most rudimentary of workers' self-defence in opposition to the violent provocations of the police and similar forces; and against the fascist groups and the scab bosses' unions we have to take responsibility for the permanent organisation of this struggle.

In the sphere of organisation, we must devote our main efforts to education. The statistics collected at the time of the congress show wide disparities inside our ranks: differences of age, of political background and experiences, of organisational origin. All these differences must be absorbed if we are to build an organisation which has been hardened out theoretically - the only guarantee of the democratic life of the organisation. This is absolutely necessary to the test of a real internal debate instead of sinking into a conservative and paternalistic approach towards the organisation itself.

Finally the number and quality of the international greetings received by the congress only emphasises the extent of our tasks as internationalists. From support of the Indochinese revolution, to support of the liberation struggle in the Portuguese colonies. From the defence of immigrant workers, victims of capitalist super-exploitation and racism; to the development of working-class solidarity on a European scale. Our 4th congress, devoted to the preparatory discussion for the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International will provide us with the opportunity in the coming months to arm ourselves for these tasks.

The content of the messages like the discussions we have been having on this occasion with delegates from different continents points out very clearly the preoccupations and common problems of a generation born in the same revolutionary age. They say that they have much to learn from our experience; we have much to learn from theirs. It is together that we shall find the solutions and it is together that we shall succeed.

WHAT IS A CLASS VOTE?

On the question of tactics to be adopted in the 1973 elections, the Ligue was faced with three separate positions at Congress: the tendency of "Bolshevik-Leninists for Proletarianisation" called for abstention in the first and second rounds. A minority of the outgoing Central Committee was in favour of voting in the second round for P.C. candidates only. The majority defended the position of voting for U.G. candidates in the second round. (In France elections occur in two 'rounds'. On the first only candidates with an absolute majority are elected. On the second held a week later, a plurality suffices.)

EACH OF THESE POSITIONS REFLECTS A DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL CONJUNCTURE AND OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT.

ABSTAIN IN BOTH ROUNDS?

For the comrades of the "B-L-P Tendency" (Tendency 1) the period since May 68 has been characterized by a strain in the relations between the working class and its traditional organisations. By holding back in the struggle the PCF has caused workers to distrust the political solutions put forward by that party.

"Under these conditions", these comrades say, "the 1973 elections do not appear to the workers to be able to accomplish much. And this results in a relative lack of interest in the agreement between the SP and the CP which seems all the less worthy of credibility in light of the fact that the workers remember how the left exploded in May '68."

As a result, this agreement and its electoral outcome is incapable of producing any dynamic whatsoever. The 'wait and see' attitude and mood of confusion it creates amongst the working class will be expressed by an increase in abstentions. In advocating abstention in both rounds, revolutionary marxists will therefore be responding to the spontaneous sentiment of the working class vanguard. Moreover, the Ligue Communiste has better things to do at the moment than employ its entire strength on the elections. It will intervene in the struggle through the steady and regular activity of its cells, without attempting to systematically search for candidates to present in the elections.

NOT JUST ANY ELECTIONS

Numerous speakers opposed this position from the platform of the Congress. In their view, the spokesmen for the Tendency were making a serious error in analysis. In fact, the elections of winter 73 are not just any elections. The point is that it will be the first parliamentary election since the general strike of May-June 68 and the departure of General de Gaulle.

They occur in a context of increased inflation for the regime, of crisis for the Gaullist coalition, of an upsurge in working class militancy and of growing discontent amongst the masses. At this point, the signing of the joint programme (Union of the Left) appears to offer a credible alternative. While a large working-class vanguard of over 10,000 workers is in fact sceptical towards the strategy of the Union of the Left; if, quite rightly, it doubts whether the Union of the

Left will open the way forward to socialism; if, in consequence, the vanguard shows itself particularly receptive to criticisms made by revolutionary marxists of the joint programme it still remains that the bulk of the class, indoctrinated with parliamentary illusions will adhere to this perspective, and that the working-class vanguard itself, no matter what its reservations, sees in a victory for the Union of the Left the only concrete means of destroying the power of the UDR 'Mafia', and in this way resolving the situation.

For all these reasons, though it is true that the Union of the Left has not won any enthusiastic amongst the workers, it is absurd to pretend on the other hand that, because it has met with a relative lack of interest, that it lacks all credibility. It is utter nonsense to state that "the 73 elections are of minor significance in the eyes of the workers."

Vital Opportunity

On the contrary, given the political conjuncture in which they take place, the 73 elections will be a most important battle, and a vital opportunity. The favourable evolution of the balance of forces between the classes, characteristic of the period after May 68 is now reflected in the electoral sphere by the perceptible failure of the Gaullists and the success of the opposition on the left. This change in electoral balance of forces, in a country where the working-class is steeped in parliamentary politics, will in its turn have an effect on the evolution of the relationship of forces between the classes. A VICTORY FOR THE UNION OF THE LEFT WILL BE SEEN BY THE WORKERS AS A DEFEAT FOR THE BOURGEOISIE AND A VICTORY FOR THE WORKING CLASS. It will be a stimulus to working-class militancy and by emphasising the contradiction now facing working-class militants in the shape of reformist bureaucracy may enable them to break with it.

A victory (unlikely, but not excluded) for the Union of the Left is bound to precipitate a major political crisis, which could lead to a generalised upsurge of struggle and to a test of strength between the mass-movement and the bourgeois state apparatus.

This is why because of the stakes involved these elections assume an exceptional significance for all the participants. They will give rise to sharp battles. They will bring about a complete polarisation of French political life in the first few weeks of the year. Within the working-class it will mean no less than a debate on the question of socialist society and the strategy for seizing power.

Experience has shown that no serious political campaign is possible during an election period without direct participation in the contest. The exercise is pointless unless candidates are put up. However one regards the rules of the electoral game, we are not in control of it. There are elections in which low participation would be both

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possible and justified (cf. municipal elections 27.71) But the importance of the elections in this case is such that we must make our presence felt in a big way.

VOTE ONLY FOR PC CANDIDATES

The Tendency 1 resolution was defeated by 262 votes to 12 but immediately a new debate arose within this anti-abstentionist majority on the question of what tactics should be adopted in the second round.

With the support of a minority of the ex-Central Committee certain comrades proposed refusing to vote for PS (Socialist Party) and radical left candidates in the second round, and voting only for the PC.

These comrades make a lengthy denunciation of the political programme of the PS; in the context of sharpening crisis of the regime, what the PS was working towards was a new political solution for the big bourgeoisie, which would involve integrating the working class by means of a shift of policy by their most representative organisations, notably the PCF and the CGT. The institutions of the 5th Republic and the semi-presidential character of the regime more than made up for the weakness of the PS in terms of its base and capacity for organisation. At this point in time, Mitterand is in fact preparing for the 76 elections, and the elections of 1973 are merely a stepping stone to these. The first secretary of the PS intends to emerge an unopposed leader of the united left. This implies not simply imposing himself as a figurehead, but actually creating within the Union of the Left the favourable balance of forces vis a vis the PCF necessary to obtain acceptance of this political solution by the bourgeoisie. And afterwards, in the perspective of the coming presidential elections, there will still be time to make room for the Centre-right, in order to consolidate the balance of forces and to ensure the confidence of the ruling class. At the head of the PS, Mitterand is thus endeavouring to win hegemony of the working class in pursuance of a policy of bourgeois-technocratic reform, of the Wilson-Brandt type.

Revolutionary marxists must in no way seem to support or defend this operation. THEIR RECOMMENDATION TO VOTE MUST ALLOW THE WORKERS TO EXPRESS THEIR DISTRUST OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT AND TO AGREE ON AN AUTHENTIC CLASS VOTE IN OPPOSITION TO THE UNION OF THE LEFT POLICY OF BOURGEOIS REFORM. In calling for a vote for the PC only, the Ligue Communiste would be asking the workers to break completely with the bourgeois parties. By responding to this call, communist voters would be saying "Break with the left radicals and the PS! Break with the bourgeoisie! Put your programme into practice! Struggle for power on a class basis!" A withdrawal in favour of the Union of the Left as a whole on the other hand, would mean giving approval to the Mitterand operation, would deprive us of the political means of denouncing him and restrains us to recommending a vote for bourgeois candidates like Deferre, Faure, and many others. In short, it would be opportunist, and would be reflection of the pressure exerted by the Union of the Left on our organisation.

A World-Wide Reformist Alternative

This line of argument did not convince Congress; many speakers pointed to weaknesses and incoherencies in it. In the first place, it is not valid to characterize the Union of the Left by the programme of Mitterand alone. And it is only this programme that the minority comrades attack. But it is neither the sole, nor the dominant programme. At present a number of mutually contradictory programmes (that of PS, that of PC) confront each other in the Union of the Left, in the context of uncertain balance of forces. The ambitions of Francois Mitterand are one thing. The political and social relations of post-May 68 - France are another. The Union of the Left cannot be analyzed as if Mitterand and the PS had already won hegemony, when in signing the joint programme and publicly repudiating the centre alliance, they have in a sense put themselves into the hands of the PC.

The class realities underlying the Union of the Left must be analysed on a more profound level than that of journalistic commentary. It must be made clear that the Union of the Left is to be distinguished from the classic frontist experience (Front Populaire, Liberation) in that it represents, not an alliance between the proletariat and a leading section of the big bourgeoisie under the leadership of the latter, but the global phenomenon in the traditional working class movement, of a reformist alternative. There is no party in the Union of the Left which actually represents the interests of big capital, as with the radicals party in 1936 or the MRP in 1945. The 'left' radicals' and the PS are relics and marginal groupings, not parties of the big bourgeoisie. Within the Union of the Left it is the PCF, a reformist workers' party, which has hegemony at the moment. And it is this hegemony of the PC which defines the terms of the alliance and gives it its class

character, not the presence of this or that bourgeois politician.

With all respect to the Lambertistes, the winning over of the left radicals does not affect the class nature of the Union of the Left, and the marginal character of their affiliation is proved by the fact that they did not even take part in the discussions on the joint programme to which they put their signature!

The entire ruling class make no mistake about this. No section of the ruling class gives any support to the Union of the Left. On the contrary, as it exists in 1973 the Union of the Left is bringing about a polarization of the classes: on the one side, the working class (represented by its political and trade union organizations - CGT, FEN, CFDT etc....) polarising various layers of the petit-bourgeoisie on the other, the different sections of the ruling class polarise equally different strata of the middle class and the petit-bourgeoisie. This is why the ruling class both fears the growth of and mounts attacks on the influence of the Union of the Left. This does not constitute a changed political solution for the big bourgeoisie", despite the fact that the bourgeoisie may be forced to turn to it in the vent of a catastrophe just as it was resigned to the presence of the PC in the 1945 government. In this situation it is clear that to criticize the Union of the Left as a 'Popular Workers' Front' ie. with the slogans "Comrades of the PC, put your programme into practice! Break with the bourgeoisie! Break with the PS and the left radicals!" makes no sense. It implies that the PC has betrayed its proletarian programme, and capitulated to the bourgeois programme of the PS, when there is in fact little to choose between the two programmes, and when the signing of such a joint programme constitutes a radical break with the traditional politics of the PS.

For the majority of the former Central Committee, the Union of the Left is thus an expression of a global reformist 'solution' which has been taken up, willy-nilly by the whole of the organised working class. They see it as a working class alternative to the present regime. And so their vote will have a class character. For these reasons, AN ELECTORAL VICTORY FOR THE UNION OF THE LEFT, IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL CONJUNCTURE, WILL BE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE SHARPENING OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF THE REGIME AND AT THE SAME TIME A POWERFUL STIMULANT TO POPULAR MILITANCY. It is in the direct interests of the working class (and of revolutionary marxists that the Gaullist coalition now pushed by the action of the masses into the bourgeois camp) encounters the biggest possible defeat, and that the Union of the Left (similarly polarized into the working class camp) wins the greatest possible victory.

This is why, if the Ligue Communiste is to launch an intensive campaign in the first round, denouncing and explaining politically in particular, the blind alley of reformism offered by the Union of the Left, it must develop its campaign of clarification by calling nationally for a Union of the Left vote in the second round. This does not exclude the possibility of certain exceptions being made on the basis of proposals at a local level and a decision by the Central Committee, because the outcome of these elections will undoubtedly have an impact on the balance of forces between the classes, and because we are certainly not indifferent to the question of the eventual relationship of forces as to whether they will work in favour of the working class or the bourgeoisie.

This position was finally accepted by 191 votes with 71 for the Central Committee minority and 12 for the abstentionists.

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In capitalist Europe, the end of the long period of expansion has involved a sharpening of the social contradictions which after May 68 took the form of a world-wide social crisis in several countries (France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain). And so when new demands flow from precisely from the explosion of the productive forces, were experienced in a particularly sharp manner, the bourgeois counter-revolution becomes less and less capable of making new concessions to the labouring masses. On the contrary, it was often forced to attack the gains which had been won during the preceding phase.

The resurgence of substantial unemployment (5 million unemployed in Western Europe) is nothing but the dramatic reflection of this phenomenon. The capital is seeking to restore the rate of profit by

the decomposition of the Franco regime. The European bourgeoisie therefore have before them a fundamental choice between attempts at "intervention" destined to reduce and nullify the competitiveness of the working class by concessions which will reinforce the mechanisms of class collaboration, but which are economically expansive; or harsh repression consisting of attacks on democratic rights such as the right to strike and the right to free wage negotiation.

These two alternative policies, if present being used simultaneously, accentuate the decay of classic party leadership democracy, and the centre of gravity of the bourgeois state is shifting towards an executive power more and more from popular control, thus undermining the current tendency of the establishment of strong states corresponding more closely to the needs of monopoly capitalism which govern the epoch.

The next likely political perspective is that of a prolonged period of instability which will see a succession of different bourgeois regimes, and attempts at reform led by the traditional workers' organisations.

1. The crisis of the international imperialist system has deepened in recent years and is marked by a general decline in economic growth in all the imperialist countries. For the first time since the end of the Second World War attempts to check the crises of overproduction by increased inflation have run into grave difficulties: dollar inflation finally precipitated the destruction of the international monetary system and led to a monetary crisis which threatened to undermine international credit and as a result, the expansion of world trade.
The principle stimulants of economic expansion of the post-war period are subsiding; it follows that the underlying tendency for a fall in the rate of profit emerges ever more clearly, holding back growth, and restricting the market in relation to the colossal expansion in productive capacity.
American imperialism has progressively lost its position of absolute superiority within the imperialist camp. Its share of the world market is constantly diminishing, the gains being made by its German, Japanese and E.E.C. rivals. Far from reducing inter-imperialist rivalry, this inflation, because of the protectionist measures it induces on the part of American imperialism, can only exacerbate it further.
2. In capitalist Europe, the end of the long period of expansion has involved a sharpening of the social contradictions which after May 68 took the form of a world-wide social crisis in several countries (France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain). And so when new demands flowing precisely from the explosion of the productive forces, were experienced in a particularly sharp manner, the European bourgeoisie became less and less capable of making new concessions to the labouring masses. On the contrary, it was often forced to attack the gains which had been won during the preceding phase.
The reappearance of substantial unemployment (5 million unemployed in Western Europe) is nothing but the dramatic reflection of this phenomenon. Big capital is seeking to restore the rate of profit by increasing the rate of exploitation of the working class. The European working class has resisted this offensive by launching the biggest wave of strikes seen since the great recession of the Thirties. But the current general rise in the level of struggle takes place in a different context. In fact, because of 15 years of decline in the numbers of the reserve-industrial army, the European proletariat enters on this phase in a position of considerable strength and with a much higher degree of organisation, in a context marked by a crisis in the stalinist camp, and the political and military defeat of the ruling imperialism in Indochina.
3. Faced with a situation of great economic difficulties and by sharpening social contradictions, the bourgeois political system is in its turn coming into crisis: a crisis of the political parties, a crisis of the forms of political domination (the paralysis of the centre-left governments in Italy, the collapse of Gaullist bonapartism, the decomposition of the Franco regime).
The European bourgeoisies therefore have before them a fundamental choice between attempts at "integration" designed to reduce and nullify the combativity of the working class by concessions which will reinforce the mechanisms of class collaboration, but which are economically expensive; or harsh repression consisting of attacks on democratic rights such as the right to strike and the right to free wage negotiation.
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The most likely political perspective is that of a prolonged period of instability which will see a succession of different bourgeois regimes, and attempts at reform led by the traditional workers' organisations.

4. A particular manifestation of the bourgeois crisis of control is perfectly shown in the jerky evolution towards European political unity. The greater interpenetration of capital throughout Europe, accentuated by the enlarging of the EEC, and the exacerbation of the rivalry with American and with Japanese capitalism militates in favour of a reinforcement of European state superstructures. But each step along this road implies sacrifices for one or other of the "national" bourgeoisies, which increase in proportion, as one approaches decisive dates (for entry), the hesitations, the social contradictions and the political divisions. European unity will not develop in the framework of the capitalist system. Its accomplishment is likely to lead one or more European countries to the brink of a social explosion with the possibility of it spreading throughout the whole system and of threatening to bring it down.

5. In France, the crisis of May 68 revealed and precipitated the bankruptcy of the Gaullist bonapartist regime. It had been indispensable for leading the different sections of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie to accept policies placing France on a par with her European rivals, but in the process piled up social contradictions which ended by exploding and led to its ruin.

The most conscious section of big capital envisaged a realistic revision of its objectives, and a modification of its forms of political domination, notably by getting rid of the bonapartist forms of the strong state.

This explains the birth of "Pompidou-ism", whose principal function is to ensure a transition from the bonapartist regime - which arose out of the prolonged crisis of parliamentary democracy - to a presidential regime.

The second priority of the Pompidou government is to work towards objectives for the French bourgeoisie which are more in accordance with its real economic power. This will be at the price of renouncing Gaullist dreams of world-wide power, and accepting the role of a secondary imperialism maintaining an honourable place, particularly in Europe. This is the explanation of Pompidou's sudden change of policy over Europe.

6. After May 68, the first task for the bourgeoisie is to alter in its own favour the balance of forces, which has been weighted on the side of the working class, whose militancy has been increasing over the last four years.

The government of Chaban-Delmas has operated a policy of integration of the working class movement. It depended on the one hand on the exceptional expansion of the years 68/70, following on the increase in domestic consumption, based on the gains made at Grenelle on the development of exports, following the revaluation of the franc and on the other hand on the inactivity of the workers' organisations, which were afraid to launch a new May through industrial actions in pursuit of claims.

Despite these two opportunities the total balance-sheet of the 'politics of agreement' remains pretty unimpressive. It is perpetually under attack from the militancy of the workers, produced by inflation and continually rising prices, which the bourgeoisie cannot prevent without severely restricting growth. Despite all these efforts, Chaban's "new society", in which it was hoped to get the voluntary agreement of the workers to the norms and limits of the system, has not seen the light of day. It has not been possible to change the balance of forces which emerged from 68.

On the contrary, the objective crisis of the society brings the combativity of the working class up to a level virtually incompatible with the successful functioning of capitalist society, just as the social layers traditionally tied to Gaullism have entered into open conflict with the policies of rationalisation being attempted by the Pompidou government. Conscious that these policies mean their eventual elimination, small agricultural employers, small businessmen etc ... the obsolete layers of the petit-bourgeoisie - fight against a movement now losing its ascendancy over them because it threatens their position.

Finally, on the level of the current social and political crisis the government is attempting more and more openly to use the various bodies which make up the repressive and ideological functions of the state apparatus in support of its own policies. This is what is at the root of the various 'malaises' - of the police, of the administration, of the

magistrates, of the mass media which feed upon the scandals and undermine the authority of the regime.

The erosion of power arises because of the conjuncture of a number of factors which, taken together, impair the authority and legality of the bourgeois state: new forms of working class struggle, petit-bourgeois agitation, the revolt of the young, the crisis of constitutional bodies, the publication of scandals.

In a word, the Pompidou-Chaban team has not managed to bring any long lasting stability to the regime. A new pre-electoral stab at it has been made by the formation of the Messmer camp. But behind the change of facade, the policies and methods remain the same; the prospect of failure is just as much on the cards.

This is why, in the absence of an immediately credible revolutionary perspective, a number of solutions for change in the long term are sought just as much by the bourgeoisie as by the traditional working class movement.

7. The groups allied to the UDR and the "reformists" (Lecanuet and JJSS) have no objective strategy, either on the economic plane or on the European, which differs in any degree from that of the present government.

But the formations of these groups casts serious doubts on the ability of the UDR to carry out such a strategy. The UDR is merely a bureaucratic apparatus only partially under the control of big capital, which emerged in the backwash of bonapartism.

The "10th December Society", an odd bunch of newcomers and incompetents, of enlightened politicians and heavy-handed men, is incapable of readapting itself without a disastrous upheaval, nor can it find deep roots in the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois layers which are the social base of the regime.

The presidential regime outlined for the near future, must if it is to emerge in any stable way, depend on a large modern conservative party. The objective of the rival factions, those of the centre and Giscardiens and the "reformists" is to perform this operation without provoking too brutal a break with the UDR,

* J.J. Servan Schreiber

which would open a breach in the shaky edifice which has existed since de Gaulle, allowing the working class movement to burst through it.

They have chosen not to smash the UDR, but to whittle it down gradually, and thus to shift the centre of gravity of the present majority by a strengthening of the Giscardien wing, and by winning over the "opposition" radicals already prepared by the JJSS/Lecanuet agreement.

It's a narrow road to tread, because all the discredit of the UDR may reflect on the regime which has worked with it, and could operate to the advantage of the Union of the Left which appears as a complete alternative to the present government.

And so a growing polarisation is taking shape in bourgeois political life between a reconstituted majority and a Union of the Left dominated by the PCF. The way is prepared for a decisive confrontation in 1976.

This is how the transitional post-bonapartist phase is coming to an end. If the Pompidou regime has succeeded up until now in holding the fort without too much damage, it doesn't necessarily mean he will make it in the end.

If the restructuring of the bourgeois parties can be smoothly worked out, the party is still not necessarily viable; the self-defensive reactions of the frantic fighters of the UDR who will feel themselves forced into regrouping, cannot be foreseen. Moreover, the Union of the Left is itself full of inescapable contradictions and has a dynamic which may burst free of the bureaucratic apparatus that set it up.

8. The agreement reached between the PCF and the PS is the response of two reformist parties to the demand for political change which has been evident in the working class since May 68, in the context of a strong state which has considerably reduced the margins of parliamentary manoeuvre.

The common programme is in no sense an anti-capitalist transitional programme - both the will and the means of attaining it are lacking. It takes place explicitly within the framework of the bourgeois state and even of the 5th Republic, which it pretends to reform from the inside - without calling for the autonomous organisations and mobilisation of the working class. In a period of intense class struggle, when the bourgeoisie finds itself driven into a corner, this

alliance with the PC.

By its policies, the PC is trying to recommend the PS to the workers as a force which is indispensable for social transformation quite independent of its actual roots (in the class). Since 1965, the workers have voted for Mitterand en masse. Thus when one considers the contradictory and transitory character of the PS, the PC-PS agreement is not an agreement of the Popular Front type, which put the PC under the leadership of a bourgeois party. For the first time it is actually obliged to open up some sort of a socialist perspective.

11. In fact, in the present context, if an electoral victory for the Left remains unlikely, relative success could be enough to bring closer the beginning of a political crisis by encouraging the mobilisation of the workers and aggravating the divisions within the bourgeoisie. From this point of view, the anti-communist campaign which the bourgeoisie is mounting is less evidence of fear of the PCF's aims than real fear of the social dynamic which could develop from the PC-PS agreement.

The political solution put forward by the PS-PC agreement necessitates mobilisations controlled and channelled by the bureaucracy, but also requires that struggles which break through the fixed bounds must be blocked. This contradiction is even more vital today when the workers' bureaucracy dreads not only spontaneous upsurges, but also the conscious and active role in struggles of the far left, organised or not, and of ourselves in particular.

Given this contradiction, one would expect to see the stalinist bureaucracy marking the pre-electoral period with a series of national mobilisations and days of actions, which will have the combined function of preparing for the elections, and of channelling and dissipating the energy which could build up in the working class, by making use of, in particular, the CGT, which is employed as a kind of electoral agent in the masses. The bureaucracy will endeavour to make use of these mobilisations outside the places of work, mobilisations of pre-electoral opinion,

altogether different from true class mobilisations.

Nevertheless insofar as these mobilisations also express the hopes of millions of workers highly conditioned to belief in electoralism and the parliamentary system, in combination with an outbreak of harsh struggles, even if these are localised, they must provide very favourable conditions for the intervention and implantation of revolutionaries in the working class; and this is the case even if the battle to explain and denounce electoral illusions has been made more difficult because the signing of the PC-PS agreement gives a certain credibility to the perspective offered by the PC.

The CFDT will not be sparing in its criticisms of the joint programme because it will want to preserve its autonomy in the eyes of the CGT just as much as its own political role. It will also try to win a certain prestige on the basis of verbal criticisms of the Union of the Left. But, incapable organisationally and politically of putting forward any solution for change whatsoever, it will on the one hand be reduced to tactical battles aimed at increasing its strength, and on the other, actual support for the Union of the Left.

In the months to come, the election campaign will open up a period of political debate which will not be exclusively dominated by the PC-PS agreement. The two allies must try to capture the maximum number of votes in the first round, the PC insisting on its working class role, and the PS giving itself by a series of inexpensive political skirmishes, the role of guarantor for democracy in the agreement (which explains the interventions of Mitterand on Czechoslovakia and on the Jews in Russia).

12. Congress approves the decision of the Central Committee to put forward candidates in the election. In the face of the reformist illusions of the Joint Programme it is of vital importance to present in opposition a revolutionary-marxist perspective.
13. In the second round, our recommendation to vote must make clear our analysis of the PC-PS agreement as a world-wide reformist alternative

programme might well by the last card a section of the bourgeoisie would play to try and prevent the success of the revolutionary process. But in the present situation, the PCPS agreements cannot appear as the conscious device of the bourgeoisie or of one of its significant sections. Difficult though the situation may be, it does not justify the risk they would take in accepting any solution which involved the participation of the PCF in government. Certain sections of the bourgeoisie are only prepared to consider a bonapartist solution in the person of Mitterand if and when he shows that he can make use of the strength of a PCF reduced to the role of a hostage, for his own ends, as in 1965. The PC-PS agreement changes the balance of forces in the immediate short period and temporarily takes away from Mitterand the support of the dissident rightwingers whom he expects to win back again before the presidential elections of 1976.

a pole for a bourgeoisie already anxious over the crumbling of the UDR.

Or else an alliance with the PCF, with the hope of regaining amongst certain layers of the highly skilled proletariat, and from the middle layers a larger social base. The relinquishing of the FO to the advantage of the CFDT was an element of this plan. In order to accomplish this refloating operation, the SFIO accepted Mitterand's operation almost unanimously, and its right wing majority left the programmatic working out of the party programme as well as the joint programme to the left.

The signing of the joint programme thus allowed the PS to improve its position, to gather strength vis a vis the PC and to prepare for the presidential elections of 1976 in which Mitterand would make gains among the working class from the pledges won in the 65 and 73 campaigns. He would then be able to use the Gaullist constitution of 58, which confers on the president an almost arbitrary position, guaranteeing relative independence from his allies, and so collect the center votes in the second round.

If the PC-PS agreement is not an acceptable solution for the bourgeoisie in the short term, because of the social dynamic which threatens to swallow it up, from the point of view of the PS leadership it prepares the way, at the price of certain risks, for Mitterand's bonapartist operation, which could work out to be a solution for 1976.

9. The PC-PS agreement represents the meeting point of two reformist programmes put forward by parties whose projected aims are quite distinct. The leadership of the PCF has been forced to supply, and to concretize a political solution in the light of the demands of a militant workers' movement. The general strike of 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the growth of the revolutionary organisations made such an initiative necessary. The limitations which a strong state placed on the parliamentary game, and the loss of an audience in the working class forced the leaders of the old SFIO to the understanding that the bourgeoisie would never again be prepared to let them take power. Without a credible governmental perspective, the PS was set adrift. The electoral disaster of Deferre in 1969 left only two possibilities of survival: either an alliance with the centre which would allow the UDR to find a new solution. But the current political polarisation rendered the operation too hazardous - from the candidature of Pöher and the JJSS crusade, the centre appeared to be too fragile

10. The contradictions of this kind are multiple. A failure for the PS in 1973 would strengthen the right wing of the party which could then open the way to a fight for a break with the PC, in favour of an alliance with the centre. The PS would then risk a new split. A party consisting of the currents it brings together and the policies it includes, the PS today can be defined neither as a bourgeois party, nor as a bourgeois party of workers, because of the weakness of its working class implantation. Incapable as it is of working within the parliamentary boundaries of a strong state, what is essential for us is the role played by the PS in the working class movement through its

and not as a Popular Front. In the second round we will call nationally for a vote for the Union of the Left, excepting only when there is a local proposition and a decision from the Central Committee. For all that we will not describe an eventual PC-PS government as a workers' government, we will simply explain to the masses who still believe in the electoral system that the reformist traitors will not be able to blame their failure of tomorrow on our defection.

It is unlikely that the effects of the Union of the Left on the working class movement will emerge clearly from the elections. And even when the indications have appeared, it is not only from them that we make an analysis of the politics of the Union of the Left. Indeed, its influence on struggles can be shown no more clearly after a relative success or with greater reason an electoral victory than in the pre election campaign. We must remember that the erosion of the Gaullist majority in the 1967 elections was not without its effects in 68. This is what we must evaluate. If it happened that there be a spectacular outbreak of struggles the election (in the first round) was settled in favour of the PS and the PC, this would not mean that the question of our attitude in the second round would be posed in a new way. But in this event, as in June 68, the clearest response to an electoral operation which was in direct opposition to the struggle would be a principled abstention and not a vote for the PC. This is the framework of our activities in the second round.

Of course, our tactics in the elections, but not any question of principle, can only be decided in the light of the most recent indications, from the first round, of the attitude of the masses to the electoral battle.

14. In this situation, one should not get involved in a discussion of the Joint Programme, reform by reform, to determine whether this or that one is anti-capitalist or not. We must start from a total characterisation of the programme and its underlying purpose, discuss part-

icular reforms, especially from the point of view of the problem of power, for which they present no solution, and we must denounce the fallacious character of the 'socialist' perspective it puts forward.

15. This polemic will give new life to our propaganda for a workers' government as described in our Manifesto. However, we must be aware that given the illusions which may be nourished by the PC-PS agreement, this propaganda which is not made concrete by an alternative governmental formula, will remain somewhat abstract. The best way of making it more concrete is to intensify our agitation, using plenty of examples, on the themes of a strike committees, support committees and workers' self-defence, as well as our propaganda for a genuine proletarian government, which can never be a parliamentary government ie. which exists without hierarchical structures of power to maintain and control it.

16. Under present conditions, the 1973 elections will certainly accentuate the political crisis by heightening the disequilibrium of the bourgeoisie. A strong thrust from the Union of the Left, undercutting the absolute majority of the UDR will weaken the 'strong state' and will push the UDR into uniting with other forces of the bourgeoisie in a perspective of greater repression of the working class movement.

In the case of a Union of the Left victory we can expect a development of workers' struggles and a crisis of the political institutions of Gaullism. In such a situation, with the danger of a fierce counter-attack from the bourgeoisie, the Ligue Communiste will make every effort to break out of the framework imposed by the Union of the Left and will push the struggle forward as far as possible, on two central themes - the development of self-organisation of the class in a perspective of dual power (occupations, strike committees, workers' control); and the arming of the proletariat to protect its initial gains against reaction, and to make new gains. With this perspective, the slogan of a working class militia for self-defence will be put forward.

Appendix on the vote in the 1st Round

The first round is to be seen as an anti-parliamentary battle and a fight for programmatic clarity. In the present state of the revolutionary left, and of the Ligue's development, the declaration of a revolutionary course, in opposition to the Programme of the Union of the Left cannot appear in the form of a common political front with the various groups on the revolutionary left. Such a front, even if it was feasible, would tend to create confusion and would be in contradiction to our policy of clarification for the revolutionary left.

Nor can it appear in the form of an agreement between Lutte Ouvriere, the OCI and the Ligue, with a shared vote in the first round. Such a 'solution' would combine every disadvantage, and would create confusion by giving credence to the journalistic note of a 'Trotskyist family'. Further, a 'trotskyist' vote would not provide the opportunity for a polarisation of all the revolutionary left votes to demonstrate the existence of a political current in opposition to the Union of the Left (ie. because of OCI vote for PC?)

In the first round, the appearance of a force opposed to the Union of the Left - even on the limited level of the electoral plane - is not a matter of indifference to us (cf. our analysis of the PSU LO vote in the municipal elections) Where the Ligue is not putting forward candidates we will call in the first round for Lutte Ouvriere. Everywhere else, we will in the the first round for votes for candidates of the far left, that is, those who reject the peaceful parliamentary road to socialism.

The political battle which we are leading through our programme, our refusal to join in a muzzy, confusing revolutionary front, are the guarantee that this call for a vote for the extreme left in the first round will not engender illusions about unity.

This call for a vote for the extreme left means that we can call for a vote for AJS candidates, certain PSU candidates or 'independents' (subject to the approval of the Central Committee)

Tell Us What's Happening in Your Part of the World

According to an official police statement, the Ligue Communiste has 5,000 members to date. They are not mistaken.

32% are candidate members, and 68% are full members.

35% of these are workers, and 65% are teachers, students or school students. 1,000 school students are in the CR, as are 1,000 students.

4% of the members come from the Parti Communiste International (former section of the FI until the fusion with the JCR to form the Ligue)

8% come from the JCR, 12.5% joined in May 68, 11.5% between May 68 and the first Congress, 31.5% between the 1st and 2nd Congresses and 32.5% between the 2nd and 3rd Congresses.

52% of members are aged 20-24 years

17% are 15-19 years old

24% are 25-30 " "

4.5 are 31-34 " "

2.5 are over 35

30% are women, 70% are men

50 militants came from the JEC and JOC, 150 from PCI, 80 from JC, 50 from UEC, 150 from PSU, 30 were Maoists, 50 from Lutte Ouvriere, 25 from AJS-OCI, 30 former anarchists, 25 from Secours Rouges, 2 from PS and 57 from various spontaneist organisations.

Between six and seven hundred members were in other organisations on the left or the extreme left before joining the Ligue.

The Ligue has three times as many trade union members in the CGT as in the CFDT (CGT Communist-dominated, CFDT dominated by Socialist Party) Altogether 25% of our trade unionists are in CGT and CFDT, and add to those 500 organised workers in the "Red Mole Groups" most of whom are trade unionists.

The Ligue intervenes inside 270 factories where it has militants or cells. Regular bulletins are put out for another 180.

"Rouge" sells between ten and fifteen thousand copies of each issue. More than 50 people are full-time workers for the Ligue in Paris and the provinces. Our principal resources are dues raised from our members, (so as not to adversely affect the standard of living of our members these are discussed within the cells, and fixed according to individual means)

The total raised by dues amounts to over 100 million old francs per annum. This sum is sufficient to cover the cost of propaganda, fines, activities, travelling expenses, rents, publications costs, paper, equipment, the International quota (5F from each members contribution goes to the International) And so you know all there is to know about the Ligue.

CONGRESS STATISTICS

287 delegates. The youngest 17, the oldest 42, Average age 23
 176 workers.
 100 students
 11 school students
 Delegates represented 386 cells, 80 towns and 18 districts of Paris.

Fraternal Greetings sent to the Congress from every Continent

The 3rd Congress received almost 30 fraternal greetings. Some were read out, others were given by comrades attending the Congress as observers. They came from all corners of the world, and every continent, from Latin America, from Africa, from Japan. French organisation sent as a fraternal greeting from
 In particular the comrades stated:-

"Militants who have been struggling alongside us in the PCF or on its fringes for 20 years to help their comrades to the consciousness of the necessity for a democratic and revolutionary upheaval in the communist movement, wish to tell your Congress, that the Ligue is regarded as an integral part of this movement."

"Older comrades amongst us deeply regret their misplaced confidence in Stalinism, and the blindness which led them to accept as true the slanders cast on militant trotskysts, without attempting to discover the truth for themselves."

"Some of us became conscious of this deviation when they refused, in Nazi extermination camps, to apply the infamous directive ordering them to liquidate their trotskyst companions. Others finally came to understand their mistake when the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, belatedly and incompletely, denounced the crimes of Stalin and partially reinstated his victims.."

"Socialism will not be established without the far left, of which the Ligue Communiste is one of the leading forces. Nor will it be built without the participation of tens of thousands of genuine revolutionaries who are members of PCF, or influenced by it, and who would be led towards defeat by any policy of reformism."

From Europe most sections of the FI were represented. Messages were read from the Ligue Revolutionnaire des Travailleurs (Belgium), the Ligue Marxiste Revolutionnaire (Switzerland), the Gruppi Communisti Revolutionnari (Italy), the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (Luxembourg) the League of Socialist Revolutionaries of Denmark, the Revolutionarna Marxisters Forbund of Sweden, the G.I.M. and R.K.J. (Germany) and Portuguese militants and sympathisers of the F.I., and finally the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria of Spain.

Greetings from South America were also numerous; from the POR (Bolivian section) POC (Brazil) F.I.R. (Peru), the organisation which Hugo Blanco as its leader led the magnificent peasant movements of 1962.

"We had intended that Hugo Blanco should personally present this message to your congress. But the repressive Peruvian government, which bans our leaders entry to the country, and international repression generally has prevented us from carrying out our intention."

"Nevertheless, this message sends fraternal greetings from Hugo Blanco himself, and the appropriate greetings from Peruvian and Latin American trotskysts."

From another part of the continent, the Chilean Section, Partido Socialista Revolucionario, recently formed by the fusion in November 1972 of the 2 trotskyst groups in the country, attended the congress and sent a message stating in particular:-

"The progress of the revolution in Chile has entered a decisive stage. If it is really the case that the national bourgeoisie is reforming and preparing its most intensive counter-attack, it is also evident that a much larger, more profound and more ambitious new offensive of the masses is firmly determined to defend itself and fight to final victory, towards workers' and peasants' power. This revolutionary perspective, objectively present in the actions of the exploited masses of Chile, is obstructed and misled by the opportunism and capitulationism of the reformist influence of the Communist and Socialist parties."

"The recent unification of the Trotskyist movement in our country marks an important step forward on the road to the construction of the Revolutionary Party necessary to the victory of the working class."

Militants of the Grupo Comunista Internacional of Mexico were also present.

Still from Latin America, the Congress received greetings from the 'Espartaco' group of Columbia and from the PRT-La Verdad, sympathising group of the FI in Argentina. Finally, from the message of the Argentine section, the PRT political wing of the ERP (Peoples' Revolutionary Army) we extract the following passage-

"Since 1969 our organisation was taken a new step forward on the road towards revolutionary fusion with the masses through revolutionary guerilla warfare. We are always conscious that this is a difficult road, barred by obstacles and many dangers, but we are firmly determined to struggle with decision and energy, armed with proletarian ideology and based on our 2 main weapons - the party and the revolutionary army. We shall attain our goal - socialism and communism".

Congress gave a standing ovation to the comrade representing the Movement Populaire de Liberation of Angola, the organisation which has carried on an armed struggle in Africa for 10 years against Portuguese colonialism underpinned by French imperialism.

A similar ovation was reserved for Comrade Sakai, leader of the Japanese section of the FI, and for comrade Andrew Pulley of the Socialist Workers' Party, sister organisation in the United States, who by the side of Linda Jenness led the revolutionary anti electoral campaign of our comrades in the last presidential elections.

Congress also received the greetings of the Communist League of Workers and the Communist League of Australia.

In one of the last international greetings, Comrade Christian Courbain, of the GRS (Antilles) denounced French colonialism and spoke of his organisations struggle for independence and for socialism.

Finally Congress received 2 messages from the Middle East - one from the revolutionary communist group "Al Monadel" a group of Arab Trotskyists, the other from the MSI (Matz) of Israel.

together with Lutte Ouvriere and the OCI we could have made a division of the constituencies thus avoiding a great deal of confusion. We did everything to bring this about - 7 months of negotiation which could have led to success were it not for the sectarianism and opportunism of OCI. The joint declaration of the Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere which we published below approves these negotiations as well as the list of constituencies in which we will probably be putting forward candidates.

Central Committee elected at the third congress must then at its first session lay down a list of candidates and their deputies, nationally; this list will be made public during a press conference the next week.

13 December 1972
gerard Filoche

A N D T H E G E N E R A L E L E C T I O N S

Joint Declaration of the Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere

Since May 1972 negotiations have been carried on between the Ligue Communiste, Lutte Ouvriere and the OCI towards a political agreement allowing for a division of constituencies amongst the three organisations. The Ligue Communiste, Lutte Ouvriere and the OCI finally arrived at an arrangement of divisions accepted by common agreement, when OCI unilaterally broke off negotiations. The OCI representative stated in effect his organisation refused to call for a vote for the LC and LO in the first round, in those areas where the two organisations would be putting forward candidates and the OCI would call on a national scale for an undifferentiated vote for PCF and PS ... Lutte Ouvriere or Ligue Communiste candidates. Furthermore, the OCI representative added his organisation could not undertake to say where these calls would be made. In other words, he did not exclude the possibility that OCI militants would campaign in favour of a vote for PS or PCF candidates in constituencies where the Ligue Communiste or Lutte Ouvriere also had candidates.

Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere were in agreement in regarding this totally unprincipled position as strictly/completely unacceptable. When the OCI representative refused to sign a joint declaration with Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere, the representatives of these organisations made a final attempt at reconciliation by inviting the OCI to publish, on its own a communique in whatever terms they considered appropriate, which would call for a vote for Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere candidates wherever they were being presented. The OCI representative rejected this proposal, and also withdrew from the agreed negotiation.

The presentation of revolutionary candidates in the 1973 elections makes it possible for the workers to demonstrate, against the reactionary candidates, and in opposition to the reformist candidates, their willingness to struggle for socialism. The OCI position, by putting revolutionaries and reformists on the same level, makes nonsense of this intervention, and thus the negotiated agreement into a cheap electoral deal. It certainly implies the neutralisation of a certain number of revolutionary candidates, to the advantage of the reformists.

In the light of this break in the negotiations, the Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere drew up between themselves the political agreement as initially intended on a division of the constituencies.

The Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere will now be putting forward candidates in more than 300 constituencies and 80 departments.

For Lutte Ouvriere
Jean Lievain
Francois Dubling

For the Ligue Communiste
Charles Michaloux
Gerard Filoche

11 December 1972

TEXT OF THE LIGUE COMMUNISTE - LUTTE OUVRIERE AGREEMENT

To decide periodically which members of the ruling class shall for the next few years, crush and trample the people underfoot by means of parliament, this is the actual essence of bourgeois parliamentary "democracy", not only in the parliamentary constitutional monarchies but even in the most democratic republics.

What Lenin wrote in 1917 is basically just as true today, and the coming legislative elections of 1973 are an excellent case in point. On one side, the gaullists who have been in power for the last 14 years, their present allies, Giscardiens and Centrists, along with the reformists who have already said that they are prepared to join forces with the present majority tomorrow, have all openly declared that their common aim, overriding their pretended disagreements, is the defence of the interests of capitalism.

On the other side, the parties regrouping within the "Union of the Left", in the pretence of wanting to "change society", seek only to collect working class votes which will give them the choice to govern within the framework of a bourgeois state and of a society based on exploitation, without making any fundamental change in the structure of that society. The content of the joint programme to which they have put their signatures reveal their unwillingness to challenge capitalism itself.

This is why revolutionaries will intervene in the coming campaign, to demonstrate that it is not elections, but the class struggle which will finally bring down the capitalist system, and to put forward the perspective of a socialist revolution.

The two organisations, Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere will put forward candidates of their own in 300 constituencies. Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere call on workers to vote for their candidates as a means of expressing their determination to make an end of capitalist exploitation, to break with the bankrupt policies of reformism, Stalinism or social democracy, and to work together for their liberation by the only possible means - through the socialist revolution.

THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere Agreements for the First Round

We do not have a rigid position of principle about participation in elections; in June 1968 we boycotted the ballot which was designed to bring about "normalisation" after the movement of May '68, in 1969 we boycotted the referendum, a device to replace de Gaulle legally by Pompidou, under the appraising eye of the establishment; in 1971 we called for a class vote for PCF candidates in the municipal elections; in the presidential elections we made use of television as a platform for the voice of revolutionaries. Each time our policy was determined concretely, tactically. What guided our choice? The desire to work out the best possible means of raising the consciousness of the workers in terms of the concrete situation confronting them.

In the legislative elections of February 1973 we have decided to put forward revolutionary candidates in the first round. Because the rules of the electoral game (electoral coverage on television, radio, in the press etc.) are cooked up beforehand, we must with this in mind endeavour to find the best conditions to make our voice heard. So we have met with other revolutionary organisations in the hope of removing some of the difficulties which may exist.