

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

Issue number 2 Winter 1989

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*Zionism, Israel, Arab Nationalism and
Palestine*

The fight against austerity in Peru

Communists and nuclear power

*The French Communist Party and the
1948 miners' strike*

*Twenty-five years of centrism: the USFI
1963-1988, part one*



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The MRCI:

Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Workers Power (Britain)

Fraternal groups:

Poder Obrero (Peru)
Guia Obrera (Bolivia)

These groups are in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming affiliated sections.

Basic documents of the MRCI—the “Declaration of fraternal relations”, “22 Theses in defence of Trotskyism” and others—are available, many in French, German and Spanish as well as English, on request (see page 45 for details).



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Editorial

Trotskyist International is published by the International Secretariat of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI). In this issue we print two resolutions that were adopted at a delegate meeting of the MRCI in September 1988. The first deals with the question of Palestine and the nature of the Zionist Israeli state. In these theses we explain the origins of Zionism, the way in which it became a tool of imperialism, the tragic consequences of the Zionist takeover of Palestine after the Second World War and the false strategies for liberation proposed by the various Arab and Palestinian nationalist organisations.

The revolutionary programme outlined in this resolution marks a radically different approach. The heroic *intifadah* of the Palestinian youth has been continuing for over a year, yet the main sections of the PLO leadership are preparing to do a deal with imperialism by proposing a Palestinian statelet. The gap between the objective situation and the political line proposed by the leaders—what Trotsky called the crisis of leadership—has never been greater in the Middle East. The successful resolution of this crisis in favour of the masses will necessitate the application of the Trotskyist method of permanent revolution. This is the method which is at the basis of our programme for Palestine.

The second resolution printed here is on Nuclear Power. Discussion of this question led to differing positions within nearly all the sections of the MRCI. After a long period of debate over two years, it was agreed to resolve the question by agreement in a democratic centralist manner. Minority positions were represented across our international tendency. The successful resolution of this question, the first to be debated and decided in our tendency on the basis of democratic centralism rather than by unanimous agreement of the sections, shows that we are on course for our target of establishing an international democratic centralist international at our 1989 congress.

One of the tasks of Trotskyist International is to make available to English-speaking readers key documents from the history of Trotskyism, together with the most important positions of our sections. In this issue we have translated a series of documents which indicate how revolutionaries should orient to mass struggles and fight bureaucratic misleaders.

In 1948, the French miners' strike detonated a massive strike wave which shook the country. The French Stalinists, in the leadership of the movement, refused to organise a general strike, despite the obvious ripeness of the situation. The article we reprint from a 1949 issue of

the journal of the Fourth International (FI), *Quatrième Internationale*, analyses the reasons for the bureaucrats' behaviour and its tragic consequences for the French miners, together with a summary of the intervention of the PCI, the French section of the FI.

Forty years later, the comrades of our fraternal group in Peru, Poder Obrero, find themselves in a similar situation as the growing economic crisis produces massive struggles. In the summer of 1988 a series of strikes broke out in defence of workers' and peasants' living standards. The need for a general strike to stop the government's plans was paramount, yet neither the traditional leadership of the Peruvian labour movement, nor the various centrist currents, were prepared to take this step. In a series of three leaflets our comrades provided the Peruvian workers and poor peasants with an explanation of the nature of the current crisis and, crucially, of how to beat the bosses.

1988 marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International. Another anniversary falls this year, which has gone unremarked: twenty-five years ago in 1963 the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) was formed, following the fusion of the Pablo/Mandel/Frank International Secretariat and the majority of the International Committee, led by the American SWP. We examine here, in the first of two articles, the history of the USFI from 1963 to 1974, its grave errors in a series of key revolutionary situations, and the nature of its centrist method. The concluding article will follow in the next issue.

As the article clearly shows, fifty years after the foundation of the Fourth International, no revolutionary international exists. The task facing revolutionaries throughout the world is the forging of a new Leninist-Trotskyist international, world party of the socialist revolution. This will only come about through debate and discussion of key questions of the international class struggle and of the record of revolutionary organisations in intervening in such battles. This is a key function of Trotskyist International. We invite all those readers—individuals or organisations—who agree with the positions expressed here to enter into discussion with us.

In the last issue of Trotskyist International we published the first part of an article by J Villa on the history of Morenoism. The version that was printed under the comrade's name was an edited version of his original article. The positions expressed in the article are those of the MRCI International Secretariat, not all of which are held by the author. The final article will be published in the next issue.

Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab nationalism

Passed at the MRCI delegate conference, September 1988

Jews: race, nation or "people-class" ?

1. The Jews are clearly not a *race*. The original Hebrew people and language belonged to the Semitic family but two and a half millenia of residence amongst non-Semitic peoples, widespread proselytism to Judaism in earlier periods and intermarriage has made these communities like most other peoples a "racial mixture".

Mass conversions to Judaism of entirely non-Semitic peoples—the Khazars in the Russian Steppes and the Falashas in Ethiopia are the most striking examples. But Jewish communities in the centuries before their medieval and modern persecution regularly proselytized on a similar scale amongst those gentiles performing the same economic functions as themselves.

Only the malign fanatics of anti-Semitism and the extreme far right racist element of the Zionist movement claim that the Jews are a "race apart".

Nor are the Jews a nation! Modern nations are the product of the bourgeois epoch not eternal or millenia-long communities. Bourgeois nationalisms, however, usually claim to be re-founding ancient nations when they are in fact forming a new nation. This is equally true of the Jewish nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries. That an ancient Hebrew state existed during the first half of the first millenium before the Christian era is incontrovertable. This state—later two states—was however destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The Hebrew ruling and priestly classes (not the whole people) were transferred to Babylon where their social function and the religious ideology that expressed it underwent a complete transformation. The monotheistic religion of Judaism was born. An exploiting class of priests and merchants developed performing an economic function within the Persian, Macedonian and Roman Empires.

The Diaspora—the scattered Jewish communities of the Mediterranean basin, the fertile crescent and beyond—were not the product of forced exile but of the functioning of merchant capital. The religious ideology with its myth of the scattered people and its retention of Hebrew as a sacred language served to link these communities.

Priestly rabbinical authorities were allowed to exercise authority over these scattered communities—some quite large as in Egypt and Palestine. After the Babylonian deportation most Jews lived outside Palestine and the majority of the population of Palestine were not Jews (although they were undoubtedly descendents of the old Hebrew peasantry as well as Canaanites, Philistines etc).

The non-assimilation of these communities vaunted as a unique expression of fidelity to nationhood both by orthodox religious Jews and by Zionists is no mystery. There was no world of nations in the ancient and medieval worlds to be assimilated into. The Jewish communities were not atypical or in contradiction with the world in which they performed a vital role. Other "exiled" or minority communities have played analagous roles—Armenians, Copts, Indian and Chinese communities in South East Asia and Africa.

2. This phenomenon has been analysed most systematically by the Trotskyist Abram Leon in his work *The Jewish Question* published in 1946. He terms this formation a "people-class". The essential axis of the Jewish communities was their functioning as merchant and usurers capital in pre-capitalist modes of production. Around the big merchants and usurers oscillated strata of shipping workers, artisans, caravan traders, peddlers, shopkeepers etc, making up the Jewish community. Jews did move into other trades and occupations but to the extent that they were estranged from money economy they tended to be assimilate not into other "nations" but into other religions.

This analysis explains the longevity of the Jewish communities and the preservation of their religion and sacred language. Leon shows that "It is because the Jews have preserved themselves as a social class that they have likewise retained several of their religious ethnic and linguistic traits." "Judaism" he maintains "mirrors the interests of a pre-capitalist merchant class".

This people-class constituted a series of self governing communities ruled by scribes and later rabbis who related directly to the gentile rulers. The Law (Torah) and the teachings of the rabbis (Talmud) constituted a basis to link the far flung communities and keep them from dissolving into the peoples surrounding them. However, the flourishing of the communities of the people-class were only compatible with an economy otherwise dominated by subsistence agriculture. Thus the stable conditions of economic life of the Middle East and Mediterranean allowed for the survival into the modern period of these communities. In Europe, however, the middle ages saw the process of the destruction and expulsion of the Jewish communities.

With the development of merchant and then banking capital in the cities of Europe from the 13th to the 15th centuries the Jews were restricted more and more to usury. The simultaneous emergence of debt bondage for the peasants and petty nobility as feudalism began to

break down motivated the vicious pogroms and expulsions of the Jews during these centuries.

The German Jews speaking a dialect of Middle High German (Yiddish as it came to be known) moved eastwards into as yet less developed Poland. Here, between the 15th and 17th centuries under the Polish monarchy they flourished, being allowed complete autonomy and self government in their network of small towns (*stetls*).

However economic development caught up with them. Their role as innkeepers, shopkeepers, pawn brokers, but above all as bailiffs of the feudal lords and kings meant that class hatred developed between them and the Ukrainian and Polish peasantry. Thus the great peasant revolts of the 17th and 18th century all saw massacres of the Jews. The dark age of the Eastern European Jews (Ashkenazim) began. At the other end of the continent in 1492 the Spanish monarchy expelled or forcibly converted the old Jewish communities of Spain. Some 150,000 Jews moved into Europe, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire becoming the Sephardic communities where they remained untroubled until the advent of Zionism.

Anti-Semitism and Zionism

3. The development of industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries in Western, then Central and last of all in Eastern Europe began the dissolution of the people-class. Class differentiation—into big bourgeois financiers, petit bourgeois trades and proletarians—led to the rapid assimilation of large numbers of Jews and to the conversion of Judaism into merely one religion amongst others. Jews in Western and Central Europe adopted the culture and national identities of the countries where they lived.

Had the development of capitalism proceeded evenly and in the same way in Eastern Europe then a similar process of the dissolution of the people class would undoubtedly have taken place. But whilst capitalism performed its destructive mission—the dissolution of pre-capitalist relationships, the impoverishment of peasants and artisans—it did not absorb all of these classes into modern capitalist production.

This impoverishment hit the once prosperous Jewish communities particularly hard since the Tsarist Empire—a Bonapartist dictatorship of late feudalism desperately resisting the disintegrative tendencies of capitalism and bourgeois democracy—blocked the absorption of the Jews into Russian and Polish economic, social and political life. Whilst the Jews were no longer able to continue their old people-class role neither could they assimilate. They became a pariah caste within the Tsarist Empire.

The bourgeois revolutions in England, Holland, the United States and above all France liberated the Jews from their late medieval discriminatory laws or allowed them to officially “return” to countries from which they had been expelled. From the mid-18th to the mid-19th centuries a rapid process of modernisation and enlightenment developed within the Jewish communities leading to powerful assimilationist tendencies. However, by the last quarter of the 19th century a counteractive tendency developed; namely, anti-Semitism.

This had its social roots in the decaying classes, the

half-ruined aristocracy, the peasants, the artisans and small shopkeepers. In Central Europe modern capitalist development was rapidly and ruthlessly ruining all these classes. Yet none could turn against the capitalist class as a whole. In addition the spread of universal suffrage drove sections of ruling class politicians like Bismark to create a reactionary electoral base.

The anti-Semitic pogroms of 1882-3 in Russia started a process of westward emigration towards Germany, France, England and the USA. A tiny group of Jews (Lovers of Zion) emigrated to Palestine where they bought land. In France and England wealthy and respected leaders of the Jewish community were terrified that mass immigration by “backward” (i.e. unassimilated) “eastern” Jews would provoke a backlash. They started to fund and encourage colonisation schemes in North Africa and in Palestine too.

Zionism came together as a political movement under the inspiration of Theodor Herzl. Herzl became convinced that the anti-Semites were right about one thing: the Jews were a “foreign body” in Europe. He conceived it their task to create a Jewish state as a colony outside of Europe. Having considered Argentina and Uganda the Zionist movement founded in 1898 realised that only the “ancient home” would appeal to religious Eastern European Jews (the only ones wishing to emigrate anywhere) and Palestine was a tempting prize to Russian, German, British and French imperialists because of the mineral resources located there and its geopolitical strategic location.

Zionism aimed to achieve its goal through approaches to a succession of imperialist powers in the years before the First World War. But with the defeat of the central powers in this war and the Russian Revolution Zionism switched its attention to British imperialism which was poised to gain from the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

The Zionists however remained a tiny minority within the world wide Jewish communities and in Eastern Europe which as a whole remained committed either to Bourgeois liberalism (the upper classes and some petit bourgeois) or to the labour movement. Zionism remained a minority current in the Eastern European Jewish communities until the rise of fascism and the triumph of Stalinism.

4. Through the welter of small parties and their coalitions two fundamental traditions exist within Zionism whose founding figures were, respectively, Ber Borochov and Vladimir Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky started his political activity in Tsarist Russia as a leader and polemicist of the Union for Equal Rights, the Jewish bourgeois organisation with a mixed liberal and Zionist membership. He was a bitter enemy of the Bund (a Jewish workers’ organisation) and of the left Zionists who looked to the working class.

In the early 1920s he became disillusioned both with official bourgeois Zionism and hostile to the ascendancy that Labour Zionism was establishing in Palestine. In addition he lost all faith in the British Mandate Authorities who were limiting settlement to an annual quota. In 1924 he founded the Revisionist Party whose tactics and strategy were to force the British to allow unlimited entry, to form Jewish military and police units



Balfour making a declaration

and to seize the Arabs' land. His objective was an autonomous Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan. In 1935 Jabotinsky split from the World Zionist Organisation. His party, and especially its youth wing, flirted with Mussolini and Italian fascism. The Labour Zionists denounced it as fascist. By 1939 the Revisionists formed the terrorist Irgun Zvai Leumi as an alternative to the labour dominated Zionist army (*Hagana*).

Labour Zionism on the other hand has its roots in the period around the 1905 Revolution in Russia and its influence on the Jewish artisan, petit bourgeois and less class conscious worker. Bevo Borochov started his career as a convinced Zionist although for a few months he was a member of the RSDLP (1900-01) before being expelled. He was also active in the local groups that called themselves "Poale Zion" (Workers of Zion). Before 1905 Borochov was moving rightwards however, pouring scorn on the hopes that revolution in Russia would ease the plight of the Jews. At this stage he believed that the Palestinian *Fellaheen* would be absorbed into the Jewish nation.

However the 1905-07 revolution had a powerful impact on him and in 1906-07 he altered his positions substantially. He became organiser and coordinator of the Poale Zion groups and helped centralise them into a party, founded in February 1906 with the name Jewish Social Democratic Labour Party (Poale Zion). Whilst it demanded "personal autonomy" and a Jewish parliament (*seyni*) as steps towards territorial independence it placed most of its stress on participation in the Russian Revolution against Tsarism. Clearly it was influenced by the Bund and on tactical questions stood closer to Bolshevism than Menshevism.

On Palestine Borochov believed it would "naturally" develop as the centre for Jewish capital and labour given the unwillingness of the western states to let in Jews. The Poale Zion movement should create labour exchanges and organise workers in Palestine but "it would be a great error to suggest that we call for emigration to Palestine. That we leave to the natural process". Borochov's reasons for clinging to the Palestine project was that the Jews, because of economic development,

did not have a large proletariat. To obtain this they would have to settle in their own territory. Thereby the over-large bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie would disappear and then a "normal" labour movement would move on to socialism. It was this latter idea that triumphed as Labour Zionism. During the 1920s Poale Zion developed branches in America, in Western Europe and in Palestine. In Russia Poale Zion took an anti-war stand in 1914 and rallied to the defence of the workers' state after 1917.

The Mandate and colonisation

5. The project of a mass colonisation of Palestine by Jewish settlers from Eastern Europe would never have got beyond the literal state of a utopia had it not been for the plans of the imperialist powers to dismember the Ottoman Empire, a process that had begun in the 1840s. As early as May 1916 French and British imperialism embodied this plan in the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement.

They developed a scheme for dividing the Arabs by developing allies who would help them dominate the region. One of these was to be a project of colonial settlement of Palestine. Imperialism found the projects of big bourgeois like Rothschild, for exploitation of the Palestinians, directly to hand. The Balfour declaration of November 1917 proclaimed that the British supported the setting up of a "national home" for the Jews in Palestine.

The main reasons of the British were military/strategic; control of the Suez Canal, the railway lines to the Persian Gulf and stop-over points on the projected air links to India. In addition it would facilitate economic control of the Iraqi and Persian oilfields. From 1918 under the protection of the British military authorities Chaim Weizmann and the Zionist Commission began to organise the settler community in Palestine. A quota of 16-17,000 immigrants a year was agreed. Between 1918 and 1939 this led to a rise of the Jewish population from 60,000 to 445,000 or nearly 30% of the population. Land was purchased by the various Zionist agencies usually from big absentee landlords resident in Beirut or Egypt. Arab peasant tenants were unceremoniously bundled off the land their forebears had worked for centuries.

Yet even in 1939 this only resulted in 5% of the total land area of Palestine being in Jewish hands. Only by theft, mass expulsions and terror could the Palestinian peasantry be dispossessed. As well as settlers and land only a massive influx of capital could have established the settlers. Jewish bourgeois immigrants from Germany, prevented by racist immigration laws from entering Britain, France and the USA brought substantial quantities of capital between 1920-35.

6. To land, immigrants and capital had to be added the crucial element of Jewish Labour. Here the Labour or Socialist Zionists of Poale Zion played a crucial role. Rothschild and the big bourgeois Zionists were quite happy to super-exploit Arab labour in their settlements and factories but the "Marxist" Zionists realised that this would turn the Jewish settlers into a privileged petit bourgeois stratum, dependent on the exploitation of Arab labour and thus ultimately doomed to be over-

thrown by them. Hence they campaigned and organised for Jewish labour only.

This led to the formation of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Workers in the Land of Israel) in 1920. Its General Secretary and founding leader of Israel, David Ben Gurion said "Without it, I doubt whether we would have had a state". In the inter-war years it was the Zionist state in embryo. It organised a systematic boycott and exclusion of Arab labour and increasingly of Arab farm products. Next to the government it was from the 1930s the largest single employer.

Up to 1936 this process had the benevolent support and protection of the British Mandatory Authorities who systematically refused to recognise the Arabs and Palestinians as a people or nation at all, recognising only religious communities. The Arabs were given no civil or political rights, whereas the Jewish Agency was consulted as a quasi-official body.

The Jewish settlers, coming from an imperialist state, albeit a backward one, were used to and expected European wage rates. Palestinian Arabs were paid at a historically lower subsistence rate. Therefore in purely economic terms Jewish labour would never be able to compete for employment by a neutral capitalist. Hence the necessity for an isolated separate Jewish economy. The Jewish workers were thus from the outset a labour aristocracy within Palestine. Average personal income was in a ratio of 2:1 for unskilled workers and even with skilled workers the Jewish settler earned 70% more than his Arab equivalent.

Whereas the class profile of the *yesuv* (Jewish community under the mandate) showed a basically advanced capitalist structure the Arab population showed a profile of "backward" economic development. For the Arabs in 1943 59% worked in agriculture whereas for the Jews the figure was 19.1%. In construction, industry and mining the figures were 11.9% and 30.6% respectively.

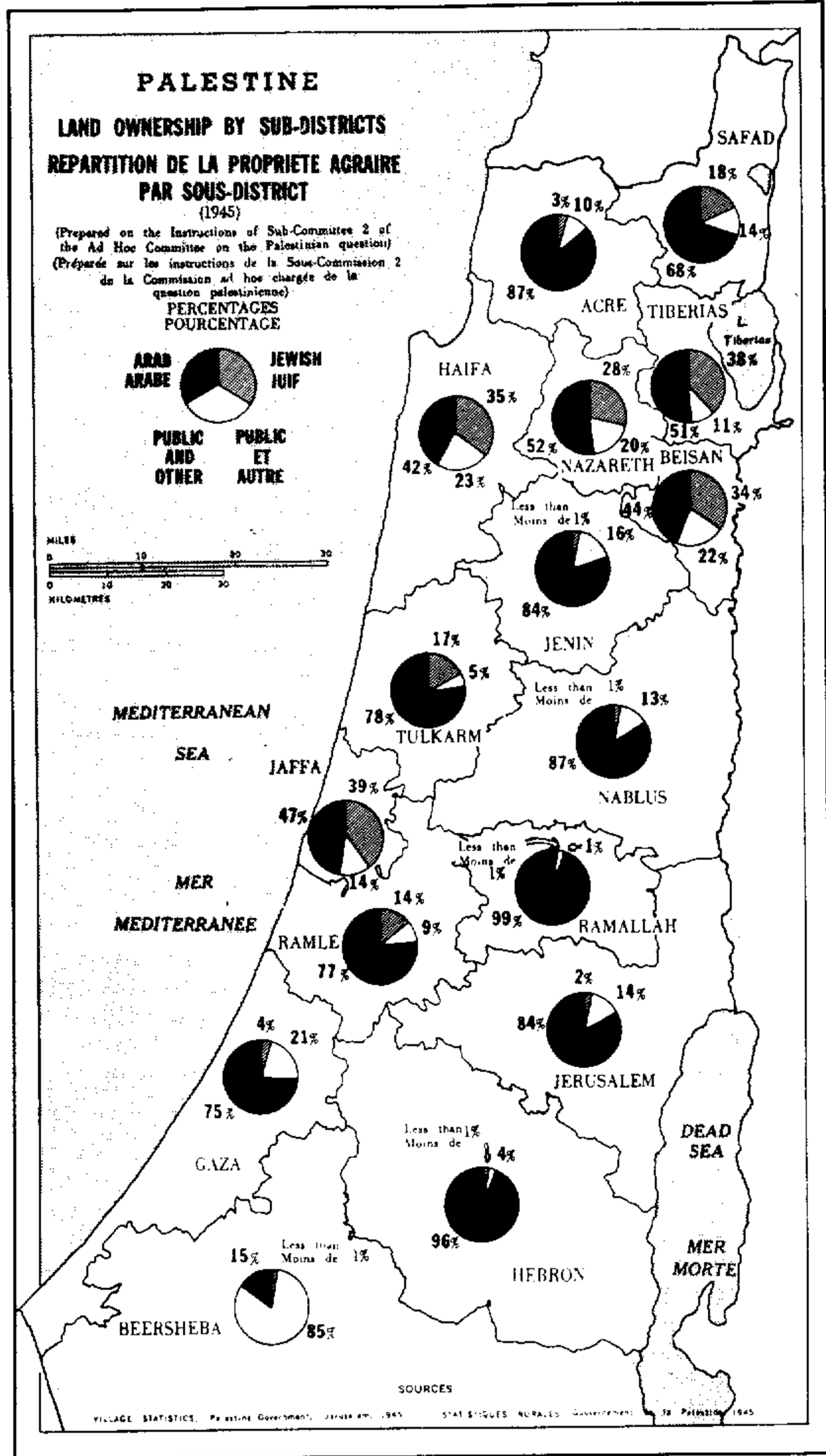
None of the left Zionist or Labour Zionist parties opposed this vicious violation of class solidarity and internationalism. Indeed the Labour Zionists were the main proponents of this apartheid-like policy. The Histadrut was a Zionist-chauvinist labour front which tied the Jewish workers to the state and the employers, whilst impeding the class organisation of the Arab proletarians. It fought hard to split and destroy unions that united Arab and Jewish workers (e.g. the railway workers' union). Eventually in 1934 the Histadrut set up

a pathetic and subordinate Arab section.

The Arabs in Palestine

7. Palestine was conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century AD from the Byzantine Empire. They neither found an empty country nor did they drive out the existing population and settle it *en masse*. They found living there a peasantry descended from the Canaanites, the Hebrews, the Philistines (from whom the country takes its name) and minorities of Greeks, Syrians etc. From these peoples as well as the Arab tribes the modern Palestinians are descended. Gradually Arabic replaced the earlier related Semitic language, Aramaic, which the population (including the Judaeans) had spoken.

Palestine passed in the early 16th century into the



hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. It remained a part of the Empire but its large landowners exercised considerable autonomy. Palestine did not constitute a single province or unit nor did the Palestinians as a whole distinguish themselves from their surrounding fellow Arabic speakers. The country was in fact ruled by the head of a series of clans (*ashair*) each headed by a sheikh appointed by the most powerful households within the clan.

In 1858 a new land law greatly stimulated the break up of clan property and the emergence of great landowners and impoverished landless peasants. The landlords became landowners more easily, shedding the traditional restrictions on the buying and selling of land. The sheiks of the clans lost their power in favour of the newly "enfranchised" landowners.

The losers in this "land reform" were the peasants who, even as late as 1922, formed 81% of the population. They lost their communal rights and having no written title to their lands were often evicted. Whereas seed and tools had been advanced to the individual peasant family by the clan organisation before now the peasants had to turn to urban moneylenders for loans. Debt bondage, foreclosure and evictions followed on a massive scale.

Into this already class divided countryside dominated by rich landlords who lived in the cities—Jerusalem, Jaffa, Nablus but also Beirut and even further afield—came the Zionist settlers. Well funded they found it relatively easy to buy land from the *effendis* (feudal landowners).

The other component of the ruling class were the urban merchants. Often they belonged to non-Muslim and sometimes non-Arab communities—Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Jews. They held a privileged position because of the "capitulations" the Ottoman government made to the western powers whereby extra-territorial rights were granted to various communities. Amongst these were freedom from paying customs dues.

The drawing of Palestine into the world economy dominated by European capitalism as well as the development of capitalist agrarian relations enormously increased trade and consequently the growth and importance of the ports of Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa. Amongst the Arab population the Christians almost monopolised big and small scale trade and became a prosperous petit bourgeoisie.

8. The Palestinian bourgeoisie was weak because of the whole development of the country and moreover was largely made up of minority communities. It therefore fell to the landowners to lead or rather mislead the resistance of the Palestinians to the Zionist settlement. The key figure between the wars was the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Against him was ranged the Nashashibis who held the mayoralty of Jerusalem. Both oscillated between opposition to the British and the Zionists and concession and conciliation.

The Mufti and the landowners in general tried to divert hostility from the big landowners—who were themselves evicting peasants and selling land to the Zionist agencies—onto the settlers. This led to vicious

attacks on the Jews by mobs of the urban and village poor and the Mufti evinced strong anti-Semitic tendencies. Their resistance to the British—who paid their salaries and could dismiss them from office—was far more circumspect.

Only in 1936 did a truly national and popular uprising against the British develop. The world economic crisis and stagnation meant a rise in unemployment amongst Arab and Jewish workers after 1936. Since Hitler came to power three years before the flood of immigration had increased and with it the increases in land purchase and evictions. Conflicts between Jewish settlers and evicted Arab villagers increased. In October 1936 Arab dock workers struck and were replaced with Jewish scabs.

Guerrilla warfare broke out in Gallilee. Rioting in Egypt against the British and a general strike in Syria inspired the Arabs in Palestine. Local committees were formed from below and a general strike proclaimed which lasted for six months. Gradually the strike movement developed into an all out rebellion aimed at the British and to a lesser extent the Zionist settlements. In 1936 at least 5,000 guerrillas were fighting in the hills. As a result of British repression the Palestinian elite fled to surrounding states and the movement in 1937 became a spontaneous, largely peasant movement.

The landowner-bourgeois leaders betrayed the peasant struggle—calling an armistice in 1936 and entering into secret negotiations with the Zionists and the British, coquetting with Nazi German imperialism. They were terrified of the peasant uprising and indeed most landowners fled the countryside. The rebellion was in the end crushed but it did alert the British to the need to shift the axis of their Middle East policy towards Arab nationalists and away from sole dependence on the Zionists.

From fascism to founding Israel

9. Before 1945 Zionism never became a majority ideology amongst the Jewish communities of Europe or North America. However, the holocaust with its murder of six million Jews allowed Zionism to triumph and the state of Israel to be founded.

Anti-Semitism was central to Nazi ideology. The Jews constituted the historic foe of the Aryan "master race". The attacks on Jewish world finance involved an attack on Germany's rivals—British, American and French imperialism—which were said to be at the service of Jewish bankers. However, Nazi anti-Semitism was not simply the most violent form of an all-pervasive anti-Semitism that contaminated the whole world as the Zionists claim.

This fails to recognise the specific class roots of German fascism which was a product of a tremendously acute social crisis in a defeated imperialist country "robbed" of its few colonies by rival imperialism. The failure of the KPD or SPD to take power in the revolutionary crisis of 1923 allowed fascism to grow amongst the petit bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat.

Before 1933 anti-Semitism was not the most central part of fascism's appeal to these layers. In the big cities even after 1933 anti-Semitism was met with indifference and sometimes with hostility. Apart from the

Stormtroopers there was little "popular" participation in the pogroms. In Austria and southern Germany, however, there was a greater degree of spontaneously occurring violent acts carried out against the Jews by the peasantry and urban petit bourgeoisie; the former often found themselves in debt to Jewish merchant capital and the latter faced competition from a broader layer of Jewish urban petit bourgeoisie than elsewhere.

After 1933 anti-Semitism was a state policy. The first wave of anti-Jewish measures was a strictly limited concession to the petit bourgeois mass base of fascism. But it went alongside the destruction of this mass base's political influence (e.g. the "Night of the Long Knives", June 1934) by Hitler at the behest of the big German monopolists who allowed Hitler to come to power but wanted their interests safeguarded from the dangers of the "rabble".

The removal of German citizenship from most Jews in September 1934, the restrictions on the flight of Jewish capital and the setting up of emigration offices gave way to less intense discrimination between 1935 and 1937 as economic recovery took off and the Stormtroopers demobilised. The threat of renewed recession and the imminence of war in 1938 led to a more vigorous campaign. From November 1938 Jewish property was confiscated wholesale, and Jews were excluded from education and entertainment and forced to wear the Star of David in public. At this time those wealthier Jews who could fled, leaving the rest together with socialists, gays and gypsies to face imprisonment, ghettoisation and then extermination in the camps.

By 1939 the failure of German autarchy posed the need to break out to the east and south to plunder the industrial and agricultural riches of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and the Ukraine. But in these war zones there was a major concentration of world Jewry.

That the Germans were able to wipe out nearly all these people was a uniquely horrible act of planned genocide—unique, that is, in the high proportion of a people wiped out in an extremely brief period. However, it was far from unique if by this is meant that Nazi genocide applied only to the Jews. German imperialism, of which Nazism was the "chemically pure distillation" wished to occupy and colonise the rich agricultural lands of Poland and the Ukraine. Most of the populations of these areas were unwanted.

Thus the Germans slaughtered and starved to death millions of Slavs—more than the sum total of Jews. At first the Jews, too, were meant to be worked to death. But after the *Blitzkrieg* failed to achieve a lightning victory over the Soviet Union the liquidation of enemies in the rear was stepped up. The SS was charged from early 1942 with the "final solution". Between 1939 and 1941 Jews had already been herded into ghettos and specially constructed concentration camps. From 1942 death camps were constructed or converted, designed to liquidate eleven million Jews, first through forced labour and then by wholesale extermination. By 1943 knowledge of all this was filtering abroad. By 1945 between five and six million had been massacred—the most concentrated act of genocide so far attempted in human history.

Zionist accounts of the holocaust present this genocide as an isolated fact in human history, linking it only

to anti-Semitism. Yet this is clearly not the case. Millions of native Americans from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, untold numbers of Africans in two centuries of slave trade have been victims of genocide too. Modern imperialist racism arose to justify these horrors. Marxists have no wish to detract from the special horror of the holocaust—special in the concentrated and intense nature of the genocide—in any way but we do insist that it was not unique and nor was its fundamental origin in anti-Semitism. Rather, it was a product of imperialism's extreme crisis.

10. Much dispute has raged over the evidence of collusion between the Zionists and the Nazis. Zionists deny or minimise it. For overzealous "anti-Zionists" and some conservative Arab nationalists it is evidence of an absolute identity between evil genocidal Nazi-ism and Zionism. The historical evidence confirms neither view. Zionism before 1933 played no significant role in Jewish resistance to the rise of Nazi-ism. It looked on Nazi-ism with a sanguine eye. The Zionists too wanted a Germany free of Jews provided that these Jews could emigrate to Palestine and nowhere else. As a result while socialists, communists and even liberal Jews were courageous fighters against Hitler, the Zionists attempted to do a deal with him.

Thus the Zionists Federation of Germany was in direct negotiations with the SS for several years. The SS allowed Zionist periodicals and even a uniformed Zionist youth movement to exist when all other political organisations were persecuted. Even during the war itself Rudolf Kastner, Secretary of the Zionist Committee in Budapest, negotiated with Adolf Eichmann for 1,000 wealthy Jews to escape to Switzerland in return for the Zionists good offices in persuading Hungary's 800,000 Jews to be deported "peacefully".

As a result over 200,000 were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps. Yet this degree of collusion was special and at heart contradicted the project of Zionism which aimed to get as many Jews as possible to Palestine. In order to realise this, during the war the Zionists inside the USA and Europe were opposed to any relaxation of racist immigration controls operated by the imperialist democracies.

Zionism in an attempt to negate anti-Semitism ends up confirming the law of the unity of opposites. This is not to equate or identify the two but to insist that firstly Zionism is a product and a response to anti-Semitism and that secondly, it is a response which cannot overcome it because it accepts anti-Semitism's definition of the widespread Jewish religious communities and their tendency to see their assimilation under capitalism as a problem.

Zionism sees Jewishness as unambiguously good whereas anti-Semitism sees it as an evil. But Zionism needs anti-Semitism, it is its *raison d'être*. It believes it is the force that will continue to drive the Jewish communities towards Palestine. Thus Zionists have negotiated with anti-Semites to facilitate this process.

Does this mean that the Zionists colluded with the "final solution"? No, but it does mean that they did nothing to aid the plight of its victims (although Zionists could and did join in heroic uprisings such as in the Warsaw Ghetto) whilst it was being prepared and even

after it was underway they did little beyond smuggling a relative handful of refugees into Palestine.

The creation of Israel.

11. Zionism, as a colonial settler movement had to be strategically allied to one imperialist power or another. Not only did these powers provide the funds for settlement but more importantly they controlled the Middle East. British imperialism was hegemonic there from 1918 until 1947-53 when it was supplanted by the USA.

The conflict between Zionism and Britain was not an anti-imperialist struggle by the former. Rather, it was a conflict provoked by a switch of policy by Britain in 1939. By then British imperialism accepted that in order to maintain control over strategic resources, such as the Suez canal, rail and air routes, and the oil fields of Iraq and the Gulf, it would have to oversee the creation of pliant Arab semi-colonial regimes. This involved propping up the monarchies of Egypt, Iran, Transjordan, Iraq and the Gulf states. But this in turn meant scaling down Britain's commitment to the Zionists.

This change was evident from 1936, when the Palestinian uprising indicated the threat of Arab nationalism. But it was retarded by the outbreak of World War Two and the support for Britain given by the Zionists. But during the war the Zionist right prepared for the eventual conflict with Britain. While the Irgun guerrilla group suspended operations against the British in the war the "Stern Gang" (LEHY) did not and even tried to make contacts with the fascists.

While the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem helped the SS in the war, Irgun and Haganah fought with the British. This helped transform Haganah into a professional armed force. Meanwhile the British disarmed and crushed the organisations of the Arabs in Palestine.

With the end of the war the conflict between Britain and Zionism resumed. The Zionists lobbied hard with US imperialism to get immediate permission for 100,000 survivors of the holocaust to be allowed into Palestine. But the dominant Arabist faction within the British ruling class aimed to block this and negotiate a partition of Palestine between the Zionists and Transjordan, which would allow a strategic military presence for Britain.

But Britain both underestimated the strength of the new US-Zionist alliance and the resistance of the Palestinians to this plan. Three years of struggle to stop "illegal" immigration, to suppress both Arab and Zionist "terrorism" failed completely. In February 1947 Britain announced it would end its mandate by August 1948. In fact, they withdrew unilaterally in May 1948 in order to try and realise their plans by proxy, by co-ordinating an invasion of the so-called "Arab armies". In truth the only force capable of fighting the Haganah was the Arab Legion, led, trained and armed by Britain.

No serious threat was posed by the Arab forces (e.g. Egypt, Syria and Lebanon), partly because they were undertrained and underarmed as a result of previous British policy; partly because the Transjordan monarchy was only interested in a deal with the Zionists for partition around the UN proposed borders which would allow Britain a role. But the USA was opposed to any British presence and so rushed to aid the newly

founded state of Israel. Stalinism too rushed to aid Israel. The Kremlin supported the creation of the state of Israel because it believed that it may have been able to exert political influence over the Zionists and so fill the vacuum created by the departure of British imperialism. In the face of this balance of forces the Palestinians suffered a historic catastrophe.

They were brutally driven out of their towns and villages throughout the area that the Zionists decided was militarily conquerable and holdable. Jaffa was attacked by Haganah and Irgun and its Arab population of 100,000 was reduced in days to 5,000. Atrocities such as Dir Yassin (250 murdered) were calculated acts of barbarity designed to spread panic and induce the Palestinians to flee.

Why did the Zionists not settle for the UN plan which the USA and Britain were happy to see? In essence because even the undemocratic UN planned partition (which awarded 54% of the area to 33% of its population that was Jewish) still left the Arabs as a bare majority in the proposed Jewish state, where they would own three-quarters of the land.

The pogroms and 1948-49 war was conducted to carry out a radical extension of the area under the control of Israel and a much reduced presence of Arabs within it. In the war the Arab states cynically grabbed what they could (e.g. Egypt, the Gaza Strip, Transjordan, East Jerusalem) but the Palestinians were left with nothing. Israel finished with 73% of the area (including the mineral rich Negev desert) and in the process 750,000



Members of the Stern Gang demonstrate, 1948

Palestinians were driven off their land and from their homes in the wretched refugee camps into the surrounding pro-British semi-colonial Arab states.

In the conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and the Zionists it was necessary to have been defeatist in relation to the Zionists and militarily supported the resistance of the Arabs. The "War of Independence" was in fact a war to establish a pro-imperialist colonial-settler state in the Middle East, under the dominance of the USA. It was a war which denied the right of the Palestinian Arabs to self-determination.

It was correct to be defeatist in relation to the struggle waged by Transjordan and later Egypt in the War of Independence. The defeat of Israel was a lesser evil as it would have seriously disrupted the attempt of Israel to establish a stable pro-imperialist regime in the region, and one based on the expulsion of the mass of Palestinians from their land. However, we would not have supported the war aims of the Arab League which were annexationist. We would have fought the Arab League's attempt to enforce its own version of partition, exposed the attempted deals struck with Israel against the interests of the Palestinians and been intransigent foes of the Arab league's anti-Semitism.

Class and nation in Israel

12. Despite the political role that Israel plays in the Middle East Israel itself cannot be considered an imperialist country in economic terms. Although it possesses many unique features, it should be understood as a special type of advanced, privileged, "subsidised semi-colony". The most decisive structural feature of Israel's economic subordination to imperialism has been its overwhelming dependence on capital imports for investment. Between 1952 and 1985 Israel has received some \$40 billion of long term capital imports in the form of grants, reparation payments from West Germany and donations from the Jewish diaspora, none of which have needed repaying. In addition, low interest long term loans from the USA have furnished the means for capital investment in Israel. Since Israel's exports of goods and services have never been more than 65% of the level of imports (including capital) as a consequence Israel has run a permanent balance of payments deficit.

Over time the weight of reparations payments and donations from world Zionism has fallen and loans and grants from the USA have risen. Since 1973 the USA has contributed between 45% and 51% of all capital imports on an annual basis and between 60% and 80% of all long term loans.

In the period between 1950 and 1973 Israel's economy grew at a fast pace, suffering only one recession in 1965-66. The massive influx of immigrants together with the import of capital allowed expanded accumulation to take place in the context of a long boom for world imperialism. This period witnessed the displacement of citrus fruit production and diamond polishing industries by the growth of import-substitution manufacturing industry, especially in textiles, food processing and later in chemicals and mining. Despite this growth the main structural change in imports has been in consumer durables. In the forty years of existence Israel has reduced its share of these in overall imports from 31% to

8%. But dependency on oil for energy has tripled and raw materials imports have grown while the proportion of capital investment goods imports has only dropped from 22% in 1949 to 18.7% in 1984.

Throughout the transformation process there was negligible foreign ownership of fixed capital. This remains the case today with the virtual absence of exploitation in Israel by imperialism. Moreover, the export of capital from the USA and Europe was undertaken not in order to realise a "surplus profit" but to sustain the state of Israel for political reasons.

The import of capital in such huge amounts allowed the rapid accumulation to take place without the super-exploitation of an internal section of the working class or through massive taxation as in many of the less developed countries (LDC's). On the contrary, the accumulation took place alongside an expansion of living standards for the majority of the population.

By the end of the 1960s Israel possessed a highly monopolised and modern industrial economy, including a banking sector. Its internal market was saturated, its export orientated industries growing. But, unlike South Africa these were not to prove sufficient preconditions for Israel to make the transition to a minor imperialist power. There are several reasons for this;

(a) The end of the long boom during 1971-73, the massive shock to Israel of the 1973-75 recession, the curtailment in export markets.

(b) The inwardly directed nature of investment by Israel state and private monopoly capital due to the very nature of the Zionist state. Finance capital had up until 1973 small amounts of foreign capital abroad (petrochemicals, loans) but insignificant in scope; since 1973 Israeli banks have persistently had net foreign liabilities. Between 1980-84 net total portfolio investments of Israeli finance capital abroad was a mere \$1.2 billion; net direct fixed investments was negative for the same period.

Above all, the need to consolidate the whole Jewish population behind the state undermined the process of class differentiation and compelled investment to be internal to sustain jobs, welfare, housing, wages, rather than look for super-profits abroad by recycling externally the capital imports from the USA and elsewhere. On the other hand it has been impossible politically to mimic South Africa and rely upon a massive super-exploited working class within the nation. The contradiction of a "Jewish closed economy" prevented the evolution of Israeli finance capital into an imperialist capital. Israel's development was frozen. There is no internal self-sustaining dynamic of capital accumulation and this leads to limited class polarisation.

(c) Finally, Israel cannot be considered an imperialist country even by virtue of its relationship with the occupied territories since 1967. The West Bank and Gaza do provide a constant source of surplus cheap labour for Israel and a captive market for the high productivity citrus fruit agribusiness of Israel. But this has to be set against the fact that as a result of the war of 1967 Israel was cut off from its large natural hinterland in the rest of the Middle East. It has to be set against the fact there is no industrial or infrastructural development in the Occupied Territories under the spur of Israeli finance capital. The parallel here is more the economic relation-

ship that exists between the Philippines and the more developed LDCs in South East Asia or even Peru's dependency on Brazil. Finally, it has to be set against the huge costs to Israel of military occupation.

Israel then is not even a minor imperialist power, despite its pro-imperialist proxy role in the region (and in Latin America and South Asia etc). Israel is a special type of semi-colony, one whose condition is masked by its relationship to imperialism rather than fundamentally altered. We can characterise its advanced or privileged semi-colonial status thus:

(a) Its semi-colonial dependency is not based on the repatriation of super-profits from fixed investments. Between 1952 and 1984 there was a mere total of \$2 billion of foreign investment in Israel.

(b) The debt burden, while it is a channel for exploitation through interest repayments, is more a burden on its future than its present. On the one hand, as the size of the capital imports has grown in the 1970s and 1980s, as weight of loans over grants has increased and as the Israeli economic growth has faltered badly in the post-1973 period, then the foreign indebtedness of Israel has grown apace. In the 1980s this has been exacerbated by an increasing tendency for Israel to rely on short term loans. By 1986 Israel's foreign debt was \$24 billion and growing. In 1985-86 debt repayments were \$8 billion out of a government spending total of \$21 billion.

On the other hand, interest payments are a much smaller proportion of export earnings (17%-20%) than in Brazil or Mexico and they are far outweighed by the inflow of new capital on favourable terms as well as grants. Since 1982 while there has been a heavy net drain of capital from Latin America, Israel continues to enjoy a net surplus (i.e. new loans exceed net repayments).

(c) The subordinate nature of Israel's economy flows from its dependency on continued privileged treatment over its debt and from the privileged access that Israeli exports have to many European and US markets as well as access to markets that the major imperialists would prefer not to have, or have only through Israel. Like certain other semi-colonies in Africa, Israel is not an economically profitable semi-colony considered in isolation. But its presence and role in the Middle East helps to ensure the continued super-exploitation of other Arab semi-colonies in the region.

The political independence that Israel shows vis a vis the USA flows not from any independent economic power but through its ability to lean upon the economically powerful Jewish community in the USA itself whose Zionist big bourgeoisie is an important sector of the US ruling class.

Whereas Israel's growth rates were favourable in comparison with the OECD nations in the 1960s in the 1970s and 1980s they have been lower than OECD and LDC (especially Newly Industrialised Countries) averages. In terms of material consumption levels, provision of social welfare, literacy etc Israel is comparable to Spain, a level sustained only by massive external aid rather than any internal self-sustaining cycle of accumulation. In general falling immigration and rising emigration bear witness to the unfavourable development of Israel since 1973.

Since 1973 Israel's economy has lurched from crisis to crisis; massive inflation, spiralling indebtedness, low

growth. Unlike Brazil and others, Israel was not able to undertake accelerated industrial growth after the 1973-75 recession via recycled OPEC petro-dollars, partly due to political reasons and partly because of its already heavy debt burden. The internal structure of the manufacturing sector did change in the 1970s and 1980s with electronics and weapons coming more to prominence in the export sector. This has been mainly as a result of US and South African investment whose purpose is to sustain outlets for these goods to areas of the world which South Africa and the USA find it difficult politically to relate to directly.

The 1980s have brought the highest inflation in the world (1981), a disastrous and costly military adventure in Lebanon (1982), and a stock market collapse (1983) with growth hovering at an average below 2% per annum for the decade.

It has taken an unprecedented national coalition since 1984 to be able to stabilise the economic situation to a degree, introduce monetary reform, get inflation down to low double figures and introduce austerity.

Hence we conclude that Israel is a capitalist state, a relatively well developed one. But it is not an imperialist country; rather it is a type of semi-colony, one which is subordinate to US (and to a lesser extent European) imperialism. The majority of its workers in no way suffer exploitation or super-exploitation by imperialist capital. On the contrary, its non-Arab workers benefit from the import of imperialist capital.

The unique character of this state is to be understood in the colonial project of Zionism and imperialism to have a local gendarme in the Middle East. This coincidence of interests alone accounts for the materialisation and continuation of the reactionary-utopia that is Israel. Were imperialist finance capital to remove its support the Zionist state would collapse into economic chaos, class conflict and heightened struggle by the Palestinians for national liberation.

13. The structural features of ownership and control of Israeli capital in the post-1948 state were laid down in the *Yishuv*. The colonising project of Labour Zionism under the British Mandate was controlled by the *Histadrut*, founded in 1920 by the left Zionist parties. It sponsored and organised the growth of the Zionist agricultural settlements in Palestine—the *kibbutzim* and later the *moshavim* (rural settlements, mainly oriental Jews using larger landed tracts based on individual ownership but marketing goods on a co-operative basis). Indeed, in the immediate post-foundation years the bulk of Israel's GDP and exports were products of the *kibbutzim*. Apologists for Zionism have long pointed to these settlements as evidence of Israel's social democratic nature or as islands of "socialism" within Israel.

In origin they were the advanced guards of colonisation. After 1948 they were the border garrison posts of the new state. In reality their famous co-operativism and egalitarian self-denial was a product of economic necessity. Jewish labour came from an area with a higher historic cost of reproduction than Arab labour which would in Palestine mean that Arab labour would always undercut Jewish labour in a free market.

Jewish labour thus had to exclude Arab labour from competing and at the same time "exploit itself" volun-

tarily to promote rapid accumulation. They have always been organised in order to create a surplus for profitable sale in the export market. The post-1948 formation of the *moshavim* was a further sacrifice of the "co-operative" ideal to the laws of the market.

Today, the *kibbutzim* are more marginal to the economic life of Israel, more capitalistically run (capital intensive), are regarded by many Jews as a "planter aristocracy" and are almost totally supporters of Labour Zionism. They only embrace 3% of the Jewish population (almost exclusively Ashkenazi) and involve the super-exploitation of the oriental Jews in the menial tasks who do not live on the *kibbutz*.

As a result of its origins in the "pioneer settlements" of the Mandate period the Histadrut in the early 1980s was responsible for nearly 80% of the total employment in agriculture. It played a decisive military, economic and political role in the colonisation project of Zionism by driving Palestinians from their land. They did nothing to promote class based unity and solidarity among all workers of the region. Rather they deliberately sought to bar the Palestinian workers from the unions and denied them their democratic rights in general. In sum the Histadrut was never in its predominant character a trade union and has become less and less so in the forty years of the existence of the Israeli state. We must fight to break up the Histadrut and build new unions.

Since 1948 the Histadrut has diversified its capital ownership into construction, banking, some transport and manufacturing. Its industrial conglomerate, Koor, employs 20% of the Histadrut membership; its construction monopoly, Soheh Boneh, employed 26% of the membership in 1976. It owns Bank Hapoalim, one of the three big banking monopolies. In all the Histadrut owned businesses account for some 23% of GDP (1980).

Consequently, it is naive to portray the Histadrut as a trade union even though today some 60% of all Israelis are members of this "trade union" which embraces workers, housewives and employers of five or less workers all of whom are eligible to join. In origin it was the main institution of colonial settlement, run by Labour Zionism. As its economic interests evolved beyond the petit bourgeois confines of the early *kibbutzim* into industry it developed a Labour Department to represent the interests of the employees that it in part employed! The top personnel of the Histadrut's companies, unions and the Labour Party are interlocking or even identical. In addition it also organises the health insurance for the whole of Israel's population, which accounts for over 60% of the membership's dues. Nevertheless, it is where the Jewish (and Israeli Arab) workers are organised as workers on the economic front and it is necessary to work within it to accelerate the development of class consciousness, both trade union and political.

In its totality the Histadrut is one of the three pillars of Zionist capitalism serving to retard and repress class differentiation and polarisation. Alongside the Histadrut the state sector (a coalition of government, Jewish Agency, National Fund and United Jewish Appeal to the USA) controls up to 25% of the economy (30% of employment in 1982) and is the main conduit for capital imports. The state and Histadrut embrace the large modern plants in weaponry, chemicals and are heavily

export oriented and, with the exception of construction, are mainly employers of Jewish labour. Private sector business interests are overwhelmingly concentrated in small and medium sized manufacturing units with an emphasis on consumer produced goods for the home market. Some two-thirds of the workforce in this sector are Arabs from inside and beyond the Green Line. As a result the weight of the private monopoly sector has grown in Israeli economic life as manufacturing has accounted for an increasing proportion of domestic production and exports.

14. Over the course of the last forty years the Israeli Jews have become a nation. They have revived an archaic language (Hebrew) to become a first language amongst a majority of Israelis; a national culture transcends the ethnic divisions.

The main bearers of this national culture and consciousness are the Sabra (i.e. Israeli-born Jews) of all ethnic groups. But an important element of the national consciousness of the Israeli Jews is its chauvinist and oppressive attitude to the Arabs. The Israeli Jews, while they have forged a national consciousness in the last forty years which is distinct from their sense of themselves as part of world Jewry, are part of an oppressor nation; their national consciousness has been forged only by a simultaneous denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to self-determination. Consequently Israel is an oppressor nation and as such we do not recognise its right to exist as a nation state.

Yet in considering the question of Israeli national identity account has to be taken of the enormously powerful disintegrative aspects of the ethnic and class contradictions both between the Israeli Arabs and the Jews and within the Jewish community itself.

To begin with, the state of Israel is in reality a creation of the Ashkenazi Jews, the half million or so who colonised it under the mandate and carved it out (arms in hand) in the period 1948-49. To a large extent it remains their state whichever party holds the governmental power. At every level they have the best jobs, hold the key levers of economic power, enjoy the best pay; their "culture" is taken as dominant and they are the main channel to the economic reservoir of world Jewry which is Ashkanazi above all.

But the Ashkanzim found themselves in possession of a state with too few people and with a class structure that was top heavy. The Zionists always recognised the need to draw in oriental Jews under the Mandate to provide a labour force for the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. This became a burning necessity in 1949. Even then the Ashkanazi were 85% urban, concentrated in administration and the service sector together with a small rural elite in the *kibbutzim*. Today the Ashkanazi Jewish workers are a veritable labour aristocracy within the state or Histadrut owned industrial sector and in the middle and upper echelons of the state bureaucracy.

From 1949 until 1951 in an unrestricted way and thereafter with some restrictions, the Labour Party government sucked in hundreds of thousands of Jews. In three years (after May 1948) the population of Israel jumped from 0.6 to 1.6 million. Only half the new arrivals could be considered survivors of the Holocaust, the rest were oriental Jews, drawn to Israel not because of

any suffering as Jews in their previous countries but because of the promise of a better life. Despite the desire to do so Zionism has been unable to attract significant numbers of Jews to Israel from Europe or the USA where life is for most at least as comfortable. They have not been much more successful with Soviet Jews, some 70% preferring not to go to or to stay in Israel after leaving the USSR.

The orientals were used first to colonise the vast acres of land from which the Palestinians had been expelled; located in "development towns" strategically placed behind the border *kibbutzim*. Secondly, they were to provide the vast reservoir of urban semi- and unskilled proletarians for Israeli capitalism. This need accelerated in the concentrated period of industrial growth after 1958.

The oriental Jews are discriminated against within Israeli society and are subject to an element of racial oppression from the European Jews. Through the mechanism of educational qualifications, amongst others, they are concentrated in manual, lower paid jobs within the state/Histadrut industrial sector, and to a lesser extent the lower rungs of clerical occupations. Today, the oriental Jews are the bulk of the industrial proletariat. Until recently they have rarely risen through the political administration to positions of prominence or power which have largely remained Ashkanazi/Labour Party controlled.

But since the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the oriental Jews have experienced a degree of social/class mobility which has both further stratified them and consolidated the whole Jewish population of Israel into a shared common oppressive and exploitative relationship to the Palestinian Arabs.

The large absorption of Arab labour into the Israeli economy since 1967 has done several things. First, it has allowed large numbers of Jews to move out of the proletariat and become small employers of cheap Arab labour. Secondly, because cheap Arab labour undermined the wages of the oriental workers minimum wages have benefited these workers in the mixed sector.

In the closed (Jewish only) sector labour has been scarce, acting as a forcing house for capital intensive industry and creating demand for skilled labour, which



has again benefited the Ashkanazi Jews. Everyone wins, so long as someone else (imperialism) foots the bill.

From these developments it is possible to discern a broad common attitude amongst all Jews in Israel to the continued occupation of the West Bank; no party wishes to end the cheap supply of labour across the Green Line. Without it the most of the small Jewish capitalists will lose out as will the workers. At the same time the extreme right is marginalised because its plans for a "Greater Israel" free of Arabs would have the same effect.

15. In addition to the ethnic/class differentiation within the Israeli Jews there exists considerable ethnic differentiation within the camp of the oriental Jews. There are at least four religious groups: Sephardi (Spain), Bavli (Iraq), Roman (Italian) and Yemani. Moreover, the first have their own language (Ladino, a Castilian dialect with Hebrew alphabet) while the rest speak dialects of Arabic. Outside of these groups there are also the Moroccans (the majority of orientals), the

Kurds, the Persians etc. Moreover, Yiddish is spoken by a minority.

There is hostility between these groups as well as a deep rooted ethnic and cultural diversity. It is well known that there is an economic stratification within the oriental Jews from Kurds at the bottom to the Sephardi at the top. All these distinctions are deliberately fostered by the Ashkanazi.

16. In addition during the last two decades Israeli Arabs have become less Israeli and more Palestinian in their consciousness as a consequence of the West Bank occupation. The Israeli Arabs form 18% of the population and nearly 80% of them are Muslim with the rest being Christian or Druze. They are citizens in a Jewish state, people or descendants of people who were trapped inside Israel after the "War of Independence" in 1949. Many of these have had their land taken away from them subsequently. Today they are among Israel's most super-exploited and oppressed citizens. They are denied access to many jobs, and are concentrated in the construction sector (over 40% of all Arabs are employed here). Many also work in the small-scale establishments of the private service sector that grew up in the post-1967 period. Their wage levels are up to 30% lower than those of the Ashkanazi and 10%-20% lower than for oriental Jews. In the 1970s their relative wages fell, under the impact of the flood of new labour across the Green Line as they found themselves in competition with their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

The oppression of the Israeli Arabs is justified by the most vicious anti-Arab racism which again confirms that Zionism, far from transcending anti-Semitism is parasitically dependent upon it. This unity of opposites reaches its most extreme form whenever both Labour and the Revisionists portray the Arabs as "stupid", "dirty", "lazy", "violent"—all of which is the stock in trade of western imperialist racism. Such racism can be used to justify atrocities from Dir Yassin to Sabra and Chatilla.

Zionism is a national chauvinist ideology that justifies itself through the use of racism. Is Zionism therefore simply racism? No, this does not follow at all. No ideologies are without contradictions, even those which are predominantly reactionary. There are Zionists who do seek to extend rights, even land to the Palestinian Arabs. But this progressive, anti-racist, democratic element within Zionism forms a distinct minority.

Nor is this to deny that there are reactionary elements in the relatively progressive democratic and anti-imperialist movements. They can even change their whole character when the progressive struggle against national oppression is concluded. Arab nationalism can and does contain anti-communist, anti-working class and even anti-Semitic elements. But because the Palestinian struggle is a progressive one these components have a limited and subordinate impact. They draw their roots from economic backwardness in the Arab world (even feudal and semi-feudal forces), from the impact of imperialist exploitation on the urban poor and from an unthinking reaction to Zionist racism.

All this imposes a twin duty on revolutionary communists. On the one side, to fight alongside Palestinian

nationalists while at the same time combatting religious obscurantism and any anti-Jewish outbursts. On the other, while fighting against Zionism and for the destruction of a state that fosters national and racist oppression of the Palestinians it is essential to strike tactical alliances with left Zionists (such as the Progressive List for Peace, Stalinists, Peace Now) in defence of democratic rights for the Palestinians, the better to break them from Zionism completely.

17. Broadly, there have been three major parties or blocs since 1948. The least significant has been the New Religious Party which existed in fragmented form before 1956. The small support for it (about 10% at its peak and declining thereafter) is a reflection of the overall weakness of religious parties in Israel. This, at first surprising, fact in a state that is obliged to embody religion in the self-definition of its citizenship is due to the orthodox religious parties being firmly opposed to the Zionist project in establishing the state of Israel. While they were the first to organise politically within the diaspora they were adamant that the diaspora was a punishment on the Jews that could not be righted by the work of man. Hence the generally secular nature of the main Zionist parties. Only the Holocaust forced them to reconsider and adopt a pragmatic attitude to Israel. The NRP formally advocates a policy of establishing Israel in the whole of Greater Israel, but its pragmatism has led several smaller rightist, orthodox parties to split or form independently since 1973 and especially since the treaty with Egypt was signed at Camp David in 1979.

For the first thirty years of its existence Israel was governed by Mapai (Israeli Labour Party—ILP—after 1967). This was founded in 1930 and was (and remains) the main party of the Ashkanazi Jews and hence the state bureaucracy, Histadrut and the *kibbutzim*. It has commanded the vote of a third or more of the population since 1949, up until 1961 standing alone and afterwards in various blocs. Today it is mainly a party of the privileged Ashkanazi labour aristocracy; the allegiance of the bulk of the (majority) oriental industrial proletariat do not see it as their party and in the main do not vote for it. This is also the case for the Arab workers.

It cannot be considered a bourgeois workers' party of the Israeli working class because as a party tied to the Histadrut (and its corporate capital) and the main national institutions of the state the ILP does not rest on the organisations of the working class. Revolutionaries cannot call for a vote for it.

The smaller Mapam Party was the party of the *kibbutzim* "pioneers" whose ideology was a mix of petit bourgeois socialism and Zionism. It used to be able to command some 14% of the vote. But as the *kibbutzim* have declined in importance and changed their nature, their allegiance has shifted towards the ILP and Mapam has been forced to shelter under its wing.

The third political bloc is that of the open parties of the nationalist bourgeoisie. One side has its roots in the Revisionists who split into differing factions in the 1920s and 1930s over their attitude to the mandate and the future state's boundaries. But by 1951 they had found their home in the Herut Party. The Liberal Party was a more respectable party (i.e. free of the stigma of terrorism) at the service of the growing private bourgeoisie of

the new state. The formation of Likud in 1973 as a coalition of both Herud and the Liberals was a result of the growing weight of the private sector bourgeoisie and the rise of the hawks after "winning" the 1967 and 1973 wars. This coalition made a successful challenge to the hegemony of Labour possible. The growth of the oriental Jewish population, with its alienation from Labour and the Ashkanazim, made possible the successful demagogic manipulation of their hopes for a better deal. Election success followed in 1977 and 1981, which returned the two Likud governments of Begin/Shamir.

In essence very little divides the Labour and Likud blocs in the field of domestic economic policy. Rhetoric, demagoguery and naked buying of votes are routinely directed at their respective "constituencies" in election time. This flows from the need of all Zionist parties to keep together the Jewish bloc and retard class differentiation. It is evidenced by the record of the National Coalition 1984-88.

The main differences are to be found in perspectives for dealing with the Arab states and the Palestinian's fight for self-determination. On the one hand both Labour and Likud are united in their resistance to the desire of the extreme right (Kach, Shass, Tami, Tehya—products of the disgust at Camp David) for more restrictive measures against the Arabs, and against those like Peace Now who would give the Palestinians their own state. This is because both proposals would undermine the Arabs essential function in the Zionist economy.

On the other hand they are divided over whether this function should be preserved by continuing the occupation of the West Bank (with all the consequent political instability, and especially the deepening polarising effect it has within Zionism since the failure of the Lebanon war of 1982), which is Likud's strategy. Likud also favours increased settlements in the West Bank because in recent years this has consolidated its base amongst the orientals who are now the bulk of the new "settlers".

Labour, on the other hand, would prefer to seek a negotiated settlement with US imperialism and the conservative Arab regimes (especially Egypt and Jordan) who could then police a Bantustan "Palestinian" state on the West Bank while preserving its function as supplier of cheap labour and captive market for Israeli agriculture.

Arab nationalism

18. At the heart of pan-Arab nationalism is the belief that behind the fragmentation of the Middle East into many diverse nation states lies one Arab nation, united by a common language and culture, capable of economic unity or integration. Today over 100 million people speak the same language (Arabic) across 15 countries stretching from Morocco to the Gulf, from the Mediterranean to the Upper Nile.

Yet the Arab world is evidently divided too. Asked "what is your nationality?" an Arab will answer "Egyptian", "Moroccan" etc. Nor is the Arab world congruent with the Muslim world—the semi-arid area occupied by the Arabs, Turks, Persians, and Indo-Afghans, including parts of tropical Asia and even Black Africa. Some parts of the Arab world are not Muslim (e.g. parts

of Lebanon and Sudan). Nor are the Arabs all of one racial origin.

Nevertheless, it is said that imperialism and before that colonialism disrupted an organic evolving unity of the Arab nation; its defeat and removal will allow for the unification of the Arab nation. What is the material basis of the Arab nation and should the Arab working class seek to incorporate it into its programme of permanent revolution in the Middle East?

The original Arabs were an ancient people of the Gulf peninsula. From early times quite different paths of evolution were taken by northern and southern Arabia. The latter, the present day Yemen, was a settled civilisation with extensive irrigation systems and an important role in trade between Egypt, Africa and India. In the north the desert was scattered with oases and crossed by caravan routes carrying long distance trade from the Persian Gulf and bringing India and China into connection with Syria, Egypt and Europe.

The nomads and merchants of the northern and western part of the peninsula welded the area into a state for the first time under the merchant prophet-ruler Mohammed (AD 571-632). The subsequent Arab conquests resulted in a vast Arab empire or Caliphate which reached its maximum extent about 732 AD. This did not involve a mass settlement of Arabs within these countries but their conquest by a small military-religious elite. Throughout most of these areas they were welcomed by the Christian and Jewish population as deliverers from Byzantine Orthodoxy. They did not "convert by the sword" as their western detractors claimed. Instead they imposed a tax on non-Muslims which gradually converted ever larger numbers to Islam.

The spread of the Arabic language was via the great trading cities, Damascus and Baghdad. Here Arabic gradually absorbed or replaced previous closely related Semitic languages (Aramaic in Syria). The pre-existing populations were Arabised and Islamicised whilst of course transmitting to the erstwhile nomads all the riches of Persian, Syrian, Hellenistic and Egyptian civilisation.

The unification of the southern Mediterranean world, the Levant and the whole fertile crescent with Persia greatly stimulated mercantile activity and with it luxury goods production in the great trading cities. Within this system were also included the river irrigation societies of Mesopotamia and Egypt (Asiatic mode of production). The Caliphate rapidly took on the fundamental features of Asiatic despotism.

The unitary Caliphate lasted for scarce a century before the Spanish and North African portions split away. Oriental despotism based on the tribute of the peasants of Egypt and Mesopotamia replaced the Arab-merchant class. The relative weakening of the mercantile basis of the empire led to its subdivision. Yet Arabic as a language and a culture continued to spread. In fact it was only from the 12th century that it became the majority language in countries like Egypt. Whilst an Arab culture—embracing poetry, philosophy, music, art, architecture and mathematics, far more developed than that of medieval Europe existed—it did not mean that an Arab nation with national consciousness (nationalism) had come into being. This explains why the

submission of the Caliphate, its repeated fragmentation and its rule by Turks, Kurds, Berbers, Mongols, Arcasians, in no case provoked a *national* or *Arab* uprising.

By the sixteenth century feudal Europe was pregnant with capitalism. Merchant capital was developing apace in Italy, Portugal, Holland, England and Spain. Consequent naval developments displaced the overland caravan routes and the Mediterranean by round Africa routes. The Arab east robbed of its mercantile prosperity sank into backwardness and economic decline. The Ottoman Empire after two centuries of glory also declined and fragmented under the strain. By the early nineteenth century the new capitalist states France and Britain had begun to penetrate the Arab world seeking to control the trade routes for *their* capitalist goods to pass eastwards and seeking areas for colonial settlement.

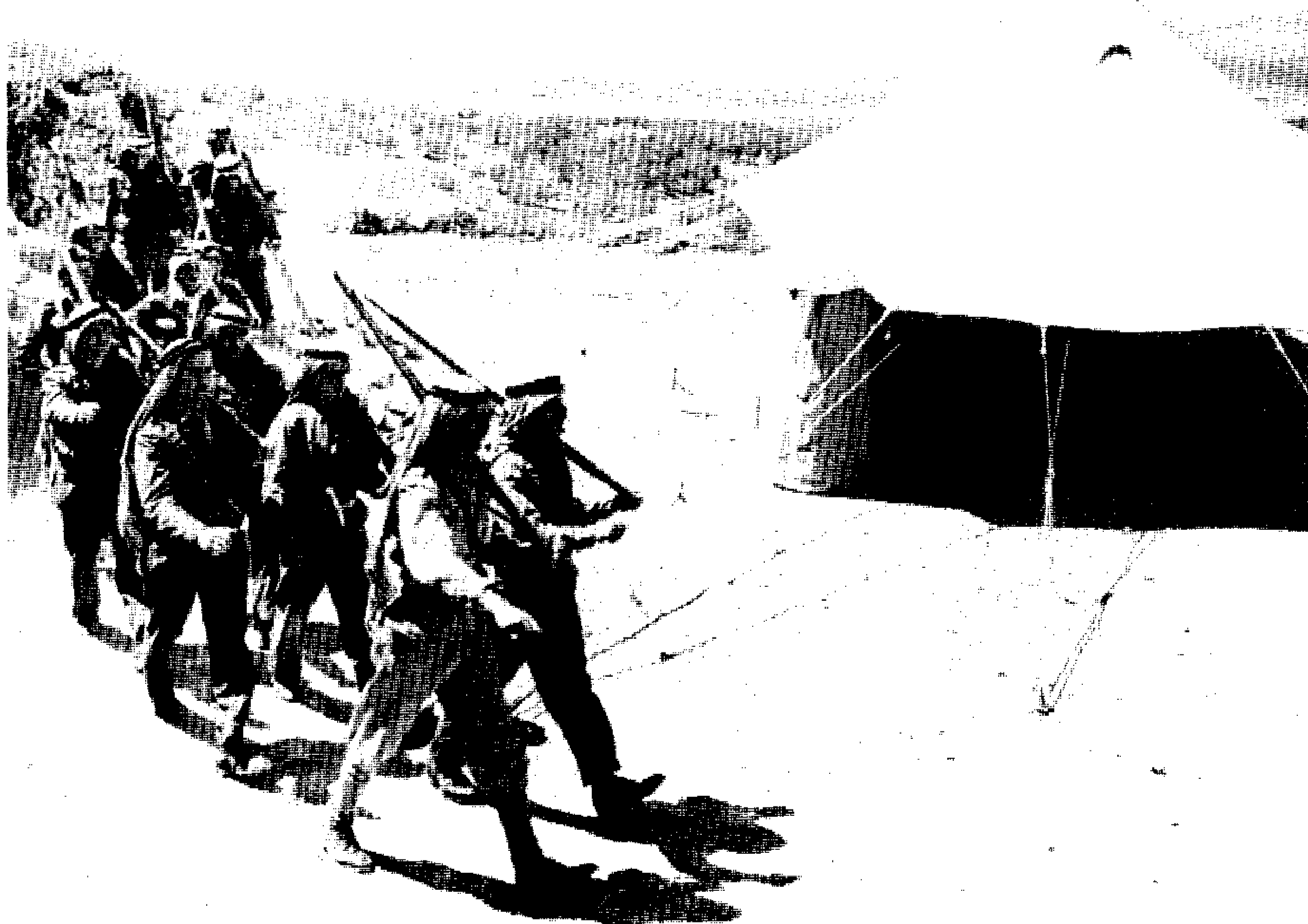
It can be seen from the above that though there was a linguistically Arab Caliphate from the mid-seventh century, by the mid-tenth century the Caliph was Persian and a hundred years later a Turkish sultan ruled the "Arab" world which was in any case fragmenting. The less than three hundred years of a unified Arab state clearly has enormous historic importance for modern twentieth century Arab nationalism but it does not follow that it actually was an *Arab nation state* subsequently divided by foreign oppressors or by "western imperialists".

19. It was in fact the irruption of the forces of French and British capitalism spearheaded by Napoleon's armies and Nelson's fleet at the turn of the nineteenth century

that announced a new phase of development for the Middle East. British rule in Egypt in the nineteenth century was aimed at restricting its independence from the Ottoman Empire (which needed to be preserved as a bulwark against Russia) and at penetrating its economy in the first place through control over the Suez Canal.

Pushing the government into debt led to resistance. But this was crushed in the 1880s and Egypt became a disguised colony of Britain and was essential to her communications to India and East Africa. While the "Uprising of 1919" made the British declare Egypt "independent" it included the reservation that British troops be stationed in Egypt, that Sudan remain in British hands, that Europeans retain their extra-territorial rights. In short Egypt's independence was nominal.

Economically Egypt served as a market for British manufactured goods and a cotton plantation to serve the mills of Lancashire. A colonial bourgeoisie developed but one heavily tied to the large landowners which were the product of earlier land reforms. The Wafd became the party of this bourgeoisie. Saad Zaghloul founded the Wafd Party at the end of the First World War. Ideologically, it represented a nationalist modernist response of this most developed Arab country. It strove by constitutional means to persuade the British and the King to admit them to office and to make political and economic concessions. Wartime economic prosperity had stimulated the growth of an urban middle class—lawyers, doctors, academics, journalists and civil servants—which formed the basis of radical opposition to the British.



Arab liberation armies in 1948

The other mass force was the "Society of Muslim Brothers" founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. It demanded the expulsion of the British by mass action and individual terrorism. It wanted a totally Islamic society and was fiercely anti-communist. At its peak it had nearly half a million members. Thus Egypt remained until the 1950s a country dominated by either Egyptian nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism.

Despite worthless promises to Arab leaders from Britain, following the 1914-18 war, the imperialists of Britain and France carved up the region under the deceitful cover of the League of Nations Mandates. The Al Hussein family were bought off with Feisal being made King of Iraq; Abdullah was made Emir of Transjordan and Hussein recognised as King of the Hejaz. Thus the feudal Bedouin chieftains proved their complete inability to lead an Arab national movement or to create an Arab state even of the Mashreq. They proved themselves over the following decades complete tools of British imperialism. The dialectic of development was such that pre-imperialist domination could not produce the political cement for nationhood whereas imperialist domination integrated the Arab world into the world economy at the cost of Balkanisation and division.

20. The imperialist carve up of the Arab world was now complete. The Balkanisation of the Middle East after the First World War as a result of the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire created artificial nation states as political entities; the forced development of subordinate colonial and semi-colonial capitalism, however, gave these nation states an economic content, eventually creating (weak) national bourgeoisies. Imperialism inserted the separate nation states into the system of world economy differently and separately, further dislocating their ties with each other.

The speed, brutality and deceitfulness of this process and the impact of harsh and arrogant occupation plus the Zionist project in Palestine all stimulated anti-imperialist sentiment and struggle. The origins of secular Arab nationalism lie in Syria. Disillusionment with the Turkish revolution of 1908 and repulsion from its consciously Turkish nationalism inspired the first groups of Arab nationalists in Syria. In 1913 an Arab National Congress was held in Paris. When the First World War broke out the British set about engineering an "Arab revolt" against the Ottomans who were allied to Germany. This involved stimulating Arab nationalism. It also involved deceiving the Arab forces as to Anglo-French (and Russian) designs on the Middle East.

Arab nationalism as an ideology of the urban petit bourgeoisie linked to these struggles really developed in the 1920s and '30s. Its main representatives were Amin al Rihani, Edmond Rabbath, Sami Shawkat, and Sati al Husri. Insurrectionary struggle wracked Syria from 1925 to 1927 and Palestine from 1936 to 1938. Previously vague feelings of identity based on language and religious culture developed into a shared experience of exploitation, domination and revolt against these. Economic development and the creation of modern state machines created a new and educated middle class. The role of the radio, newspapers and books helped to activate the common bond of the Arabic

language and spread modern ideas—secular nationalism, socialism, communism and fascism in these classes.

But before the foundation of the Zionist state, therefore, pan-Arabist nationalism remained a distinctly minority current out paced by Islamic fundamentalism/pan-Islamism on the right, by regional nationalism (Egyptian or Greater Syrian) and by Stalinism on the left. It was the catastrophe of the first Arab-Israeli war and the humiliation it involved for all the adjacent Arab states that launched Arab nationalism into a mass force—one that was to dominate the Arab world from the early 1950s to the end of the 1960s.

Nasserism and the "Arab Revolution"

21. The loss of the 1948-49 war discredited all the bourgeois politicians of Egypt. It is not surprising that it was in the army that this humiliation was most keenly felt. In Egypt a coup came in 1952. Its organising force was the Free Officers movement within which the leading figure was Gamal Abdul Nasser. From a lower petit bourgeois background, Nasser was an undogmatic nationalist determined to rid Egypt of the British and help his country on the road to development. Over the next decade he pragmatically and eclectically espoused pan-Arabism and the statified economy as the road to development. The only major immediate social measure was a sweeping land reform creating a sizeable kulak class—a solid social basis for Egyptian Bonapartism.

In 1954 Nasser forced the British to agree to a two year evacuation plan from the Suez Canal. In addition he refused to join a US organised cold war alliance of Arab states against the USSR. He wanted to stand between the two blocs but took advantage of the willingness of the USSR to give aid to "non-aligned" countries. US and British resistance to the Aswan Dam project forced Nasser to nationalise the Suez Canal to use its revenues to pay for the dam. Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt but Arab resistance, USSR support for her and the hostility of US imperialism to Britain's unilateral actions (which threatened to bring down the USA's system of alliances) led to France and Britain's defeat and withdrawal. In this conflict it was correct for revolutionaries to have pursued a defeatist policy in France and Britain, to have demanded unconditional arms from the USSR for Egypt and no reliance on or support for US imperialism.

Nasser's triumph was such as no Arab statesman has ever achieved. A hundred years of humiliation for the Egyptian and Arab peoples was signally avenged. For the next eleven years Nasserism was the overwhelming influence in the Arab world. Nasser's prestige as the leader of the Egyptian revolution spread to the whole Arab world. For over a decade Nasser was to seem to millions the embodiment of the Arab revolution. Egypt under his leadership seemed fated to achieve the united Arab state and break the influence not only of the weakened and humbled British but also the new hegemonic influence, the USA.

Arab nationalism rapidly developed in the most important Arab states. In Syria after fusing with Akrain Hourani's Socialist Party the Ba'athists became the most

dynamic political force. Once the predominant force within the government the Ba'athists proposed a union between Egypt and Syria. Nasser hesitated but as leader of the "Arab revolution" he could hardly refuse. The United Arab Republic (UAR) came into being (1958) with a new Bonapartist constitution and Nasser as president. Arab nationalism was at its zenith.

But the conditions that created Egyptian Bonapartism—a land reform that wiped out the big landlords and benefited the rich peasant (*fellaheen*), the discredited and split forces of opposition whether Islamic, Stalinist or conservative bourgeois—did not exist in Syria. The Syrian Ba'athists had expected Nasser to rule Syria through them. Speedily undeceived they passed into opposition. Also a bitter feud erupted between the UAR and Iraq which struck a damaging blow to the hopes of expanding the union of Arab States.

Meanwhile faced by imperialist hostility and economic boycott Nasser resorted to a series of far-reaching nationalisations and state capitalist measures totally in keeping with his Bonapartist regime. He wished to stimulate (capitalist) development but not to strengthen the hostile bourgeoisie with its many links to British, French and US imperialism. He nationalised cotton export firms, banks and finance institutions and 275 major industrial firms. A further land reform broadened his base in the peasantry.

The application of these measures to Syria, a country with a stronger urban and rural bourgeoisie alienated the right. The communists were already hostile so Nasser succeeded in setting all the possessing and politically influential classes against him. In September 1961 a coup toppled the Egyptian satraps and the first experiment in Arab unity collapsed.

In the aftermath of this fiasco Nasser was obliged to resort to socialist demagogy to cloak his Bonapartist-state capitalist regime. He declared Arab socialism to be the embodiment of social democracy. He created the Arab Socialist Union as a mass organisation. From September 1962 he threw his efforts into supporting the struggle in the Yemen against reactionary forces and in Aden against the British. In 1963 the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'athists came to hold sole power and, albeit cautiously, declared their support for Egypt's campaign against the reactionary regimes of the Arabian peninsula. Once more as in 1958-61 the Arab revolution seemed on the move headed by military officers professing nationalist and socialist ideologies. Unity discussions again started. This time they broke down in bitter mutual recriminations.

After this failure Nasser had to return to the framework of the Arab League and to talks with the pro-imperialist conservative regimes. In August 1965 he even made his peace directly with King Feisal. Soon he was being outflanked by the Syrian Ba'athists whose radical wing had seized power and was supporting a new Palestinian guerilla organisation, Al Fatah, which began a campaign against Israel in 1965. Israeli counter-attacks drove Syria and Egypt into a joint military command in case of war and the latter promised assistance to Syria in case of attack.

Israeli reprisals against Jordan for harbouring Al Fatah led to Hussein demanding that mighty Egypt cease hiding behind UN troops and close the straights to

the Israeli port of Eilat. Nasser did so to avoid losing face. Jordan signed a joint defence pact with Egypt. The Arab world was in a state of great excitement. United action against Israel by both "revolutionary nationalist" and traditionalist states seemed imminent. The unity of the Arab nation would perhaps soon be forged in the heat of a victorious war against the Zionist intruder. But despite all the rhetorical threats no attack was planned. Instead it was Israel who struck first.

The Six Day War against Egypt in 1967 was aimed as a double blow against the Palestinian resistance and Nasser's refusal to subordinate Egypt, to the wishes of US imperialism. In this it had the same essential features of the 1973 war. In both conflicts it was necessary to defeatist inside Israel and critically support Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the military conflict, whilst at the same time struggling for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination even against the wishes of the Arab states.

The war in early June was a total, humiliating and crushing blow for Nasserism and Arab nationalism as the ideology of the military-Bonapartist regimes of the major Arab states. In 1948-9 Arabs had been able to blame the incompetent corrupt semi-feudal regimes in hock to imperialism as the cause of their defeat. All the political achievements of Nasserism and Ba'athism suddenly proved hollow and the impotence of these forces to unite the Arab world and confront Zionism, let alone imperialism, were cruelly demonstrated. Henceforth attention would turn to a different quarter, to the Palestinians and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Palestinian nationalism and the PLO

22. The soil from which a specifically Palestinian nationalism could grow existed in the mandate period among the intelligentsia within the merchant (mainly Christian) Arab population. It developed a highly westernised outlook with their newspapers and periodicals playing a leading role in the campaign to resist Zionism and in the developing of a Palestinian and Arab national consciousness.

Among the key external factors in developing this was the British imperialists refusal to grant Palestine's inhabitants self-determination or self government and the separation in 1918 of Palestine from Syria (a French Mandate) and from Transjordan (a British puppet monarchy). Trade routes were disrupted as a result and the economy decisively reoriented by the Mandate government. Cash crops for export came to dominate the most fertile area—the coastal plain. Citrus fruit exports, largely to Britain, increased enormously

No less important was the effect of the Zionist colonisation. By 1935 Jewish organisations and individuals owned 12% of the total arable land. Given the impoverished minifundia of the Arab population, burdened with debt and unable to afford irrigation, machinery and fertiliser to increase productivity the Arab peasantry's land hunger became ever more intense.

These external pressures, allied to the destruction of pre-capitalist social relations, created the basis for the birth of a national consciousness amongst the Arab Palestinian population. Until the unmasking of pan-



Yasser Arafat

Arabist movements such as Nasserism, however, specifically Palestinian nationalism was muted.

Today, the PLO has become the umbrella organisation including all the major forces in struggle against Zionism for Palestinian national self-determination. As an alliance of mass political, cultural and military organisations it has become the centre for national resistance, performing the role of a surrogate state throughout the Palestinian diaspora.

It has armed forces, a parliament and a "government" but it is sovereign in no definite territorial area: and in the last analysis it depends on the support or toleration of the other Arab states. Set up by Nasser and the Arab regimes in 1964, the "official" PLO under Ahmad Shukeiry was unable even to establish its hegemony over the Palestinian masses and remained a pliant tool of the neighbouring bourgeois Arab states. In fact Shukeiry was rapidly outflanked by the growth of Fatah (the Palestinian National Liberation Movement), which gained in popularity after launching its first guerrilla strike on Israel in 1965, Fatah eventually took control of the PLO in 1969.

Fatah was founded with financial backing from the exiled Palestinian bourgeoisie. It reversed the previous strategic schema—first pan-Arab liberation, then Palestinian freedom. Given the manifest failure of Egypt and Syria in 1967 and given the successful guerrilla struggles of the 1960s—the FLN in Algeria, the NLF in Vietnam, the July 26th Movement in Cuba, Fatah proposed a similar struggle to destabilise and internally disrupt the Zionist state. Attacks were to be launched

from the neighbouring states—Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Revolutionary communists (Trotskyists) are opposed to a *strategy* of guerrilla warfare for the following reasons. Our strategy is the mobilisation of the urban and rural masses under the leadership of the working class. To withdraw from production, from the towns and cities and even from the most densely populated agricultural districts the most fearless fighters, to concentrate their activity solely on military combat training is to deprive an oppressed people and exploited classes of their cadres for direct mass action. It denudes and weakens economic and political struggle in favour of military action which by and large is episodic and desultory. Thus while the PLO factions set up armed militias based on the camps for twenty years or more they neglected the organisation and mobilisation of the Palestinians within the Zionist state. The result is to create an elite of trained fighters not a vanguard of mass struggle.

In fact the PLO and Fatah were never able to develop guerrilla warfare on a mass scale or penetrate the Zionist state except on daring, but always suicidal, missions. The one victory Fatah won, in 1968, was fought on Jordanian soil (Karameh) where they repulsed an attack by Israeli raiding forces against a refugee camp. Moreover since the guerrilla groups depend for their finance and their base of operations on bourgeois Arab regimes, both conservative and "radical", it has repeatedly been restricted, disciplined and indeed expelled and disarmed by these regimes. In addition it has been pressured into repeated attempts at diplomatic solutions. Fatah, with the closest links to its Saudi and Gulf backers, has repeatedly proved amenable to these projects.

The limitations of this bourgeois nationalist strategy were tragically revealed in Jordan during 1970. The strength of the PLO having extended beyond the Palestinian camps into the very institutions of the Jordanian state, ferocious attacks by the Hashemite regime. Despite a general strike and widespread calls for the overthrow of the monarchy, Fatah's policy of "non-interference" and express support for the Jordanian-Palestinian bourgeoisie of the Kingdom caused them to attempt the demobilisation of the Palestinian and Jordanian masses in the face of Hussein's assault. The resultant massacre of 2-3,000 Palestinian fighters (Black September) must be seen as a direct result of this strategy of dependence and alliance on the Arab regimes.

One organisation within the PLO which, at least in words, rejects the principle of non-interference is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Founded by former leaders of the Arab National Movement, most prominent among them being George Habash, the PFLP evolved quickly in the direction of Stalinism. Though it argued for the resistance itself to seize power in Jordan in 1970, given the political leadership of the movement this could only be taken as a call for the establishment of a democratic bourgeois regime. Indeed the PFLP is totally committed to the Stalinist "stages" theory which limits the immediate goal of the national struggle to the realisation of democratic demands. No established tendency in the Palestinian movement was fighting in 1970 for a revolution in Jordan which would have required councils of worker, peasant and soldier delegates to take power. Thus a

decisive opportunity was missed in striking a real blow at imperialism and its local agents.

Despite inclusion in its programme of the need for a "revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party", the PFLP has not adopted a strategy of organising the Palestinian workers for mass struggle against Zionism. Indeed it sank, after Black September, into a despairing petit bourgeois strategy of individual terror, initiating a wave of hi-jackings and hostage seizures. Whilst unconditionally defending from state repression those militants who adopt such methods Trotskyists reject and fight against the adoption of these forms of struggle because they are completely ineffective for promoting the victory of the national liberation struggle and because they condemn the masses to the role of passive by-stander rather than the instrument of their own liberation.

23. The failure of the PLO's strategy to yield results, together with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza following the 1967 war, spurred the growth within the PLO of support for the formation of a Palestinian state on the newly occupied territories; such a "mini-state" was to exist alongside the Zionist state itself.

Between 1967 and 1973 the Popular Democratic Front For the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP)—later known simply as DFLP—which was a split from the PFLP and led by Naif Hawatmeh, argued for the West Bank to become a liberated zone, free of Israeli troops and no longer under Jordanian tutelage. Under the impact of the defeat in the 1973 war the idea was transformed by Fatah into that of a "mini-state". Despite the opposition

of the DFLP to Fatah's increasing reliance on the Arab regimes, the mini-state policy has led directly to manoeuvres with "democratic" imperialism, the Arab bourgeoisie, the United Nations and the USSR—all in an attempt to persuade the Zionists to grant limited autonomy to the West Bank and Gaza.

All consistent advocates of self-determination for the Palestinians must reject this slogan as a reactionary dead end for the struggle for national liberation. A quasi-Bantustan, economically and militarily dominated by Israel, is an attractive prospect for those powers seeking to "stabilise" the situation in the region by diverting and undermining the prospects for any sustained anti-imperialist revolt.

Support for this within the PLO stems to a large extent from layers keen to appropriate the power and the material benefits of office. For the Palestinian masses such a solution would be a betrayal of their just aspiration to return to their homeland as free and equal citizens of a non-confessional and democratic state. To date only the Palestinian Communist Party has taken the line of compromise and retreat to its logical conclusion and recognised the state of Israel's right to exist. Since the decision of Hussein of Jordan to renounce his claim to the West Bank the PLO has signalled further preparedness to recognise the state of Israel and seek a political settlement based on a West Bank state. Any future election of a Labour Party government in Israel may well accelerate the PLO's abandonment and betrayal of the Palestinian's legitimate goal of a state in the whole of Palestine.

Opposition to the mini-state has in the past been led



| Palestinian youth hurl stones at Israeli security forces on the West Bank

by a "Rejection Front" of Palestinian organisations, most prominent among them being the PFLP. Yet this attitude remains only slightly more progressive than the position of Fatah and the DFLP. All Palestinian organisations (except for the Islamic Jihad) whether "realist" or "rejectionist" support the PLO's central slogan of a "Democratic Secular State" in Palestine. Our objection to this slogan does not lie principally in its ambiguity (allowing several interpretations including that of a mini-state) still less in its clearly progressive aspect in prescribing no confessional basis for a future state in Palestine.

Our objection lies in the absence of any indication of which class in Palestinian society is capable of overthrowing Zionism and which class must predominate in the future state. When all the ideological trappings of religious and national mythology are stripped away, every state remains an instrument of coercion in the hands of a particular class in order to defend its particular property relations. The question of the class character of the Palestinian republic cannot be left wrapped in deceitful phrases.

It is only the proletariat backed by the peasantry and sections of the urban petit bourgeoisie which has the power to smash the Zionist state. In that process it must ensure that there is no return to the domination of the imperialists over the economy, its banking and agricultural sectors. The demand for a democratic secular state remains at the level of ideology utterly utopian and in practical terms would lead to a capitalist Palestine. Such a state would find itself from the first day in the vice-like grip of imperialism just as every Arab state does today.

Whilst the PLO will be an important arena from which militants and cadres of a future revolutionary party of the Palestinian workers will be assembled, it is nevertheless a "popular front" of varied class forces wedded to bourgeois nationalist ideology and dominated by the agents of the Palestinian and Arab bourgeoisies. It must be supplanted, politically and organisationally, if the Palestinian revolution is to move forward to final victory.

Because of the failure of the PLO to advance the cause of self-determination Palestinian nationalism is increasingly being challenged for hegemony of the masses within the West Bank and Gaza by Islamic fundamentalism. Any moves to recognise Israel by the PLO will allow the Islamics to pose as intransigent enemies of Israel and gain credibility thereby.

This movement finds its inspiration from the Iranian revolution which brought down the Shah. In the refugee camps of Gaza, as in Lebanon, the spread of Islamic influence depends as much on the provision of funds and other supplies, as on any liberatory vision that the fundamentalists are able to conjure up. In reality, Islamic fundamentalism has a reactionary ideology which embraces anti-Semitism. This has led the Israeli state to encourage the growth of the Islamic groups to lend credence to their repressive policy and to divide the Palestinian resistance.

The goal of an Islamic republic for the Palestinians would spell disaster for the Jews as it would for the mass of Palestinians. The present example of the state of Iran is testimony to this; as with Iran an Islamic republic in Palestine would involve the enslavement of women, the

oppression of other religious groups, such as the Christian Arabs and the wholesale denial of the democratic rights of the masses.

While it is possible and necessary to struggle alongside these militants against Israeli repression in the Occupied Territories, a real consistent struggle for democratic rights for the Palestinians involves sharp criticism of the denial of such rights contained within the goals of fundamentalism and a fight to defend and extend such rights even against Islamic militants.

Marxism and the Jewish Question

24. Marx himself was Jewish but came from an assimilated enlightenment background. He had very little sympathy with the old ghetto culture of eastern Jewry. In addition in the early 1840s he identified Judaism as the embodiment of the spirit of capitalism (Christianity was a more impure form of the same thing). This does not mean that Marx was an anti-Semite or a self-hater as Zionist apologists claim. It does mean that neither Marx nor Engels made a "modern" (i.e. scientific materialist) analysis of the Jewish Question.

The reasons for this are simple. Both assumed a straightforward process of assimilation of the Jews as capitalism developed. Jewish culture was for them a medieval fossil, a reactionary left-over that would melt away into modern bourgeois culture. Marx died just at the moment that modern anti-Semitism was being born. Engels and his German Social Democratic disciples condemned it as "the socialism of fools", that is, a fake demagogic "anti-capitalism". In this spirit the Second International in its early years condemned "anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism alike"; it condemned incipient Zionism as well as the Tsarist pogroms and the anti-Dreyfus reactionaries. Jean Jaures and Rosa Luxemburg both advocated an active labour movement involvement in the struggle against anti-Semitism. Yet the Marxist analysis of the Jewish question and Zionism was only to be effectively grounded with the work of Lenin, Kautsky and later Trotsky.

25. Lenin's attitude to the Jewish Question was forged in conflict with the leaders of the Jewish Bund. Founded in 1897 it began in the 1890s as a movement amongst the Jewish workers living in Poland under the Tsar's rule (the "Pale"). The Bund did oppose Zionism as a reactionary utopia. That is they demanded the full political emancipation of the Jews in Russia as part of the labour movement's struggle against Tsarism. But at the historic Second Congress of the RSDLP the Bund opposed the view of a centralised party for the whole Russian Empire.

Lenin opposed the idea of a federal party consisting of politically autonomous sections. Instead he proposed that the Bund should carry out agitation and propaganda in the Yiddish language amongst the communities of Jewish workers within the "Pale" but as a section of the RSDLP subject to its congresses and leading bodies. In addition Lenin advocated the right of Russia's "nationalities" to self determination and secession if they so wished and the free use and exercise of their language in state schools and public life as a method of fighting all national oppression. Lenin's objective was

not to create a patchwork quilt of nations as a positive goal but to end national oppression as a dividing factor between the proletariats of all nations. Only if the proletariat actively fought against privilege, coercion and fraud could it achieve this.

The Bund however claimed exclusive rights to organise Jewish workers throughout the Russian Empire even where they were a tiny minority. The Russian and other nationalities they would leave to other socialists. This led them to espouse the Austro-Marxist programme of "national-cultural autonomy"—uniting the scattered Jews by demanding separate schools and cultural institutions. Lenin rejected this as a positive espousal of nationalism, calling the Bund "nationalist socialists". Trotsky never dissented from Lenin's view.

The Bolsheviks conducted a ceaseless struggle against the Black Hundreds and the instigators of pogroms, advocating and organising defence squads. Lenin explained the specific oppression of the Jewish workers and its consequence, the necessity for the closest unity between the workers of all nationalities. In this context he was a remorseless foe of Otto Bauer's slogan of "national-cultural autonomy" as tending to unify each proletariat with "its own" bourgeoisie and separate it from its class brothers and sisters of other nationalities.

Lenin insisted that Marxists must base themselves on the "international culture of democracy and the world working class movement". This is not an abstract non-national culture but one which takes "from each national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois nationalism of *each* nation".

Thus though the Jews are in Lenin's words "the most oppressed and persecuted nation" the slogan of national culture even for them "is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie". Worse, it tends to become the glorification of the results of oppression for in Russia and Galicia (north east Austria-Hungary), "backward and semi-barbarous countries" the Jews are "forcibly kept in the status of a caste". Lenin points to the other side of Jewish culture where the Jews have won emancipation. "There the great world-progressive features of Jewish culture stand clearly revealed; its internationalism, its identification with the advanced movements of the epoch." (*Critical Remarks on the National Question*)

Lenin was therefore a consistent integrationist. But he was absolutely opposed to any forced assimilation to the Russian nationality or to any cultural or linguistic privileges for a dominant or majority nation or language. With regard to minority and oppressed peoples he was in favour of full assistance and facilities for their unhindered cultural and linguistic life. The working class organisations however had to integrate the democratic and proletarian components of these cultures into a common international culture which transcended all nationalist philistinism and exclusiveness *even of the oppressed* peoples.

26. Karl Kautsky devoted a work, *Race and Judaism* (1914), to the Jewish question. Kautsky located the social roots of anti-Semitism in the despairing petit bourgeoisie, ground down by big capital in industry, trade and banking but unable to fight capitalism as a whole because of their own umbilical cord of private



V I Lenin

property. Kautsky before 1914 held that "the Jews in Galicia and Russia are more of a caste than a nation and attempts to constitute Jewry as a nation are attempts at presenting a caste".

Moreover in the countries where they have been totally politically emancipated the process of assimilation is going on apace either through intermarriage and secularisation or through the development of Judaism into a religion and nothing else. Kautsky goes on to show that the project of settlement in Palestine is a utopia.

Here his argument is at its weakest because he underestimates and ignores two related facts; the oppression of the Jews by the Russian state, by anti-Semitic pogromists and the erecting of racist immigration laws by the "advanced" democracies which were creating and would increasingly create an enormous pressure for "exodus". Secondly, imperialism itself had a use for emigrant populations. It had historically used them as a supplementary reserve army of labour in the independent countries themselves and to settle and hold valuable colonies. This latter task came to predominate in the later 19th century and in this century, especially in South Africa and Rhodesia where vital raw materials (gold, diamonds, copper etc) had to be safeguarded against the "natives".

Kautsky, who before 1914 had adopted a tolerant, conciliationist attitude to the Austro-Marxist position on nationalities therefore tended towards a more positive attitude to nationalisms than did Lenin. In the case of the Jews he insisted they were *not* a nation. Lenin was never so dogmatic and sometimes called them a nation, nationality or people. For Kautsky a positive attitude flowed from the very fact of national existence. For Lenin and Trotsky the problem was how to overcome the obstacles to internationalism that any form of oppression—racial, national or religious—posed.

27. Trotsky, though Jewish himself, came from a Russian speaking family and had no experience with the specifically Jewish labour movement. Only in the 1930s did he devote special attention to the question having on his own admission hitherto assumed that once backward semi-feudal Tsarism had been swept away the Jews would be painlessly assimilated into modern democratic society. By the 1930s he was obliged to recognise that imperialism—the highest stage of capitalism, the epoch of its death agony—was reviving anti-Semitism.

The *Transitional Programme* pledged the Fourth International (FI) and its sections to "an uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and shades of national arrogance and chauvinism, particularly anti-Semitism" as part of the "daily work" of the FI's sections. Thus the SWP(US) mounted a vigorous campaign against the racist immigration quotas and for the slogan "Open the gates!" to the Jewish refugees from Hitler before, during and after the war. However, Trotsky remained an intransigent opponent of Zionism. Palestine he called "a tragic mirage" and pointed out that the development of military events between British and German imperialism—i.e. a Nazi victory—"may well transform Palestine into a bloody trap for several hundred thousand Jews". In the short term this fear was not realised though Trotsky's other prediction that the war would bring with it the question of "the physical extermination of the Jews" was amply grounded.

After the war the FI continued Trotsky's strategy of fighting for the admission of Jewish refugees into all the imperialist countries who still—despite the holocaust maintained their racist immigration laws and quotas. In addition the FI stood by the struggle of the Arab masses against Zionist chauvinism and the project of creating a Jewish state by robbing the Palestinian majority of the best agricultural land and the major economic resources of the country. It condemned the utopian and reactionary character of Zionism.

It was reactionary because its idea of autarchic economic development for Jewish Palestine was impossible in the context of capitalism in its death agony (here the FI was wrong at least for a whole period but this was a general problem of perspectives). It could never be able to outgrow the Arab population of the country and the region by Jewish immigration alone. It would be entirely dependent on the big imperialist powers, a pawn in their play for control of the Arab world.

Lastly it could be no answer to anti-Semitism which is rooted in capitalism in the imperialist epoch. Its *reactionary* nature was to be seen in its *pro-imperialist* role; because it racially divides the Jewish and Arab workers and fuels the latter's subordination to their own bourgeois and feudal exploiters by means of nationalism; because it weakens the agrarian struggle of the Arab peasants by diverting it against the Zionist land-grabbers and away from the feudal landowners (*Effendis*). Last but not least on a world scale it diverts Jewish proletarians away from participating in the class struggle where they live towards fantasies of immigration.

The FI defended the right to self-determination of the whole population of Palestine and called for the expul-

sion of the British and the convocation of a sovereign democratic constituent assembly to decide all questions including the right of immigration and its control.

After the war, however, the FI wrongly took a position of defeatism on both sides in the "war of independence" of 1948-49. They did so mainly because during the period of economic prosperity during the Second World War there had been growing incidences of united working class action between Jewish and Arab workers in Palestine. They believed that the "war of independence", led by the Zionists on one side and the semi-feudal landowners of the Arab League on the other, represented a reactionary diversion from the class struggle of the Jewish and Arab workers.

In reality these special conditions of the Second World War were bound to collapse and with it the fragile basis of unity and integration. The FI underestimated the importance of the imperialist backed offensive in the region and the revolutionary-democratic struggle against Zionism as part of the class struggle. It would have been essential to have agitated for armed self-defence committees in the Arab villages and towns; for military co-ordination with the forces of the Arab League without giving any political support for their own annexationist goals.

Programme of action

28. The starting point for a revolutionary party's programme in Palestine and the surrounding countries must be the struggle against imperialism and its wide variety of local agents. The world-hegemonic imperialist power—the USA with its fleets in the Mediterranean and the Gulf defends "its" oil and the semi-feudal rentier regimes it props up in the Arabian peninsular with a limitless arsenal. Yet as its ignominious fiasco in Iran and its inglorious retreat from Lebanon shows it is far from invincible when the masses are roused against it even under the most appalling leadership. This "leadership" whether Stalinist, bourgeois nationalist or clerical reactionary can however only score partial and limited victories against the USA and its agents.

Militarily the Israeli state is a formidable supplement to the forces of imperialism, socially and economically rooted as it is within the region. But its massive strength derives ultimately from the huge economic support given it by the US and European imperialist bourgeoisies and the Zionist bourgeoisie world wide. Whilst it acts as an agent of imperialism as a whole in dividing and disciplining the Arab world it has its own projects and interests that clash from time to time with the projects of one or other of the imperialist powers—even with those of the USA.

So essential to the USA is the existence of the Zionist state that it is repeatedly forced to adapt its overall strategy and tactics for controlling the region to the wishes of its Israeli ally. Most frequently undermined and sabotaged are its relations with its Arab clients (Mubarak, Hussein and the Saudi rulers) who it is repeatedly obliged to abandon and swindle.

The world strategic interests of the Soviet bureaucracy and its ability and willingness to give military and economic aid (armaments, advisers and loans) have enabled various bourgeois Bonapartist regimes (Nas-



A Palestinian woman confronts the occupying forces on the West Bank

ser, Assad, Hussein, Gaddafi) to play the anti-imperialist and even defy the USA tactically for a whole period. In turn these regimes have influenced and moulded the PLO through its various factions.

Yet these bourgeois nationalist Bonapartes, despite all their anti-imperialist and even "socialist" demagogy, despite their claims and aspirations to unify the "Arab nation" or Islam against the "yankee" and Zionist menace have repeatedly surrendered to them at the decisive moment. In reality they are competitors to Israel for imperialism's favours.

What are the real anti-imperialist objectives facing the proletariat of the Middle East? Who are its allies and who are its enemies? What demands must it take up both in its own interest and to win to its side these allies? Its open enemies and their slavish semi-colonial puppets are clear enough to millions although illusions may exist in the Japanese and EEC imperialists who from time to time, jackal-like, try to seize some morsel from under the nose of the US lion by playing up their own "moderation" and "peaceable" nature.

Whilst it is legitimate to take tactical advantage of any contradictions within the imperialist camp, to entertain any illusions in for example Britain, France, Italy or Germany—old plunderers or would-be plunderers of the Middle East and architects of its Balkanisation—could lead only to defeat and catastrophe. Nor should the workers' movement entertain any illusions in the Stalinist or social democratic lackeys of these imperialisms when they weep crocodile tears over the wrongs of the Palestinians.

Labour, Socialist and Social Democratic leaders have long supported and encouraged the Zionists and feted their "labour" leaders in the Socialist International—that below-stairs version of their masters big "thieves kitchen", the United Nations. In neither and through

neither will the masses of the Middle East see their violated national rights redressed.

Nor can the bourgeoisie and the military caste of the Arab states which temporarily resist direct imperialist control or its dictates, provide the leadership of a successful struggle against imperialism. Firstly, neither Nasser and Sadat nor Assad were able to defeat the Israeli armies, backed as they were by US economic aid. Leaving aside their ability as strategists Egypt and Syria alone or together were not economically or militarily able to overcome the Zionist forces. 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 have all proved that Israel cannot be defeated from without, by conventional military means and that the bourgeois Arab generals cannot lead the Arab masses to victory.

Still less can the battle cries of Islam and the clergy unite the Arab world in a successful *jihād*. Their reactionary utopian political slogans will alienate all the minority national and religious communities of the region and repulse women who have nothing to hope from them except a return to medieval conditions.

29. The working class alone can provide the solid social force capable of sustaining a real revolutionary party which can lead all the dispossessed and impoverished—the poor farmers, the camp dwellers, the sub-proletariat of the huge cities, the self-sacrificing intelligentsia in an assault on imperialism and all its agents—Arab as well as Zionist.

The first step is to create the nuclei of revolutionary parties, independent of all bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces not tied to any strategic deals with the exploiters and oppressors of the working class. Class independence is the beginning of all wisdom. From the 1930s onwards the powerful influence of Stalinism with its strategy of the popular front and the revolution by

stages has led the proletariats of Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Iraq to various Bonapartist dictators or petit bourgeois parties or fronts, demanding first national liberation and a popular democratic regime, then at a later stage socialism.

The working class and its immediate and historic needs have been sacrificed on the altars of these false gods. In the "independent" Arab states the proletariat has seen its trade unions and political parties repeatedly crushed and its best fighters martyred by "anti-imperialist heroes" whose standing amongst the masses was sedulously promoted by the Stalinists.

Against the popular front of class collaboration and betrayal the working class must fight for class independence, for an alliance between the working class and the urban and rural poor organised in "soviets" and for anti-imperialist united fronts of struggle whenever the fight reaches the stage of open conflict. The *united front* must be based on the principle of the right and ability of the workers' parties as well as those of the petit bourgeoisie to organise separately, openly and democratically but to fight together loyally and with iron discipline against the common enemy.

There must be no confusion of programmes and strategy and no suppression of any party's right to express them or to make criticisms of each other. As for the parties or forces tied to the bourgeoisie we cannot expect them to ally with us or to prove a reliable ally should exceptional attacks by imperialism momentarily force them to do so. As for the Arab bourgeois states in conflict with imperialism their "gifts" can be accepted only on the spears' point, that is, with no conditions as to control of the struggle or the leadership of it.

They are the class enemy even when imperialism forces them to seek the proletariat and the peasantry as allies. In each separate country the proletariat must seek as its main support the proletariat of the surrounding states and must defend their interests as its own. No "stage" must act as a barrier to the proletariat's advance to power. A workers' state in the Middle East would be a massive blow to imperialism, a reliable arsenal and fortress for all the oppressed. The seizure of power therefore must be the goal of our programme. But to rally the forces and create the conditions to make this possible we must take up all the immediate and partial, the democratic and anti-imperialist demands that are in the interests of the masses.

30. The Palestinian urban and rural proletariat has shown that it can fight—not only because generations of its bravest youth have taken up arms against Zionism and imperialism in guerrilla struggle and alongside the "regular" forces in the Arab-Israeli wars but also in the mass actions of the 1987-89 uprising on the West Bank.

Guerrilla warfare can never be a *strategy* for victory, despite the justification of guerrilla tactics in certain periods and the need for a defence militia to protect the mass struggle and inflict punishment on the occupiers and aggressors. Whilst the proletariat must defend the heroes of the guerrilla forces it cannot share their strategy which tends to oscillate between negotiations and concessions and individual acts which though heroic are all too often doomed to defeat from the outset.

The proletariat erects its strategy along the path of

mass action; the demonstration, the strike, the uprising the building of trade unions, workers' and peasants' councils, women's committees and a popular militia. In the present period the key factors that proletarian revolutionists have to address are:

(a) US and European imperialism's attempts to create a disarmed Palestinian mini-state on part or all of the West Bank, under the guardianship of King Hussein.

(b) The commitment of the Fatah majority within the PLO to a West Bank statelet and the recognition of the state of Israel and the abandonment of the struggle against the Zionist state that this would entail.

(c) The uprisings of the Palestinians of the West Bank and Israel proper against Zionism's military brutality and against the appalling conditions under which they live.

(d) The division of the Israeli ruling class with the Likud led forces seeking to sabotage the US-EEC plans and with the Labour Zionists seeking to accomplish the creation of a helpless Bantustan where the "surplus" Arab population can be utilised in the South African fashion to make permanent an Israeli Jewish majority in Israel and keep a pool of cheap Arab labour close at hand.

(e) The continued guerrilla actions of the Palestinian *fedayeen* and the interaction of the whole Israel/Palestine situation with the class struggle and inter-state rivalries of the Arab world.

Revolutionary communists must be prepared to intervene and take united actions with progressive forces on all these issues but from a strictly independent class standpoint. Thus we should oppose the imperialist project of a West Bank Bantustan.

- No PLO recognition of the Zionist state's right to oppress 650,000 Palestinians. No abandonment of these Palestinians!
- For a united struggle against national oppression. Smash the Zionist state. Support the mass uprisings against Zionist terror and occupation. Broaden it into a struggle against all aspects of national oppression and super-exploitation suffered by Arab workers and peasants!
- Strengthen the organisations of the working class, trade unions and workplace committees. Build workers', village and camp councils to forward the struggle!
- Build a mass defence militia. Down with the Zionist occupation and brutalising of all Palestinian towns, villages and camps. Israeli troops out! Jewish workers who oppose the occupation: do not avoid conscription into the reserve. Organise soldiers against the occupation inside the army. Organise within the army to get units to refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories. In the Territories fight the brutality and politicise the disaffection within the army. Organise rank and file soldiers' committees. Link up with the Palestinian resistance.
- Build fighting unity with all Jewish Israeli organisations willing to defend the democratic rights of the Palestinians and oppose repression. For solidarity wherever possible with the Jewish Israeli proletariat's economic struggles against the bourgeoisie. Defence of their democratic trade union rights. Proletarians of all nationalities unite!

- Critical support for the struggle of the guerrilla organisations against the Zionist state against imperialism and against the treacherous Arab bourgeoisie. For an active defeatist position towards the Zionist state in any conflict with an Arab bourgeois regime. Defencism with regard to both the PLO and the Arab regimes does not and must not signify abandonment of the political struggle against both, preparing the working class for their betrayals and their inability to fight Zionism and imperialism!

At no stage must the working class abandon its struggle to unite and lead all the exploited and oppressed against the Zionist state and to create a workers' state in Palestine which would recognise and defend equality of rights for the Arab and Israeli Jewish nationalities, their language and culture. This can only be achieved by mass struggle, by the disintegration and destruction of the Zionist armed forces, that is, by an insurrection that breaks the ability and will to resist of the Zionists. To achieve this objective the working class and its revolutionary party must take up a whole series of struggles (democratic, trade union, poor peasant) that will rally forces to the workers' side and disintegrate the class alliance of Zionism.

To win the masses to action one must take up and defend their vital interests here and now whether these interests can be satisfied by the existing state or whether their realisation requires its destruction and indeed the abolition of capitalist ownership of the large scale means of production.

Thus within the whole of the borders of historic Palestine and indeed in the surrounding states where Palestinian refugees live we must fight for a programme of demands to abolish the awful conditions of the camps. This would require a massive *programme of public works* to build decent houses, hospitals, schools and centres for social life and recreation, install running water and sewers, electricity and heating to pave the roads and provide a good public transport service. Who should pay for it? The American, Zionist and European imperialists and Arab millionaire bourgeoisies and feudalists. How to force them—for certainly they will not do so out of the goodness of their hearts? Take action against their businesses in Palestine, throughout the Arab world and summon the proletariats of Europe, the USA and Asia to assist.

This must not be a call for charity but for restitution and recompense for generations of plunder of the Palestinian people. And such a massive public works programme should be under the control of the unions and local committees of the Palestinian workers and camp dwellers. They should plan and execute everything.

The Palestinian workers' unions should fight for full trade union rights and absolute independence from the state. They should be open to all workers who wish to fight for their interests on the basis of class solidarity and oppose national chauvinism and privilege. They should support Jewish workers in every progressive trade union and political struggle they undertake (i.e. for higher wages, against inflation, against rationalisation or austerity measures and in defence of their social welfare gains). In return the Palestinians should demand equal wages and equal social welfare conditions with their Jewish class brothers and sisters. Together

they should fight for the full programme of transitional anti-capitalist measures (the sliding scale of wages and hours, against inflation and unemployment, workers' control of production, workers' inspection of all aspects of the economy, nationalisation of industry, commerce and banking etc). They should fight under the slogans:

- Jewish workers break out of the company union, the Histadrut, instrument of class collaboration and Zionist chauvinism!
- For an anti-racist union movement open to all Arab and Jewish workers!
- For militant class struggle and workers' democracy!
- For a workers' party to fight for a workers' state!

31. A revolutionary workers' party faces a whole series of democratic demands mainly affecting the Arab workers and peasants but the Jewish workers should remember Marx's dictum: "A people that oppresses another cannot itself be free". Any serious crisis for the Zionist state will see the restriction and destruction of bourgeois democracy for Jewish workers, intellectuals and progressives too. The most important and general demand is to end the forty year separation of 2-3 million Palestinians from their own country:

- For the right to return of all Palestinians!
- Down with the internal borders and all restrictions on movement between "Israel", the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem!
- For free elections for all municipal authorities and the legalisation of all political parties including the PLO and its constituent organisations!
- Absolute equality of the Hebrew and Arab languages in state, business, education etc!
- Repeal all repressive and emergency regulations and release all political prisoners!
- For the dissolution of the Israeli defence forces and police and the replacement of them with an integrated popular militia!
- For the summoning of a sovereign constituent assembly based on universal suffrage of all Palestinian-Israeli citizens over the age of 16!

These demands should be fought for amongst Jews and Arabs. No consistent or sincere democrat can oppose them. If the mass struggle around democratic slogans leads to the shipwreck of the Zionist state before the workers and peasants are convinced in their majority of the need to establish a workers' state based on soviets then revolutionaries—whilst giving no support to the objective of a bourgeois state (i.e. a secular democratic republic)—should fight for the convening of a sovereign constituent assembly based on an armed popular militia.

Revolutionary communists should fight in the elections to such an assembly and in it if it were convened, for a programme that can resolve the national antagonisms; granting the fullest democratic freedoms to both nationalities now resident within Palestine and posing the only social and economic and political basis for doing this—a workers' state and a planned economy. Such a programme must be a programme of transition based upon:

- The nationalisation of all land and its working on a collective or co-operative basis with the restoration of the returning Palestinians full right to participate

equally in the farming sector. To make this possible a massive development of the neglected areas of Arab land ownership would be necessary to raise its productivity. Private property in the land is an anachronism and can only be a continued instrument of national antagonism. Of course, collective ownership cannot be imposed on small peasant farmers. They must be won to it via a process of co-operative working when they see its economic superiority.

- The nationalisation under workers' management of all large scale industry and its co-ordination under a democratically decided upon central plan!
- The nationalisation of the banks, financial institutions and large scale commercial institutions!

A workers' state would grant absolutely equality to all peoples and languages in political and cultural life making state facilities available to fully develop and protect cultural expression in both the Hebrew and Arab languages with full rights for minority languages (Yiddish etc).

This equality and absence of all coercion would extend to the Israeli/Hebrew speaking people themselves once the national oppression of the Palestinian Arabs had been ended and the Zionist state destroyed. Revolutionaries would of course not advocate separation. Quite the contrary. But it would be far better for the Palestinian Arabs to freely facilitate a democratic and equal separation where the Israelis wished it than to exert the slightest coercion themselves. Of course, there could be no question of yielding to an undemocratic minority of hardened Zionists in collusion with imperialism who were acting as a *vendée* against the Palestinian workers' revolution.

32. The programme for permanent revolution in Palestine, for an uninterrupted strategic advance from democratic and transitional demands in today's conditions to a workers' state, should not be seen as a schema of peaceful or gradual advance. On the contrary the Zionist bourgeoisie and the imperialist powers will not yield to persuasion—to the weapons of criticism. War, revolution and counter-revolution gave birth to the Zionist state and will undoubtedly bring about its destruction. A living flexible but principled programme will have to be applied and re-applied in action programmes suited to every fundamental change of conditions or decisive shift in the balance of forces or the arena of struggle.

Firstly the Palestinian revolution is intimately and indeed inextricably linked up to the political fate of the immediately surrounding lands; Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Palestinian revolutionaries should seek the closest links with revolutionaries in these countries. The existence of huge Palestinian refugee communities in these countries makes this involvement easier and

imperialism and Zionism's repeated interventions makes Palestine almost a domestic issue in all these states. The fate of their class struggle could be of the greatest importance to the struggle within the Zionist state. The overthrow of a Mubarak or a Hussein could alter the whole balance of forces. A new Arab/Israeli war could also create conditions where the external and internal destruction of the Zionist state could coincide.

There is a political slogan which expresses the goal of a Middle East united against imperialism and led by the working class and poor peasants: *the socialist united states of the Middle East*. It is profoundly more progressive than other goals aimed at unifying against imperialism. That the idea of a united Islam is a reactionary utopia we have already stated. Reactionary because it would not be a democratic but a theocratic state, imposing religious law on non-believers. It would be utopian in that it could hardly unify Sunni and Shi'ite Islam let alone the many sects and minority religions. Pan-Arab nationalism whilst largely a secular ideology also has reactionary and utopian features relative to national minorities—Berbers, Israeli Jews, Kurds within Arab countries—and it cannot unite with overwhelmingly non-Arab states such as Iran. A socialist united states of the Middle East would allow for separate states or autonomous regions for every nationality, would allow for the real national consciousness that distinguishes Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis to be both expressed and resolved in a state form capable of completing the struggle against imperialism. Thus and only thus could the Balkanisation of the Middle East be ended and the world proletarian revolution carried a mighty step forward.

- Down with the imperialist powers—exploiters and oppressors of the peoples of the Middle East!
- Smash the Zionist state—instrument of imperialism!
- Victory to the national liberation of the Palestinian people!
- Critical support to even bourgeois Arab states in economic or military conflict with imperialism and Israel!
- Unconditional but critical support to the PLO's military struggle by the proletariats of the imperialist countries!
- For permanent revolution in Palestine and the Middle East!
- From the national democratic struggle to the proletarian revolution!
- No to any form of confessional state! For a workers' state in Palestine!
- For a socialist united states of the Middle East!
- For revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) parties in every country as a part of a refounded international!

The theses were passed unanimously by the delegations from Pouvoir Ouvrier, Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group. The Gruppe Arbeitermacht passed the theses with a reservation over the semi-colonial nature of Israel expressed in thesis 12. They have no characterisation as yet of the socio-economic nature of Israel. Arbeiterstandpunkt passed the theses with the exception of thesis 12. They consider Israel to be an imperialist country.

For a revolutionary fight against austerity

Three leaflets from Poder Obrero (Peru)

Introduction

We print here the English translations of three leaflets issued by Poder Obrero in during the strike wave which took place in Peru in June and July 1988. Poder Obrero is not yet a section of the MRCI but has declared its intention of joining our international tendency. Part of this process is an ongoing discussion of programme and tactics, both in relation to Peru and Latin America and in relation to centrism. One of these tactical differences is reflected in the call in the first leaflet to "refound a Leninist-Trotskyist Fourth International". The MRCI is not in favour of this slogan for the reasons we have outlined elsewhere.

It was also our opinion, expressed in discussion with the comrades, that the slogan "For a 72 hour general strike" was not adequate in relation to the attacks facing the Peruvian working class. We are obviously in favour of making any action called by the bureaucracy (e.g. a 24 hour general strike) as successful as possible. However we also think it is necessary for revolutionaries to point out the inadequacies of such limited actions which can easily be turned into a series of exhausting and demobilising actions which lead nowhere.

We therefore think it is necessary to raise the need for all-out, indefinite general strike to force the government to abandon its plans. As the comrades point out clearly in their leaflets, the general strike, if developed in a revolutionary fashion (organisation of rank and file councils of action, a national strike committee, extension of the strike, armed self defence of the strike, etc), can pose the question of working class power. It is necessary to convince the vanguard of the workers' organisations of the necessity of an all-out general strike as the only way of defeating the capitalist offensive, and of overcoming the reformist bureaucracies' cynical one- or two-day "strike/demonstration" tactics which, whatever their use at the onset of a struggle, if repeated when decisive action is called for eventually exhaust the masses and lead to defeat.

These leaflets were issued in a situation where Alan Garcia's "Aprista" government had entered a deep crisis. Elected in May 1985 for a five year term, the first two years of Garcia's administration seemed to confound the western economic "experts" who predicted instant disaster for the high-spending APRA government. In the election Garcia had defeated the incumbent, President Belaunde Terry. In 1982, Terry had called in the IMF ("Imperialism, Misery, Famine") to bail out the ailing Peruvian economy.

The IMF-imposed austerity programme led to huge reductions in public spending, a dramatic fall in real

wages and an unprecedented slump. The resulting disillusionment and protest swept the APRA to power, with the support of important sections of workers and peasants and also of much of the Peruvian bourgeoisie. Even the ruling class had suffered at the hands of the IMF's "free trade neo-liberalism".

Garcia's government adopted an economic strategy based on stimulating the economy through tax cuts, allowing wages to rise and increasing public expenditure. In the short term these policies worked. Idle industrial plant was brought back into production and the economy grew at one of the fastest rates in Latin America.

In 1986, GNP grew by nearly 9%, in 1987 by 7%. However none of this found favour with the imperialists and their agencies, because Garcia attempted to finance his expansionist project by reducing the crippling interest burden on Peru's foreign debt.

The APRA government had inherited a \$14 billion dollar external debt. The interest payments alone—had they been paid—would have gobbled up all Peru's export earnings! In August 1986, with a great "anti-imperialist" flourish, Garcia "broke" with the IMF, defaulting on the loans and declaring that in future Peru would pay no more than 10% of its export earnings in debt servicing. The IMF responded by declaring the Peruvian government ineligible for further loans, signalling a financial *cordon sanitaire* around the country.

By the middle of 1987 the writing was on the wall for the Peruvian "economic miracle". Export revenues were falling and there was little evidence that the Peruvian bourgeoisie was investing any of its booming profits in new plant. Instead there was a dramatic surge of imported goods. As Peru's foreign currency reserves dwindled away, Garcia attacked the living standards of the masses by reducing subsidies on petrol and some foodstuffs. At the same time he tried to force the bourgeoisie to invest more, but the courts ruled against his proposals. Finally, in July 1987 Garcia announced his intention to nationalise Peru's domestic banks, insurance and investment companies. However, our brave "anti-imperialist" decided that all the foreign owned banks (Citicorp, Lloyds etc) were not to be affected!

These measures met with a furious campaign from the Peruvian capitalists. The anti-APRA bourgeoisie united in a bloc called the Frente Democratico (FREDEMO) which included the Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC) and Belaunde's Accion Popular (AP). Although Garcia's nationalisations were largely neutralised by court intervention and government

retreats in the face of ruling class reaction, the damage was done. The APRA government had managed to alienate the masses and major sections of the bourgeoisie. It was a severely weakened government which entered the growing economic crisis of 1988.

The opposition to Garcia from the left came from two sources: the Izquierda Unida (IU—United Left,) and the guerrillaist Maoist organisation Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). The United Left is a coalition of bourgeois workers' parties and centrist groupings which includes the Partido Comunista Peruano (PCP), the Unidad Democratica Popular (UDP) and the Partido Unificado Mariateguista (PUM). These organisations happily coexist in the IU alongside the tiny bourgeois parties like the Partido Socialista Revolucionaria (PSR), a party founded by retired military officers identified with the Bonapartist military regime of General Juan Velasco (1968-1975).

The IU was founded in 1980 by Alfonso Barrantes, who was mayor of Lima from 1983 until 1986 when he was ousted by the APRA at the height of its popularity. Barrantes always played a Bonapartist role within the IU, "standing above" the contending parties. This position allowed him to accommodate to the bourgeoisie (especially the APRA) and to distance himself from those policies of the IU he considered too "left".

As the economic crisis hit and the pressure of the masses began to be felt within the IU, Barrantes distanced himself still further. In May 1987 he resigned as leader of the IU, and in early 1988 formed a group called Socialist Convergence "in which," he said, "there will be no room for the enemies of democracy". The "enemies of democracy" were of course the "Marxist wing" of the IU, or anybody who risked compromising its electoral respectability by mobilising the masses in struggle against the bosses and their government.

Barrantes intends to lead the next government of Peru. To do this he needs to split away the left of the IU or subordinate it to his policies. His friendly references to Garcia and his endorsement of many APRA policies - such as the repression of "terrorists"—reflects his willingness to establish a governmental bloc with the APRA or, even more ambitiously, a government of "national unity" including the right, the PPC and AP, or sections of it. In this he is amply supported by the PCP, always willing to support a popular front and to use the Peruvian trade union federation, the CGTP, to make the workers pay the price of a class-collaborationist bloc.

The other element of the Peruvian crisis is the on-going guerrilla struggle organised by Sendero Luminoso (SL). Garcia has shown himself only too willing to allow the army to continue its repression of the peasantry, especially in the Ayacucho region where SL is strongest. Disappearances, torture and massacres are commonplace in the so-called "battle against terrorism".

In June 1987, while Garcia was hosting a meeting of the Socialist International in Lima, the army used prison protests by Sendero prisoners as the pretext for a bloody massacre. An estimated 325 prisoners were slaughtered, some being spirited away to military bases to be tortured before they were disposed of. Of course, none of the perpetrators of this massacre were ever brought to justice. The repression has been progressively extended

to the rest of the left, who now suffer growing harassment in the increasingly militarised Peruvian society. Despite its recent "turn" towards building in the cities and in the labour movement, SL continues its guerrilla tactics and selective assassinations of both police and members of opposition political tendencies, including member of the IU.

The first leaflet we reproduce was directed at the National Popular Assembly (ANP), a body which was called into being by the United Left. After many delays and excuses from the IU leadership, the ANP met for the first time in November 1987. It brought together the CGTP, representatives of municipalities controlled by the IU, peasant organisations and other bodies.

The leaders of the IU had a definite aim when they organised the ANP. They wanted to bring together the mass organisations developing in Peru, placing themselves at the head. They wanted to develop an organ of "popular power" which was bureaucratically led and controlled. A body which would be used to show the bourgeoisie that the IU was the only force which, providing it was entrusted with governmental office, could contain and divert the rising struggles of the Peruvian masses.

True to form the CGTP and ANP, having been forced into calling a general protest strike by a wave of strike action involving the miners, teachers and transport workers (even the police went on strike!), delayed the call to action until the leaders of the miners and teachers had got their members back to work through sell-out deals made with Garcia. Nevertheless the two day general strike was a resounding success, despite being given no leadership by the IU or the bureaucrats. It was left to the militant vanguard to fight the police and paramilitary and establish on the streets the right to

PODER OBRERO

LUCHAS A LAS OBRERAS Y TIERRA RURAL DE 72 HORAS

TRANSFORMAR A LA ANP EN ALTERNATIVA DE PODER
MOVILICEMONOS PARA LUCHAR

Contra la disminución de los salarios reales: por un SALARIO MINIMO VITAL (que cubra la canasta familiar) CON ESCALA MOVIL (ajustable conforme a la inflación y devaluación).
 Contra el desempleo: ESCALA MOVIL DE HORAS DE TRABAJO (Distribución de la jornada de trabajo y distribución del trabajo existente).
 Contra la falta de viviendas: EXPROPIACION SIN PAGO DE LAS MANSIONES Y FEUDOS BURGUESES.
 Contra el desabastecimiento, la falta de inversiones, el despilarrame y los ataques contra las masas: CONTROL DE LOS TRABAJADORES SOBRE LOS MEDIOS DE PRODUCCION Y DISTRIBUCION.
 EXPROPIACION SIN PAGO DE LAS GRANDES Y MEDIANAS EMPRESAS.
 POR LA EXPROPIACION DE LOS RICOS Y BURGUESES DEL AGRO Y POR LA DISTRIBUCION DEMOCRATICA DE LA TIERRA A TRAVES DE TOMAS DE TIERRAS MASIVAS Y COMITES DE CAMPESINOS POBRES. No a la destrucción de industrias y minas agrícolas sino por su expropiación en favor de los pobres. Las propiedades sin pago y bajo control de los trabajadores de la banca y las industrias impulsará el apoyo crediticio y tecnológico del agro. La tierra debe ser para quien la trabaja y se debe impulsar las formas colectivas. Utilización de las lenguas quechua, aymara y amazónicas en sus respectivas regiones.
 POR LA SINDICALIZACION, LOS DERECHOS DE HUELGA Y POLITICOS Y SALARIO MINIMO VITAL Y MOVIL PARA LOS SOLDADOS Y POLICIAS. Los miembros de la tropa deben focalizar a sus oficiales y algarines. Comités de trabajadores y uniformados de base deben juzgar e imponer justicia sobre oficiales corruptos y criminales. No a los asesinatos de uniformados de base que pone obstáculos al objetivo de garantías para el movimiento obrero organizado y favorable a la provocación ultra-revolucionaria.

demonstrate. The third leaflet printed here was given out on the first day of the strike.

Since July, Garcia has introduced further swingeing austerity measures. In September the masses saw their incomes slashed drastically with many basic items of food, medicines and services doubling or trebling in price as subsidies were withdrawn and massive devaluation took place. Once again the leaders delayed their response, squandering the workers' combativity which had led to riots and looting in Lima on the day the

measures were announced. Only on 13 October, a month later, was a 24 hour general strike called to protest against the measures.

This again shows the nature of the tactics being used by the Stalinist and social democratic leaders of the IU and the trade unions. These tactics involved the use of 24 and 48 hour general strikes in order to defuse the mass pressure on these leaders to undertake a real fight against Garcia's attempts to make the workers and peasants pay for the crisis of Peruvian capitalism.

For a march to the cities and a national 72 hour stoppage! Transform the ANP into an alternative centre of power! Organise for struggle!

The cyclical crisis

There is only one way for the capitalist system to escape, albeit temporarily, from the present crisis: to attack the workers and their gains in order to feed the bosses' hunger for profits. What divides the bourgeoisie is how best to go about achieving this objective, how to gain most for the different sectors of bosses.

The neo-liberal right

They want to fight inflation and the fiscal deficit by selling off state enterprises and natural resources, sacking huge numbers of workers, doing away with subsidies and cheap credit and granting major rights to the speculators so they can fix prices. At the moment they feel that getting into government with the aid of the army would be premature. They prefer to set about gaining power by first participating in the defeat and demoralisation of the workers' movement and then making sure that the petit bourgeoisie comes over to their side. They encourage the fiction of a united front of proprietors, from the biggest to the smallest, under the banner of struggle against the workers and against state intervention.

The Aprista right

Their programme of demagogic reforms has failed. For the moment they dare not do away with subsidies or cheap credit in order not to provoke a mass response, but their objectives remain major concessions to big capital, imperialism and the militarisation of society. They try to concede only minor concessions piecemeal.

Reformism

Barrantes appears as the great saviour of the bourgeoisie. Whoever leads the public opinion polls seeks to convince Peru's bosses and the armed forces that they should let them run the state. Alan Garcia's friend now speaks of openly repudiating the proletarian dictatorship and forming a government of national unity with

APRA, AP, PPC and other imperialist puppets. Seeking to govern with the support of the trade union bureaucracy and the "left", and with ministers from all the bourgeois parties, the loyal candidate of the IU wants to be a bourgeois president capable of imposing anti-working class measures which alleviate the crisis and smash subversion.

Radical reformism

From inside the ranks of the founders of IU a radical layer has emerged. Some remain inside the IU; others (such as the UDP¹ and the MRTA²) may attack it, even to the point of violence. Nevertheless none of them have fundamentally broken with reformism. They will not support a government of national unity, but they will do so if it is a bourgeois government with sections of Apristas, Velasquistas and other wings of the bourgeoisie. They do not sympathise with the massacre of prisoners but they defend the bourgeois armed forces against those who call for a re-orientation and change in the anti-subversive policy. They can speak against Barrantes, but they always end up tailing him or tailing his bureaucratic patrons in Moscow, Cuba and Nicaragua. Although they launched the ANP, they limit it bureaucratically and refuse to transform it into a soviet and an alternative centre of power. They seek to ensure that it remains a limited body which can serve as a stepping stone for the IU or some other popular front. The "strategy of government and power" is nothing less than the desire to get into government and power; it is nothing less than the desire for a bourgeois reformist government (such as that of Allende or Siles) which would use pressure groups to modify the capitalist state. By refusing to break with the capitalists they would do no more than assist those who are responsible for the crisis and thus strengthen the opposition (as happened in Chile and Bolivia, and is happening now in Nicaragua).

Militarist Stalinism

Violence by Sendero does not express the interests of the

1. Semi-Maoist organisation, the rump of a 1980 electoral bloc.
2. Maoist guerrilla organisation.

industrial proletariat and thus clashes with the only class which is 100% revolutionary—the working class. We defend the guerrillas against state repression. We criticise SL *from the left*. SL fire on workers' meetings, on leaders of the left, on rank and file members of the armed forces and police and on dissidents from their very own ranks. They attack the ANP (as on the eve of various national stoppages). They have created an apparatus of iron despotism and ultra-Stalinism. They oppose the socialist revolution and soviets in order to promote a new state which would protect the national bourgeoisie. They seek to provoke a reactionary massacre. All this reveals SL as a marginal petit bourgeois current opposed to the proletarian revolution. As good followers of Stalin and Mao, the Senderistas are bound to end up forming a pact with the bourgeoisie.

The proletarian strategy

Only the working class can take power at the head of the oppressed. To do this it must be mobilised behind a revolutionary anti-capitalist programme and party. It must build soviets and popular assemblies on a mass scale. It must arm itself by means of self-defence committees and unionise and win over the proletarian and plebeian sections of the bourgeois armed forces. Electoralism and guerrillaism are strategies which seek to limit working class initiative and prepare new capitulations to the ruling class.

The crisis of the "Trotskyist movement"

Leninism-Trotskyism was the only current capable of leading the first and only genuine proletarian revolution. It is also the only current capable of leading the destruction of the capitalists and bureaucrats. The problem is that, since the early 1950s, the whole of the FI has deviated from the path of Trotsky and has sown illusions that other, counter-revolutionary parties (such as nationalists and Stalinists) could transform themselves into revolutionaries. Thus in Peru, the POR³ split between those who tried to transform Belaundism and those who oriented to Aprism.

The false Trotskyists of the 1960s became Castroites and guerrillaists; in the 1970s they veered towards parliamentary cretinism with their "revolutionary socialism" (trying to get parliament to decree socialist transformations) and electoral opportunism (co-author of the explosion of the ARI⁴). Today they propose the creation of amorphous and confused parties including, and tailing behind, various reformists, centrists and Stalinists. These centrist currents have proved capable only of wasting extraordinary opportunities (such as that of 1978–80), of going from crisis to crisis, of demoralising militants and discrediting Trotskyism. Because of this they have assisted the development of the IU and SL.

- For the construction of a proletarian revolutionary party and the refounding of a Leninist-Trotskyist Fourth International. Given that we are for the socialist revolution, we are obliged to draw a radical balance sheet of our experiences. Debate and discussions at conferences must contribute to this. Poder Obrero believe that we must return to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky,

develop and re-elaborate their programme and form a new organisation of cadres at the national and international levels. The militants of Poder Obrero will fight wherever the oppressed are in struggle in order to lay the basis of a new revolutionary party.

- Against the fall in real wages: for a basic living wage (which covers the family budget) with a sliding scale (adjustable in line with inflation and devaluation).
- Against unemployment: a sliding scale of hours (reduction of the working day and distribution of existing work).
- Against the housing shortage: expropriation without compensation of the big houses and lands of the bourgeoisie.
- Against shortages, lack of investment, squandering and attacks on the masses: workers' control over the means of production and distribution.
- Expropriation without compensation of large and medium sized enterprises.
- For the expropriation of the rich and bourgeois landowners and for the democratic distribution of the land by means of mass land takeovers and the construction of committees of poor peasants. No to the destruction of agricultural industry and machinery: for their expropriation in favour of the poor. Expropriation without compensation and under workers' control of banks and industry. For the launching of credit and technical assistance for farming. Land to the tillers and for the building of collective farms. Legal recognition of the Quechua, Aymara and Amazon languages in their respective regions.
- For the unionisation, the right to strike and to be politically active, and a basic wage with a sliding scale for soldiers and police.
- Assemblies of troops must control and elect their officers. Committees of workers and rank and file troops and police must judge, and impose justice upon, corrupt and criminal officers. No to the assassination of rank and file troops and police which puts obstacles in the way of winning them over to the organised workers' movement and favours ultra-reactionary provocation.
- Against repression and Stalinist methods of violence against workers' democracy: for committees of proletarian and popular self-defence; for patrols supervised by democratic rank and file assemblies.
- Against scarcity, speculation, inefficiency and municipal corruption: for committees of workers, peasants and villagers to control prices and supplies, and direct exchange of produce between the country and the city under the control of these committees.
- Repudiation of the foreign debt and the agreements with Shell and imperialism.

In order to struggle for this programme, the ANP and the CGTP must democratically approve a plan of action and immediately organise a march on the cities and a 72 hour national strike.

Faced with the decay of the capitalist system, it is not a question of demanding that the government or cabinet be changed for another, also based on the bourgeoisie, or of seeking a new "democratic" state which looks after the national bourgeoisie and other exploiters, but of expropriating the capitalists by means of insurrection, revolution and the workers' and peasants' government.

The ANP must cease to be a bureaucratic instrument,

3. Section of the Fourth International, split in 1956. The group supporting the International Committee participated in the creation of Accion Popular. The group supporting the International Secretariat entered the APRA.
4. Alianza Revolucionaria Izquierdista: electoral bloc involving the UDP, Patria Roja (Maoists), Hugo Blanco's PRT (USFI) and Napuri's POMR (Lambertist). Disintegrated in 1980 elections.

an impotent umbrella organisation tied to bourgeois democracy. It must be democratised from top to bottom. Popular assemblies must be built throughout the country with delegates elected and recallable to rank and file assemblies.

The popular assemblies must be charged with carrying out the deepest felt demands of the rank and file, with administering justice, controlling prices and supplies; they must organise mass defence committees and unions for the soldiers and police; they will thus take on the character of *soviets*.

Employers, exploiters of the workers and murderers of the proletariat (such as Mohme, Mufarech and Rodriguez) must be declared enemies of the masses.

The Stalinists of the IU and SL are bringing about a disaster for the working class. In their search to build

"democratic" governments with "national" capitalists, albeit with varying degree of violence, they are merely weakening the proletariat. They repudiate direct action by the masses and seek to replace it by military or parliamentary cretinism. They thus contribute to a strengthening of reaction.

It is not only one section of the bourgeoisie that is rotting away, but the whole of the exploiting class. Only the proletariat is capable of doing away with it and creating genuine communism.

For this the ANP must be de-bureaucratised, opened to the masses and transformed into an alternative centre of power. In order to achieve this it is necessary to defeat those who oppose its sovietisation (reformists and militarist Stalinism) and build *a new revolutionary leadership, a Leninist-Trotskyist Party and International*.

For an immediate 72 hour national strike!

There will be an even more reactionary turn by the government:

- Low wages will be reduced even more. The new "increases" do not compensate for the rise in the cost of living and the inflation of recent months, and still less for the increases in petrol, rice and essential goods in the popular economy.
- Major concessions are being made to the transnationals, the IMF, Shell and the big monopolies. It is hoped to encourage investment by the big bosses, granting them better conditions for profit and anti-working class measures. They are continuing to sell off nationalised enterprises in order to benefit private capitalists.
- Unemployment will continue to increase. It is intended to institutionalise insecurity of employment.
- There are considerable increases in the budget for the armed forces at the cost of funds for education, health etc.
- There will be a stepping up of "anti-terrorist" witch-hunts. The real victims will be the most combative mobilisations and elements of the workers' and popular movement. We are virtually entering a camouflaged state of siege where any protest march is violently suppressed by bullets and shells. Massacres and the assassination of demonstrators are passed by in silence, barbarities are whitewashed and there is the threat of new anti-popular terror laws.
- A major section of capital and of the military high command seeks a severe but "gradualist" attack on the workers. They hope to involve the IU (or a wing of it) in an anti-worker alliance.

All this takes place in the middle of a militant struggle by teachers, SUTEP, civil construction workers, FEN-TUP, FENDUP, the district of Huangugo and other sectors who continue to wage combative all-out strikes. The new cabinet has decided to isolate and viciously smash any type of mobilisation.

We cannot allow these strikes to be isolated and fail (as in the heroic cases of COPE, INDUMIL etc). We must

prevent APRA and the armed forces from consolidating their repressive anti-popular offensive and the mass movement from suffering a serious blow. In order to do this it is urgent to launch mass direct action.

The energy and initiative of the masses is squandered by mere parliamentary protests. Equally useless are attempts to conciliate through organising "commissions of enquiry". These are examples of the reformism which dominates the leaderships of the IU, the ANP and CGTP. These policies only undermine the militancy of the masses and thus strengthen reaction. Individual terrorism, provocative bombings and petit bourgeois militarism scorn direct action and get in its way.

Against the reactionary offensive we urge:

- The immediate calling of a militant 72 hour general strike with road blocks and mass demonstrations.
- The building of a national strike committee with delegates elected and recallable by rank and file assemblies which unite unions, peasant and popular organisations etc, to implement the general strike and mass actions.
- The ANP and the CGTP must effectively organise a mass mobilisation, a 72 hour general strike, a national strike committee and mass self-defence squads that can genuinely defend demonstrations against repression.

The CGTP and the ANP can no longer delay the calling of a strike. There is the serious risk that these strikes may decline because of isolation, by repression etc. To hope that the tide of popular struggle will pass or wane in order to then call a passive strike or day's "holiday" would be a betrayal of the thousands of workers, teachers and students who have mobilised and have confronted brutal repression every day. We warn against possible negotiated solutions or passive strikes. The leaders of the IU, ANP and CGTP must build a massive campaign using every available means of publicity in order to launch a national day of action. The mass mobilisations have scared those leaders who are waiting for the bourgeoisie to let them run the state

in 1990. This is a major factor which is conspiring against the success of these struggles. The immediate construction of a national strike committee by the ANP and CGTP must be part of the massive involvement of the rank and file in the organisation and de-bureaucratisation of this new mass upsurge.

Which way for the IU congress?

The first congress of this popular front is getting closer. The Barrantes wing is threatening a pro-Aprista split and to this end is forming a bloc with Velasquistas⁵, Sinamistas⁶ and right wing reformists. They propose a government of national unity not only with sections of the bourgeoisie but with all of its tendencies. A Barrantes government would totally defend the bourgeois state and would use anti-popular economic and repressive measures.

The "radical" wing does not represent a true break with Barrantes. From the PUM to the unifiers, they have made a pact with Velasquistas, Mufarech etc, have reduced their programme to one which can be tolerated by the ruling class and have provided a justification for the strategy of democratisation and reform of the state.

While Barrantes is prepared to grant major concessions to reaction and to the armed forces, his hangers on want to flirt with mass mobilisations in order the better to control them and to be in a better position to negotiate with the ruling class.

Our group, Poder Obrero, has no illusion that the IU can transform itself into a revolutionary organisation. However we are prepared to work with it in order that the many thousands of healthy activists that do believe in it can learn from their experiences. Class conscious militants in IU must struggle for:

- A democratic rank and file congress of the rank and file (one member, one vote) as against the vertical structure of the parties and of Barrantism.
- The launching of massive mobilisations, self defence squads, a militant general strike and for the establishment of the popular assemblies as the alternative centre of power.
- An anti-capitalist programme and government.
- The expulsion of the bourgeoisie and their mini parties (PSR, APS) from the front.

Poder Obrero

Faced with the Stalinist strategy of a class-collaborationist popular front, with petit bourgeois militarism and with reformist defence of the capitalist system and state, we raise the Leninist strategy of revolution and proletarian dictatorship. We struggle to transform the workers' movement and the assemblies into an alternative centre of power. We struggle for the construction of a Leninist-Trotskyist party and international.

The slogan of "an ANP government" is equivocal

During the first meeting of the ANP, Poder Obrero gave out a leaflet in which we posed the transformation of the ANP into a soviet-type organisation and thus an alternative centre of power. For this to take place the ANP has to be democratised, its delegates must be elected and recallable by means of rank and file assemblies. Proletarian organisations must be in the majority (and not merely one third of it), and it must take on the character of an organ of dual power. Although the ANP is an important step forward it has not been able to go further, because it is rigidly controlled by the leadership, is bureaucratic and politically limited. Its reformist leadership does not want the ANP to be the undisputed leadership of the oppressed people, a body which unites sections in struggle, which organises mass actions and which finally breaks with the bourgeoisie and raises itself as a dual power body.

To demand of a workers' organisation that it takes power when it is not an alternative centre of power with great authority over the majority of the masses, or a supreme soviet, is to breed illusions in reformism. All the more so when the organisation is led by a reformist bureaucracy.

The proletarian dictatorship is the opposite of a pro-bourgeois left government. To confuse a workers' and peasants' government with a reformist government will not help the transformation of the ANP into an alternative centre of power and the construction of a new anti-bureaucratic leadership which is capable of carrying out this transformation.

The fall of Morote

Someone designated by the police as being "Number 2 in Sendero Luminoso" has been captured. Many "leftists" have applauded this act. The forces of repression are using it as part of a pretext for making raids, stopping demonstrations etc.

As proletarian revolutionaries we are opposed to militarist Stalinism which replaces the socialist revolution with the assassination of ordinary people, uniformed soldiers and workers' leaders, the destruction of workplaces and bomb throwing provocations. They are searching for a new "democratic" republic that defends the national bourgeoisie, they

carry out attacks on workers' democracy and they intend to subordinate the proletariat to the authoritarian project of a petit bourgeois party.

Despite all this we cannot take the side of the bourgeois state and its murderers. We do not grant to this state the right to judge or condemn Morote. Only the labour movement has this right. We demand that Morote's life and physical and mental health be protected.

The only way to smash such methods of torture and massacre is by the mobilisation of the masses and the proletarian revolution.

Poder Obrero

(Leaflet during July general strike)

The latest Aprista attack shows that the government is increasing food shortages and intends to plunge the masses into the deepest misery. The "increases" in wages are useless since the rise in the cost of living is even higher, and the only way the APRA has of imposing its starvation package is by being more repressive and murderous. In practice we are living in a camouflaged state of siege, of growing militarisation where the raising of any popular protest is brutally crushed. The forces of repression are continuing their campaign of mass murder and the extermination of entire villages, such as at Cayara, Accomarca etc, killing students at Sanmarquino Arrasco, and viciously attacking the marches of workers in struggle with bullets, bombs and imprisonment (e.g. SUTEP, INDUMIL, COPE etc—heroic strikes which did not end in victory).

This shows that APRA is in close collaboration with the military high command and businessmen. It depends for each reactionary offensive on the help of the neo-liberal right (FREDEMO), which is as much for the repression of the workers' and popular movement as APRA. The only thing which divides these bourgeois parties is *how* to exploit and impoverish the workers.

This is why APRA, the military and the bourgeoisie combine their forces to attack those they really fear. This is why the workers' and peoples' movement is increasingly on the rise. The mobilisations, strikes and marches reply to the reactionaries' attacks with even greater force, and show that the only way to struggle is by initiating and organising mass direct action.

The national two day stoppage of the 19-20 July is the outcome of the struggle of rank and file workers who are breaking from the leaders of the CGTP who for a long time have been holding back such an approach. In doing so they are acting as understudies to the reformist leaders of the IU-ANP, in order to prove to the bourgeoisie that it should let them run the state in 1990. They immobilise and frustrate the progress of struggles, resulting in the isolation of heroic strikes such as that of SUTEP. This strike was betrayed by the reformist and conciliationist leadership of Patria Roja. They derailed the mobilisations and called off the strike without any real respect for the rank and file, who were abandoned in the midst of a struggle and of hunger marches. This resulted in further repression of the teachers, such as the crushing of the union branch of SUTEP in the Department of San Martin and the imprisonment of more than one hundred teachers. We warn the workers that they should have no confidence in those bureaucrats who seek only a passive national stoppage for self-publicity, and who will not organise anything that is based on the rank and file. This strategy aids their conspiracy against any successful outcome to the struggle.

On the other hand we must clearly indicate the provocative and opportunist nature of military terrorism which is trying to climb on the back of the national stoppage, when it is and always has been their practice to denigrate the organisations and struggles of the masses.

In order to strengthen the struggle and prevent new betrayals, the rank and file must build, in every zone,

councils of action with delegates elected by, and recallable, to assemblies drawn from all sectors of workers, shanty-town dwellers, peasants, the unemployed, housewives etc. They must organise self-defence pickets against the repression and struggle for a basic living wage with a sliding scale. They must fight for a sliding scale of hours of work, the democratic distribution of land to the poor peasants. They must organise self defence and workers' councils to smash militarisation, and demand the expropriation without compensation of the whole of the bourgeoisie and workers' control over production and distribution. At the same time we demand that the CGTP-ANP constitute a national strike committee which will unite workers' unions and peasants' and popular organisations to organise the strikes and mass actions.

The workers are counting on new sectors entering the fray (miners, CITE, the village of Uyacali etc): we therefore fight for committees of struggle and assemblies which serve to strengthen and broaden the strike, and in order that these organisations can be developed an alternative workers' and people's power. This is the only way to really transform the ANP, from the base up, into an alternative centre of power. This would mean a break from its current bureaucratic and leadership-based character which places it at the service of reformism. We have to struggle for its revolutionary transformation so that it can organise the multi-millioned masses where the proletarian organisations would be in the majority; launch mass committees of self-defence; break with the bourgeoisie and pose itself as an alternative worker-peasant government. This is the central goal which the activities of the masses must have in the national stoppage of the 19-20 July.

To set the masses on this course is the task of revolutionaries who struggle to realise the Leninist-Trotskyist strategy of revolution and proletarian dictatorship.

- 19-20 July: for a militant national strike with mass mobilisations, marches and blockades.
- For the formation of a national strike committee which will unite the rank and file in struggle and whose delegates will come directly from the ranks of the assemblies. Only in this way will it be possible to build a powerful mass strike which will counteract the bureaucrats' tendency to betray the demands of the ranks behind their backs.
- Impose a minimum living wage with a sliding scale of wages (wages that covers the cost of living and adjust to inflation), a sliding scale of hours (distribution of work among the population on the basis of their ability to work), direct distribution of produce from the countryside to the city and full respect for the liberties and life of the exploited.
- Against repression and militarisation: mass pickets for self-defence responsible to rank and file organisations.
- Build popular assemblies and pickets for strikes and self defence in each shanty town and locality.
- Neither petit bourgeois guerillism nor reformist electoralism; workers and peasants must take the power, de-bureaucratising the ANP and transforming it into an alternative centre of power.

Theses on nuclear power

Passed at the MRCI delegate conference, September 1988

1. For Marxists the goal of communism entails the fullest development of the productive forces so that the material necessities of life are automatically available to all and not only to a tiny minority: the characteristic feature of all class societies.

Capitalism, as the highest and most progressive form of class society based on private property, has witnessed the greatest quantitative and qualitative development of the productive forces, based on the application of science and technology. This development has not been an even and continuous process due to capitalism's contradictory laws of motion. Its development is motivated, not by planned satisfaction of human need, but by the capitalist class' competitive compulsion to increase the rate of exploitation and offset the tendential fall in the profit rate.

Thus cyclical crises, longer periods of stagnation or expansion, wars and revolutionary upheavals have given the development of technology in particular and the forces of production in general, an erratic, convulsive character. Successive scientific breakthroughs and their technological application within capitalism have both raised the productivity of human labour (and with it the quantity and quality of material goods) and intensified the exploitation of the labouring masses (and with it the inequalities of distribution).

The imperialist epoch has sharpened these contradictions. The productive forces have, in certain periods, expanded in certain countries and certain sectors of industry in a manner unimaginable during capitalism's youthful epoch. In other periods they have stagnated and have even been physically destroyed (mass unemployment, mass extermination during World War Two, etc) as never before. The epoch, as a whole, because it is the epoch of monopoly and world economy, has proceeded by way of enormous convulsions, antagonisms, sharp revolutionary and counter-revolutionary periods, of division and re-division of the world market.

It should therefore be obvious that scientific advances and any technological fruits that follow these advances are indelibly marked by the nature of the epoch and the period in which they occur. Electricity, radio, micro-chips, nuclear fission, have all revolutionised industry, communication and energy production. However, each scientific advance does not automatically find its most widespread application under capitalism, particularly in the imperialist epoch. The cramping nature of private property and the relations of production under capitalism restrict the application of new technologies to within the limits of what it is profitable so to do.

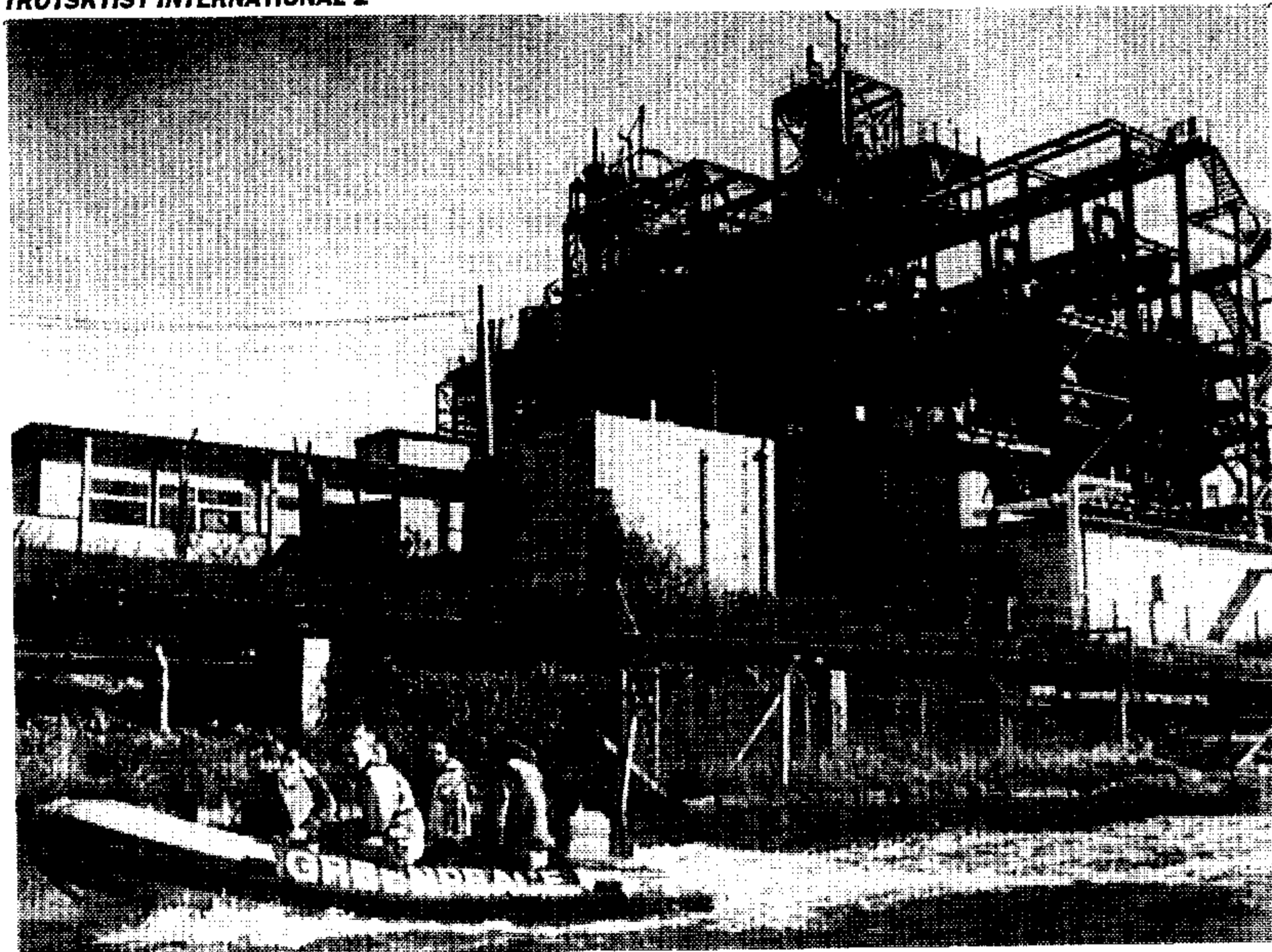
The widespread application of computerisation was unthinkable until after World War Two with its enhanced conditions for profitable investment. On the other hand, the scientific breakthrough in robotics is incapable of widespread application in the renewed period of imperialist crises. The expansion of the civilian nuclear power industry in the 1950s and 1960s was itself based upon an optimistic view of the continued future of profitable accumulation, the expansion of production and the ensuing demand for energy. The impetus behind the massive construction programme of the middle '70s was also rooted in the conjunctural "oil crisis" and the attempt on the part of particular imperialisms, such as France, to achieve a strategically "independent" energy policy and also in the need of the capitalists to ensure a return on earlier investments, i.e. "production for production's sake". But the slow down in growth, sinking oil and coal prices and the two generalised recessions have closed the door on the economies of scale envisaged and required if the promise of "too cheap to meter" energy was to materialise.

In this context, with only 13% of the world's energy provided by nuclear power, the "revolutionising" character of nuclear energy is still to be proven.

2. If the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is between the limitless expansive powers of socialised production (and on this basis the unlimited ingenuity of science and its potential for consciously controlling nature), on the one hand, and the cramping mode of private appropriation on the other, then this contradiction gives rise to others.

Production for profit rather than for human need means that capitalist production is also wasteful and destructive on a scale unimaginable before its birth. It is wasteful of the means of production themselves. It ruthlessly squanders the living forces of production—human labour. It also "masters" nature in a destructive and thoughtless manner. These phenomena were visible even in the earliest period of capitalism where booms, crises and wars saw the wanton destruction of machinery, of workers' health and lives and the environment in both industrial and agricultural areas.

The working class was and is obliged to resist the destructive effects of blind capitalist production on itself and its environment. After its constitution as a modern proletariat, i.e. after the disappearance of the last admixture of the old artisan class, the working class realised the impossibility of halting or reversing the introduction of machinery (Luddism) and adopted a



Greenpeace activists

different strategy, most clearly and scientifically expressed by Marx and Engels. It learnt to fight, not large industry based on machinery itself, but its destructive effects on the working class and its environment. This meant struggles to increase safety at work, to enact legal measures against environmental pollution, to prevent the sale of commodities injurious to health, etc. As the scale and universality of capitalist production has increased on a world scale, so has its destructive potential with regard to human life and nature. But the struggles of the working class over safety over nearly two centuries have succeeded in restraining and reversing countless dangerous elements of capitalism.

The class struggle has led to the intervention of the bourgeois state in the form of labour protection laws, factory inspectors and rules on pollutants. Nonetheless, these safety measures were introduced by the capitalists as answers to one or other of the following factors, or a combination of them; firstly, the pressure and organisation of the working class combined with attempts by the bourgeoisie to buy support from sections of the workers in return for "social peace"; secondly, the safety and security of their own machinery and factories; thirdly the attempt by capitalist monopolies to knock out their rivals through expensive safety measures, hours of work etc, in the knowledge that they could not follow suit; fourthly, the need to avoid working class organisation.

Basically, all this changes nothing in the nature of the mode of production and its destructive effects on the workers and on the exchange with nature. The rapacious drive of capital raises this problem to ever higher levels. Because of this, safety cannot be left in the hands of the capitalists or their state. Because of its material needs and its position in the process of production only the working class can decide on and install real safety

standards. For this it must attack and defeat the capitalists' decisive criteria, the driving forces of profit—private property and capitalist competition.

The scale of the new dangers in the nuclear and chemical industries require a higher stage of struggle than most previous ones. This fight poses not only legal changes within capitalism but a struggle to rest control of these industries themselves from the control of the capitalists. These struggles for safety are not simply immediate or "democratic" but are transitional ones; ones that can only be fully successful to the extent that they join up with and help lead to the abolition of capitalist ownership of the means of production itself.

Thus a qualitatively new technology like nuclear power necessarily brings with it a qualitative increase in the danger to humanity and this can only be met by a qualitatively different combination of tactics; namely the struggle for workers' control as a bridge to the overthrow of capitalism.

3. It is characteristic of the epoch in which this industry has developed that all the contradictions latent within this energy source have reached their sharpest pitch. Thus, in the political and economic sense, the military application of nuclear fission functioned as a kind of midwife for its civil application. Without the development of nuclear weapons it is possible that nuclear power stations might never have been developed to the point of production and that state investment might have flowed into other energy technologies.

Historically, the main purpose in the construction of reactors was the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons and the existence of a nuclear power industry facilitates the possession of nuclear weapons. But the lack of such an industry is not an insurmountable obstacle to any state determined to develop nuclear weap-

ons. Even where the development of nuclear fission took place from primarily economic considerations (as, for example, in the Federal Republic of Germany) this was a by-product of its military application. At the present time, the industry is still closely tied to imperialist military needs which is particularly clearly shown by the production of plutonium in the case of fast breeders (e.g. Super Phoenix in France).

As a technology and as an industry nuclear power cannot be abstracted from capitalist social relations any more than any other industry which involves risks to the health and safety of large numbers, or which, as with industries such as aerospace and electronics, are intimately linked to imperialist war preparations.

4. We reject the claims of the "left critics" of nuclear power who either assert that the industry is intrinsically and irremediably unsafe or who hold that a nuclear power industry should only be allowed to operate under a healthy workers' state.

The first position is metaphysical. By what criteria is the industry deemed beyond recall? By what scientific judgement? The revolutionary party has no special authority to determine competing claims in the separate fields of natural science. The revolutionary party makes no claim to "command" in the field of the separate natural sciences.

This means subjecting the experts' opinions to a rigorous test in front of the labour movement in conditions where commercial and state secrecy can be eroded and eventually abolished. Only in this process can the dishonest hirelings of the bourgeoisie or the petit bourgeois pessimists be exposed.

Only in front of a tribunal that has no vested interest in continuing capitalist recklessness, on the one hand, and on the other has no *a priori* commitment to closing down nuclear power stations, can the question of operation or closure be clarified. Only in the course of workers' inspection and through these tribunals can the relationship of the dangers of nuclear fission (in normal operation, the safety limits for radiation, the storage of atomic waste, the handling of plutonium, likelihood of accidents) to the political and military tasks and needs of the working class and the technical alternatives to nuclear power be decided.

The objections of ecologist critics, like the assertions of the proponents of nuclear power ("nuclear power is safe cheap", "there is a threat of an energy gap", "there are no alternatives") must be proven. In this process the interests of the working class must come to the fore. In this sense workers' control is a school for the planned economy.

We reject, too, the view that the technological fruits of science in the form of the nuclear power industry is in itself reactionary, that is, it can only be used for reactionary purposes. The position that technology which is linked to militarism or, more generally, the offspring of the imperialist epoch, is therefore reactionary technology ignores the contradictory development of technology and again abstracts from the social use of technology under definite class relations, (do we reject radar because it is a by-product of militarism?). However, the opposite conclusion of those who believe in the progressive nature of nuclear power, that the results of the

nuclear industry are, "in themselves" progressive must also be rejected.

Under capitalism it has been the struggle between competing capitals and between capital and wage labour which produced successive waves of new technology. The quest for higher productivity on the one hand, the determination of workers to resist death, degradation and mutilation on the other, has resulted in refinements and replacements of technology. Competition and class conflict have been the far from impartial handmaidens of scientific development. The nuclear power industry is not immune from this law of history!

5. What then are the responsibilities of the "vanguard of the vanguard" in this area? We are the memory of the class, we seek to embody its historical, generalised experience. We do not abandon our responsibility to lead. We must convince workers that the bourgeoisie is a reactionary class whose contempt for the future is proven by its carelessness in regard to the dangerous effects of the nuclear industry. We should not seek to minimise the dangers of nuclear power nor exaggerate the preparedness of the bourgeoisie to deal with a major accident in the industry. The record of minor accidents, of near "melt-downs" over the last thirty years in Europe and America, the deaths and ecological destruction from Chernobyl and lack of concern about the long term future of high level waste disposal are proof of this. A class which is conditioned by its frantic concern for next years' profit ledgers cannot be trusted with the future of humanity hundreds and thousands of years from now!

Against this record we must set down the equally terrible record of many other industries; of Bhopal with its 3,000 deaths and 200,000 serious injuries; of "Chernobasle" in Switzerland which has killed off 200 miles of the Upper Rhine. The opponents of nuclear power do not call for the total closure of the chemical industries, but merely an enquiry or its "restructuring". This indicates an extension of the genuine fear millions feel about the dangers of nuclear power, which in part stem from a grasp of the horrendous consequences of nuclear war.

The safety of workers in the industry and the safety of future generations of working people mesh and find a common focus in the struggle to impose safety standards within the nuclear power industry. Here we should remember that it is not the case that the party leads and the class follows; the dialectic of the relationship means that the class, or this section of it, must also teach the party how to concretise its demands out of the living experience of daily life. Thus our safety proposals in the struggle for workers' control must have a provisional character; the final word on what is an "acceptable level" of radiation contact, what structural improvements/containment vessels are adequate etc, cannot be settled now by our propaganda.

6. Those "left critics" who want a shut down now and an opening-up under a healthy workers' state have effectively abandoned the method of transitional politics. The struggle now to improve and impose safety measures upon the bosses pushes forward new scientific and technological developments. Under capitalism if our masters wish to retain their cherished industry then under the hammer blows of this struggle they will be

forced to refine and improve their industry. If they decide that the cost of concessions is such an intolerable pressure upon their profit margins that they stop building new plants or close down existing ones then we will fight to stop them closing these plants if such action would be at the expense of the workers in the industry or the mass of consumers. We are not blind and wilful optimists; we are revolutionary realists. We do not say that a safe industry is compatible with capitalism. Cheapening the technology of safety, bringing nearer the day of nuclear fusion, or closing down certain plants—all these are possible outcomes of struggle. But whatever the case, the fight for safety prepares the ground for the solution of the many-layered problems associated with the nuclear fission industry just as the struggle for workers' control in that industry helps prepare the ground for a workers' state itself.

The struggle for transitional politics, for workers' control, builds a bridge to the consciousness of workers in the industry. These workers are not bosses' agents. Great pressure is exerted on them, however, by the fear of unemployment and by the bureaucratic union leaders and reformist parties. These workers combine a respect for the fears of the class as a whole with a determination to hold onto their jobs in an age of mass unemployment (and an age of scepticism about the ability of trade union leaders to find them "alternative employment"). But this method also builds a bridge between the workers in the industry and the working class community at large. In short, it unites the working class against a common enemy.

Of course, our programme for the nuclear power industry is not guided by sectional interests. We cannot sacrifice the interests of the whole class to those of one section. Just as we will not tail the spontaneous opposition to nuclear power of many British miners or the demand for alternative production from the German KWU (power station union) and engineers' union IG Metall, and works' councils, because these express chauvinist sectional interests or concern for the profits of "their" capitalists, so we cannot allow nuclear power workers' complacency about safety prevent a vigorous campaign for workers' control over safety.

The "left critics" are imbued with a two-fold pessimism. On the one hand they reject that there are remaining reserves within this mode of production for technological advance; on the other hand, they have not fully broken with the pessimism of the petit bourgeois opponents of nuclear power who have long spurned the revolutionary capacity of the working class.

Apart from this the whole history of the anti-nuclear movement and of the Greens has negatively confirmed the correctness of our approach—that we must proceed from the powerful role of the working class in the sphere of production, rather than from the sphere of reproduction, because the workers in the nuclear power stations are doubly affected by the dangers, as producers and as inhabitants. By contrast the potential of the *petit bourgeois* opponents of nuclear power remains limited to more or less powerless protests (demos, sporadic occupations) and inner- and extra-parliamentary details (referendums, petitions, resolutions, negotiations over parliamentary support, coalitions). But despite our criticisms of the political and organizational weak-

nesses of this movement we call on the workers to defend it against the bourgeois repressive apparatus. In certain circumstances it is possible to have a united front with the petit bourgeois movements in pursuit of limited objectives (for example the demand for a workers inquiry, the fight to introduce safety measures, the abolition of certain reactionary laws or the immediate closure of an installation where a major accident has occurred) to be fought for by direct action including demonstrations and strikes. Even during joint actions with such movements communists never cease to criticise their basic positions and methods of action, seeking to orientate them to a working class position.

Whilst we support the democratic right for popular initiatives and a referendum against the bourgeois state we do not agitate for one on the question of closure of the nuclear industry as a whole.

Should either the anti-nuclear movement or the bourgeois state call one, we should campaign for a working class abstention since we can neither support closure in principle nor give confidence to bourgeois ownership and management which either a "yes" or a "no" vote would imply. Of course we would use the campaign to agitate for workers control, a workers' enquiry etc.

7. Our action programme for nuclear power must start from a recognition that the issues involved and the struggles that occur are international in character. We reject the national-centred and myopic view of certain centrists whose propaganda and programme starts and finishes with a concern for their national situations.

The struggle in the semi-colonial world has a contradictory aspect all of its own. On the one side there is the need and the urgent necessity to satisfy their energy requirements. On the other hand, an element of the anti-imperialist struggles in Pakistan, India, South East Asia or Latin America involves a fight against reactionary governments conspiring with multinationals who find no market in the imperialist countries (e.g. the USA) for their (often unsafe and out of date) technology. The fight for stringent safety measures and workers' control in the construction of the plant is doubly important in these countries.

8. The transitional programme for the nuclear power industry begins with the fight to change the defensive, economic struggle of the nuclear power workers into the struggle for workers' control, not just of "health and safety" but of production in the plant. This assumes immediate relevance where accidents occur inside the plants. In this context we fight for:

- Workers' control over safety, radiation levels, manning levels etc. The right to determine partial or full shut downs and closures where workers conclude that a plant or element of it is unsafe. Both in the struggle to win workers' control and the struggle to implement it day to day, the weapons of strike action, occupation, emergency cover only under workers' control, leading to temporary "shut downs" until demands are met, will be crucial. This does not coincide however with the shut down strategy of the anti-nuclear movement.
- Workers' control over the construction of proposed

plants. An end to the system of contract and temporary work (cleaning squads) and their transformation into permanent employees. For power and building workers to fight for the implementation of acceptable levels of safety provision, building specification at all stages of planning and in the supervision of construction.

- Representation of all sections of the workforce in a factory committee as a plant based organ of struggle.
- Structural improvements in the housing of reactors.
- Lowering of safe radiation contact levels, and of emission levels. For health and safety inspectors to be accountable to the workers.
- An end to business/state secrecy in and outside the plant. Bosses' secrecy and workers' safety are incompatible!
- Workers involved in the specifically military aspects of the process to struggle for workers' control over the process.
- Full lay-off pay when temporary closures occur, for alternative jobs with no loss of pay if the workers decide on closure of a plant.

The central element of our programme however is the demand for a workers' inquiry. The demand is applicable both generally in the nuclear power industry of a state or region, and specifically when new reactors, dumping sites, reprocessing plants etc, are proposed, or when an accident occurs. The main purpose of the workers' inquiry is to unite the nuclear power workers, the communities affected, the organised workers' movements, youth and progressive sections of the middle class around the struggle for safety in the disposal of waste, to impose workers' control and a veto in the proposed plants, on the process of construction. Should the workers inquiry find types of reactor or dumping inherently unsafe, or unsafe as planned by the capitalists then the struggle becomes one to shut down or prevent the building of them. In this struggle the battle needs to be generalised to the class as a whole. We fight for mass strike action as the key to this. Whilst we will take part in mass physical confrontations and occupations of sites we fight to win the best elements in this to working class strike action.

The demand for a workers' inquiry, whilst placed on the capitalists and the state in the first instance, may also take the form of first winning the workers' movement to the inquiry, then fighting to implement the demands of the inquiry. In either case it should not be allowed to be an enquiry of pro-nuclear trade union bureaucrats or petit bourgeois environmentalists but *centrally* of the rank and file representatives of plant workers, building workers, working class women's groups and representatives of the working class communities affected by local plants. The process of inquiry should mobilise proven pro-working class scientists and technicians as advisers.

9. The reformist parties try to look both ways on the question of nuclear power. They are forced to give expression to the genuine fears of their supporters and yet are intent on reassuring the nuclear power chiefs that a future government of theirs will not impose harsh conditions on it or impede its plans. We must fight for the following:

- Full compliance with the demands of a workers' inquiry. Recognition of the right of workers' committees to veto management decisions in the industry.
- An end to state secrecy in the industry. Open up the records of the Department of Energy to union inspection.
- Repeal the Official Secrets Act. Disband the Atomic Energy Constabulary.
- Full trade union rights for nuclear power workers. Tear up all no-strike agreements.
- No permission for new plants until a labour movement inquiry, including representatives of local working class communities, is satisfied that their demands for safety will be met.
- Full and immediate compensation for the victims of accidents whether in the plants or in the community, whatever the source of contamination.
- Nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of all private sector contractors in the industry (e.g. Babcocks, Taylor Woodrow, GEC).
- A massive programme of research in medicine, nuclear fusion, alternative energy sources and safety.

10. Relations in the degenerate(d) workers' states are characterised by imperialist encirclement and the domination of a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic caste. The effective expulsion of the working class from actual exercise of power constantly threatens the pre-conditions for the building of socialism. This leads to the desperate attempts of the bureaucrats to catch up, economically, with the developed imperialist countries and to adopt their technologies unseen and at the cost of the highest security.

In the USSR the nuclear power industry, while not subject to the laws of profitability, has been expanded in the 1960s and 1970s under the direction of a bureaucracy that has cut back on safety standards. As the bureaucracy diverted its oil and gas resources into a means of earning hard foreign currency it built plant at break-neck speed, on the cheap. The consequences are to be seen in Chernobyl. Bureaucratic mismanagement has been aided and abetted by cracking down on dissent and even blocks the means of communication within the bureaucracy itself, making it particularly inept at taking effective preventative action. Chernobyl shows that the Stalinist usurpers must be overthrown by a political revolution if nuclear power is to be harnessed in the transition to socialism. As a consequence we fight in the USSR for:

- An end to bureaucratic secrecy. For workers' inspection and management in the entire nuclear industry. Legitimate defence requirements to be decided by workers' committees.
- For new towns, amenities and compensation for all present and future victims of accidents such as Chernobyl.
- For a full discussion of the plan for energy provision at all levels of the trade unions and a fight for workers' control of the plan.
- Given the anti-Soviet Union propaganda of Thatcher and Reagan, who deflect thereby from the dangers of their own nuclear power industries we must fight to expose their hypocrisy.

From the archives of Trotskyism

How the French Communist Party betrayed the 1948 miners' strike

Introduction

We reprint here a 1949 article from *Quatrième Internationale*, the French language journal of the Fourth International (FI) on the 1948 French miners' strike. During the strike the miners were subjected to murderous repression organised by Jules Moch, the Socialist Party Minister of the Interior. But responsibility for the strike's defeat lay with the French Communist Party (PCF) led trade union, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which consistently refused to spread the action throughout the French working class. Troops and CRS riot police were sent into the pits, strikers were killed, a wave of strike action shook the whole of France, but still the CGT leadership refused to act. Battered and bloody, the miners were forced back to work after 56 days. This was to be the last national miners' strike in France for 15 years, and marked a significant defeat for the French working class.

The article clearly shows the treacherous role of the CGT leadership in trying to limit the strike and prevent it from spreading throughout the working class. The reason for this lay in the PCF's desire to pressurise French imperialism into adopting a "friendly" attitude

towards the USSR, a line which was pushed by Moscow in order to try and deal with the growing economic and military pressure from US imperialism.

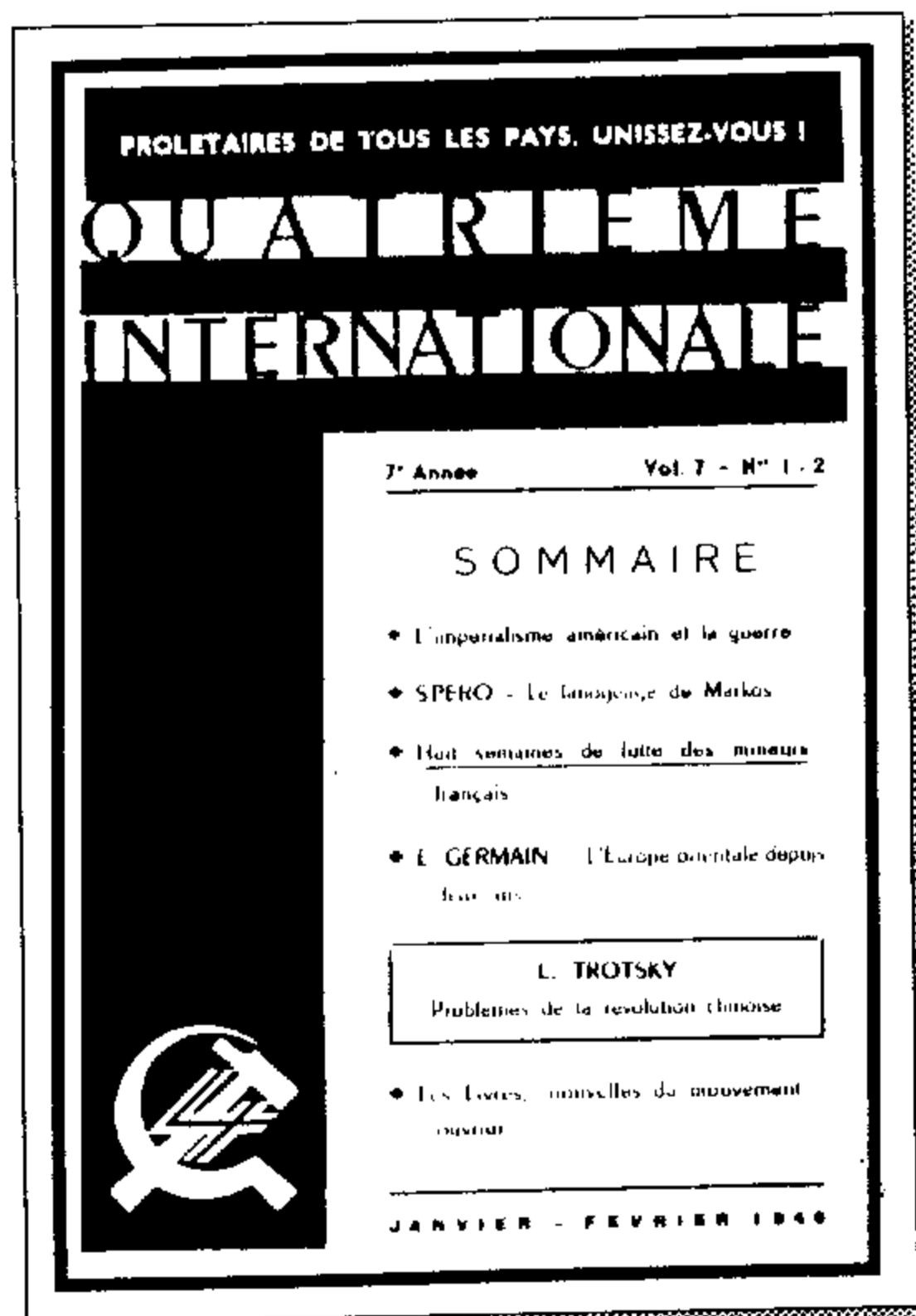
The PCF had already shown their preparedness to curb workers' struggles in order to act as intermediaries between the bourgeoisie and the Moscow bureaucracy. At the end of the Nazi occupation in 1944 they argued for armed resistance fighters to lay down their guns, under the slogan "One state, one police, one army"! Faced with de Gaulle's project to set himself up as a new Bonaparte, this policy was extremely dangerous. Although French imperialism was not to find de Gaulle's services necessary until 1958, as the article shows, this threat was an important factor on the French political scene.

Between 1944 and April 1947, the PCF were in government together with the Socialist Party (SFIO) and the bourgeois MRP. Miraculously, during this same period there were no major strikes! Under their slogan "Work hard first, then ask for concessions", the PCF did their best to stop workers' struggles in order to "win the battle of production"—for the ruling class!

In April 1947, a massive strike wave over wage levels, initiated by Trotskyists (or "Gaullist-Trotskyite-anarchists" as the PCF called them!) in the Renault Billancourt car plant, swept the country. When the movement reached this scale the Stalinists were unable any longer to condemn it. Now the government had a pretext to get rid of the PCF ministers. In addition the cold war had just broken out. On 12 March Truman declared his doctrine of "resistance to subversion" and CP ministers were expelled from the Italian, Belgian and French governments—the latter on 5 May 1947. Once free of government office, the Stalinists in their turn were able to adopt a more "muscular" approach to the class struggle, in line with a new "left" line from Moscow which coincided with the recreation of an organisation of CPs; the Cominform. However, as the FI article correctly argues, this "left" turn did not contradict their treacherous role in the miners' strike.

This period also saw the development of divisions within the French labour movement which still exist today. Following the "Liberation" of France by the Allied imperialists, there was one major union federation, the CGT. Although this supposedly represented the fusion of the Stalinist and social democratic labour bureaucracies, the PCF increasingly got the upper hand inside the apparatus, controlling over 80% of regional unions by 1946.

Following the 1947 strikes, two important splits



weakened the CGT. The teachers' federation, the FEN, split at the beginning of 1948. More damagingly, a group of right wing social democrats, with the support of US imperialism, split to form "Force Ouvrière", a new union federation which was to become an important rival to the CGT. The other major union formation at the time was the Christian union, the CFTC.

A split labour movement is a weakened labour movement. This is clearly revealed by the article when it perceptively discusses the likely effect of the defeat of the strike and the impact of different union federations on the French workers. The CGT suffered particularly badly. Its claimed membership (grossly inflated) slumped from nearly six million in 1946 to three million in 1950. This period thus lay the basis for the extremely weak levels of unionisation which exist in France today. The article raises the question of whether a mass union movement could really be said to exist in France after the miners' strike. The situation today is far worse, with only 10-15% of workers in a union. And yet, in the 1980s as in the 1940s, in the absence of an organised revolutionary alternative, the union leaders are still able to lead and betray strikes. Then as now, the question of

dealing with the influence of the union leaders is crucial.

Finally, the article is a striking lesson in the importance of transitional demands in the class struggle: raising demands and forms of organisation which lead the working class from their current levels of consciousness to confront the question of power. The general strike is a vital weapon in the revolutionary arsenal, as this article shows. Faced with bloody state repression, the situation was clearly ripe for a general strike against the government's use of the force and against wage restraint. This demand, coupled with the argument for rank and file control of the strike, was at the centre of the activity of the French section of the Fourth International, the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI). Their intervention shows clearly that whatever the later degeneration of the FI, at this stage they were clearly able to use the method of Lenin and Trotsky in mass struggles. For the MRCI, this is the revolutionary heritage we claim, this is the method we seek to apply in the class struggle today.

The article is taken from *Quatrième Internationale* Vol. 7 Nos 1-2, January/February 1949, pp 14-19.
Translation by Billy Cashman.

A general strike betrayed

The eight week struggle of the French miners

For eight weeks the French miners led a strike which constitutes one of the most heroic pages in the history of the proletariat of this country. They showed extraordinary combativity and remarkable tenacity in the teeth of unbridled government opposition openly aided and abetted by reformist and Christian trade unions. This struggle of almost 400,000 workers, under a Stalinist leadership, which exploited their combativity but led them into a cul-de-sac, can only really be understood within the general development of the class struggle in France.

The current decline of Western Europe—its loss of political and economic power—is most keenly felt in France. Since the events of 1934, which put an end to classic democracy, there have been a series of zigzags between far right and far left, without any long-term stability. Big capital has not been able to forge a reactionary fascist weapon in order to impose its "strong state", whilst the proletariat remains trapped within the framework of capitalist society. At the time of the "Liberation" in 1944-45 it was the Stalinists who, quite literally, set the capitalist state back on its feet. They also sent the workers—who believed in "their" ministers—back to the factories to "produce" . . . more surplus-value. The

masses, whose standard of living was constantly falling, began to shake themselves free of the Stalinist yoke in the spring of 1947. Strikes multiplied from April onwards, reaching a peak in November/December. With the creation of the Cominform the Stalinists had meanwhile made a "left" turn. They nevertheless brought about the failure of the movement by the slogans, the forms of organisation and the tactics they put forward.

1948 began with the "Force Ouvrière" trade union split and with a combined government and bosses offensive on the living standards and working conditions of the workers. But the defeat of 1947 had not deeply affected the resilience of the proletariat and the ever-increasing difficulties of everyday life—rising prices—stimulated the workers' resistance. Initially there were small movements, with no apparent unity; then more massive resistance began. The government's use of the CRS to eject strikers from the Bergougnan factory at Clermont-Ferrand immediately roused the whole town. This became the starting point for nationwide workers' resistance.

The workers' counter-offensive grew in strength. From the end of September it was clear that the masses were on the move. The previous year's defeat and trade

union divisions were objective factors which hindered the generalisation of the struggles and their development into an all-out confrontation. In these conditions, the role of the workers' leadership was crucial. A revolutionary leadership which had the support of a wide section of the working class would have used a massive campaign amongst the workers to popularise the common goals of all sectors, and would also have argued for the need to prepare for an all-out struggle as the only means of achieving these demands. On the one hand, such a policy would have won the support of the most backward layers, preparing them for battle. On the other hand it would also have to some extent inhibited premature actions in certain industries. The demand for a general strike would have been both necessary and appropriate when key industries had been drawn into struggle by the movement or following decisive events in the class struggle. The workers' defensive struggles could then have been transformed into a major offensive for workers' and peasants' power.

In France it is the Stalinist leadership which had, and still has, most authority over the working class and its key layers. This leadership had a completely different perspective and strategy. It never dreamed of a struggle for the conquest of power by the workers; its aim was to exert pressure on the bourgeoisie to accept a particular policy. The crux of this policy, as defined by the Central Committee of the PCF which met at Gennevilliers in May 1948, was to be a new foreign policy orientation on the part of French capitalism. The workers' movement was to be used by the Stalinists to obtain this. The rhythm of the class struggle was ignored: in order to exert the kind of pressure necessary, the Stalinist leaders needed a series of separate movements, one after the other or even simultaneously, but never co-ordinated in order to overthrow capitalist rule. Hence the tactic of "accelerator strikes" with the Stalinist leadership putting the brakes on here, stepping on the gas there. The key part in this war of attrition with the bourgeoisie was to be played by the miners' strike.

Like any tactic of merely harassing an enemy who is squaring up for a decisive fight (as far as its own forces will permit), it was bound to achieve the opposite of what it intended.

The beginning of the strike and its aims

The authority the Stalinists enjoyed over the miners was particularly strong. During the "Liberation" they had nationalised the mines (nonetheless, the former shareholders still drew an annual dividend of F1.5 billion) and had secured improved conditions for the miners compared to other categories of workers, because of the need to increase productivity. Thorez, demagogue that he was, played on his past as a miner and went as often as possible to speak to the miners—often in their own dialect—in an effort to persuade them to "produce, produce and produce" more coal. French coal output grew rapidly, but, as in all countries, productivity remained below 1938 levels. Despite receiving certain privileges the miners, like all workers, were underpaid. Their most important demands were for a minimum wage (fixed by the Stalinists at a laughable F15,000), guaranteed purchasing power and increased retire-

ment pensions. Added to this were demands opposing the decrees of the Socialist minister, Lacoste, who had given the bosses' state a system of sanctions attacking the conditions which the miners had gained through years of struggle.

In order to give the movement a narrow sectional character, the Stalinists prioritised the demands against Lacoste's decrees. The demands which the miners shared with the working class as a whole were relegated to points three and four. In a vote prior to the beginning of the movement, an overwhelming majority of miners came out in favour of the strike. The reformist and Christian leaders didn't dare to openly oppose it at that time; they declared themselves in favour of a two-day strike and then left it to the workers in their unions to respond whatever way they wanted to. From the beginning of the movement—which embraced all the miners from every coalfield in France—the working class understood that this was their struggle. Even though the strike was launched without taking into account developments in other industries, its very existence and the hardships it underwent hastened the development of a class-wide movement of French workers.

The shootings

The strike began on 4 October and progressed with apparent calm for about ten days. But behind the scenes, government manoeuvres and preparations were going ahead. When they sent troops into mining areas, the Miners' Federation decided on a 24 hour withdrawal of safety cover. The government used this as a pretext for sending its forces of repression to clear pits occupied by the striking miners. So the Miners' Federation completely withdrew safety cover. Bloody clashes were predictable.

The government's CRS could not simply go ahead with widespread attacks. They were concentrated at a few particular points, at first overlooking the principal coalfields of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, because its forces were in fact limited, despite their efforts to use them to the maximum. It was in the Gard and more especially the Loire that the government sought to make its mark. This attack, concentrated on a few areas, began to arouse a vigorous response from the miners.

Miners who had been thrown out of the pits in turn chased out the CRS detachments. Elements of civil war were beginning to develop. The miners held on to their territory, taking hundreds of CRS prisoner, including, top of the list, a colonel. In several places the CRS fled, abandoning their equipment (trucks, etc). An arrest in Pas-de-Calais led to the occupation of the sub-prefect's offices in Béthune. Despite his boasts, the Minister of the Interior, Jules Moch, great strategist that he was, had failed in his goal of "ensuring safety" and "the right to work" without using force. Faithful to the (social democratic) tradition of Noske, if not Jaurés, he had no hesitation in giving the order to open fire. Newspapers and radio spread lies to sow panic and, on 19 October, the shootings began. Miners were killed in the Loire and the Gard; there were many arrests and a regime of terror was mounted which banned meetings and attacked those who left their homes. Troops occupied important strategic points. The government's campaign took on

the character of a military operation: each day a communiqué indicated the number of square kilometres of "liberated territory".

Next we will examine separately the consequences of the wave of shootings for the working class as a whole and its effects upon the miners themselves.

The movement towards a general strike

The murder of strikers unleashed workers' anger throughout the country. The idea of a general strike, which until then had only been gaining ground little by little, rapidly gripped broad layers of workers. Issuing from the factories, this call penetrated right to the top of the CGT apparatus. The union branches, the departmental unions and the federations received resolutions demanding a general strike, a few days after the 27th Congress of the CGT. The union leadership took pains to ensure that the proposal, presented by delegates of the revolutionary minority, was rejected. In the CGT Confederal Bureau, Frachon himself was forced to receive delegations which insisted that the CGT leadership took responsibility for issuing the order for the general strike.

The Stalinist leadership doggedly opposed this slogan, resorting to every and any kind of "explanation". To some, it said that it was the Gaullists who wanted the general strike. To others, that the working class was not ready for such a movement. To yet others it said that the miners were involved in a sectional movement and that to win they only needed material and financial support. Some were told that economic strikes could not culminate in a general strike, which being political, could only be launched on the basis of political slogans, etc. The document which best expresses this hostility was the "Open Letter" from Benoit Frachon to the Chenard and Walker workers. The general secretary of the CGT intervened with the full weight of his authority at the moment when the desire for an all out struggle was being voiced from every quarter. This letter was intended not so much to convince people as to sow disarray among militants and thus prevent the leadership being swamped.

The Stalinist leaders could find only obstacles to the idea of a general strike. Even today, several weeks after the defeat of the miners, they are still forced to find responses to the doubts of their militants on this point. This is why the theoretical organ of the Stalinist party, *Cahiers du Communisme*, reprinted in its January 1949 issue a twenty year old article by Maurice Thorez on the political mass strike.

We do not intend to discuss all the Stalinist arguments here, but rather to make understood the place which the miners' strike has in the struggle of the French proletariat. To those who question whether the working class was ready for a generalised struggle, we offer the following, very incomplete table of workers' struggles during this period. The table is based on information gleaned from the pages of *l'Humanité*.

All this took place at a time when every union leader who voiced an opinion was against the general strike, and in a period when the Stalinists' policy was that the workers could achieve their demands by limited movements. There can be no doubt that propaganda which

September (before the miners strike):

- 1 The engineers of Nantes, Saint-Nazare, Montargis, Bagnole, down tools and protest. Partial down-tools in Dôle. Demonstration in the 15th arrondissement.
- 3 Two hour strike in Marseille.
- 5 Stoppage and demonstration at Tulle.
- 7 24 hour strike at Troyes. Stoppage and demo at Strasbourg; stoppage in the Rhône, stoppage at Pont-de-l'Arche.
- 8 Stoppage at Aubusson.
- 9 Stoppage at Blanc-Mesnil; 24 hour strike in La Rochelle and in the Somme.
- 10 Stoppages and demonstrations in Boulogne, St-Ouen, Puteaux, Courbevoie, Clichy, St-Denis and Issy. Stoppage in the Ardennes, the Haute-Garonne, the Cher and at St-Etienne.
- 11 Stoppages and strikes in several areas: engineers, building, textiles and papermills in the Ariège; in the Aisne; papermills in the St-Girons. Stoppage in Levallois.
- 12 Stoppages in Arras and in Boulogne.
- 14 Stoppage at Hagendange; stoppage and demonstration at Gennevilliers, Asnières, St-Cloud. One hour strike at Alès and at Nîmes. General strike in the Doubs.
- 16 Stoppage and demonstration at Tarbes and in Charente.
- 17 Stoppage at Orleans and in the Sarthe.
- 21 Stoppages in the Haut-Rhin, at Lorient and in Grenoble (funeral of Voitrin, a worker murdered by the Gaullists).
- 25 Two hour general strike throughout France called by all the union headquarters (CGT, Force Ouvrière" CFTC, administrative staff).
- 28 Stoppage in Le Havre.

From 1 October:

- 1 24 hour strike of gas and electricity workers throughout France.
- 5 Taxi strike in Paris and Bordeaux. Day of agitation in the community (CGT and CFTC) throughout France. Start of the rail strike in the north east and of engineers' strike in Lorraine (which would last until the 16th).
- 8 24 hour merchant navy strike.
- 11 24 hour strike in the Moselle. 48 hour strike of Moselle engineers.
- 13 24 hour strike of all French ports.
- 15 24 hour strike of Bordeaux engineers. Textile strikes at Troyes, Sedan, Vendôme.
- 20 24 hour strike of railworkers in the Mediterranean region. General strike in Tarn.
- 21 48 hour strike of railworkers in Le Mans, Alençon and Chateau-du-Loir.
- 22 24 hour strike of railway workers in Toulouse, Nîmes, Alès, Avignon, Sète and Teil. Calais and Boulogne dockers refuse to unload coal. Engineers throughout Paris down tools in solidarity.
- 25 24 hour strike in the Loire. Stoppages at Lyon, Marseille, Limoges, Saint-Julien, etc. Numerous strikes throughout the country.
- 26 Stoppages in Marseille, Rouen, Dieppe, Montpellier, Béziers, Sète, Clermont-Ferrand, La Rochelle.
- 27 Stoppages in Marseille, La Bocca, Toulon, Brignolles, Périgueux.
- 28 Stoppage in the Gard, stoppage in Vienne, at Mantes and amongst the Denain engineers.
- 29 Stoppage at Boulogne-sur-Mer.

1 November Sailors' strike in Marseille.

put to the fore the need for a general strike would have met with a tremendous response and would have prepared the way for a movement of formidable scope.

The decline of the miners' strike

The Stalinist leaders therefore refused to organise a general strike and the miners continued their strike, helped by material support of other workers (collections each pay day, evacuation and lodging for miners' children) but, under conditions where the war of attrition could only turn to their disadvantage.

Despite all the goodwill of the workers, the payments, the donations and the material help, was limited by their resources. It is one thing to support 5-10,000 strikers and their families, and quite another to support 400,000 strikers and their families. At F1000 per week—an inadequate sum anyway—F400 million would have had to be collected each week! In contrast the French government was receiving aid from the Americans who weren't bothered by the price of coal.

But it wasn't only material difficulties, hunger and the reign of terror which sapped the miners' resistance. In addition to all these difficulties, there were the tactics of the Stalinists.

On the question of withdrawing the safety crews, the move decided upon—for a 24 hour withdrawal—was prolonged indefinitely due to the way the struggle developed. But such a tactic, extremely rare for this section of workers even during the longest strikes, appears in complete disproportion to the goals of the strike as expressed by the Stalinists. In a decisive struggle for power, where the whole fate of society is in the balance, the most extreme and daring methods are justified and understood by the workers. However it is difficult to understand a leadership which proposes sectionally restricted goals, which refuses to call to a general strike and which yet calls for the most extreme means of struggle by an isolated section of workers.

The government and reformists of every hue exploited this imbalance between means and ends. The propaganda denouncing the Stalinists as having other aims than the interests of the miners was, in this case, based on something very real. Moreover in the absence of a revolutionary organisation able to show how a revolutionary outcome was possible, and in the face of the stifling of the movement for a general strike, a growing number of miners—whose families were starving and who could see no end to the strike—were drifting back to the pits.

But that wasn't all. On the one hand the Stalinists' policy favoured a return to work by the least combative; on the other hand it bred feelings of anger and despair amongst the most combative, those still on strike, which in several instances turned into acts of terrorism against those who had returned to work. Violence against scabs is legitimate, but to resort to acts of violence (breaking windows, physical attacks, etc) towards those who, after several weeks of struggle, have gone back to work because they no longer have the strength to hold out and because the leadership, for reasons it cannot openly declare, refuses to pose the question of ending the strike, can in no way reverse the decline of the movement. On the contrary, this tactic (if it can be called that) can only

aggravate the defeat by sowing feelings of hatred amongst the workers.

In the final period of the strike, not only were none of the small coalfields fighting, but even in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais there were hardly even one third of the miners still on strike. It was on 29 November, when a complete disintegration of the movement was looming, that the Miners' Federation gave the order to return to work—24 hours after having called for a fight to the finish and without even consulting those still on strike.

The sequel to the defeat

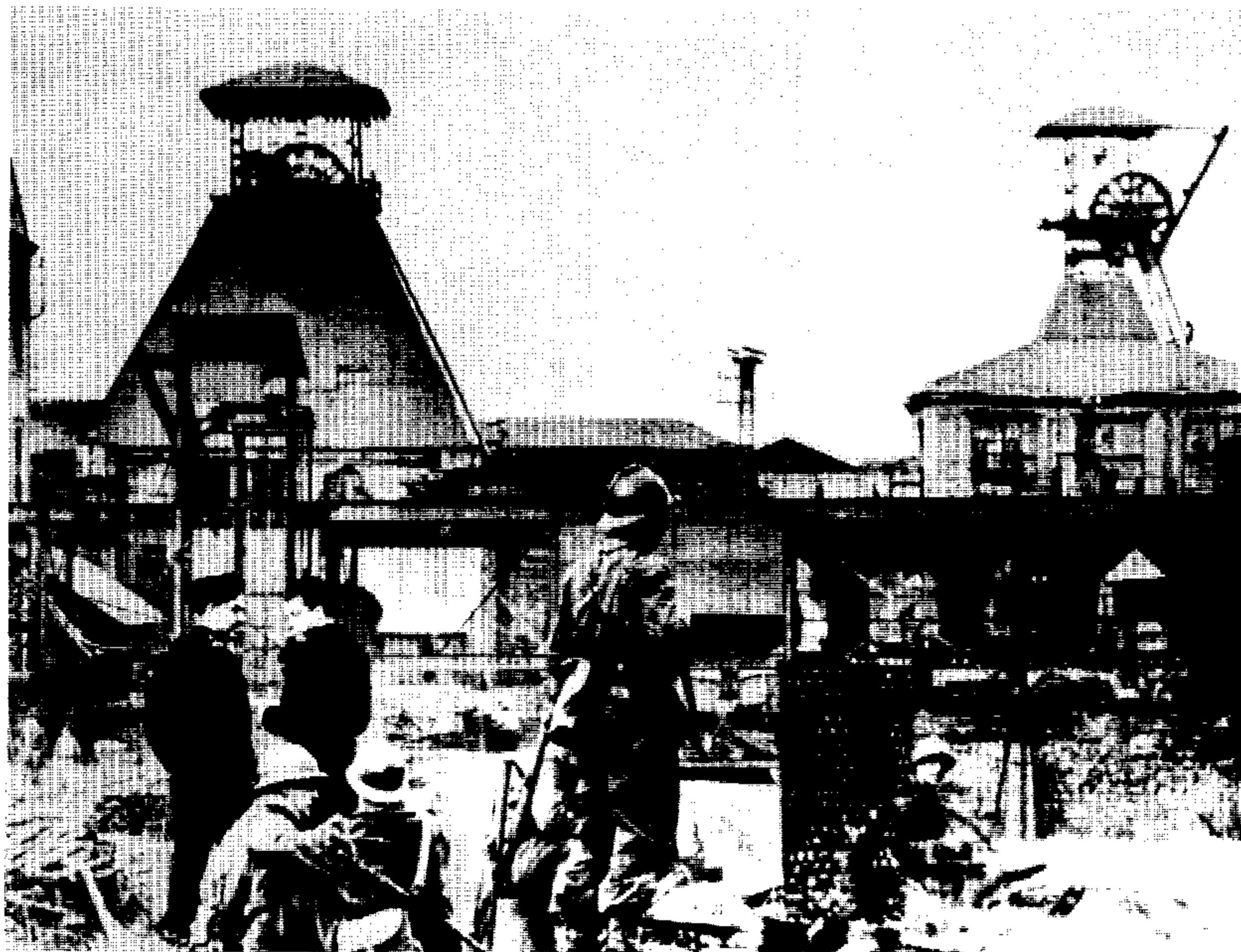
It was a very heavy defeat for the miners' union branches. Almost 2000 miners had been jailed, notably almost all of the safety delegates who were the mainstay of the union movement. The government also unleashed the most disgusting repression of immigrant workers who had fulfilled their class duty. As far as the "internationalism" of Moch & Co was concerned, the latter were fit only to produce and keep their mouths shut. The reformist leaders of Force Ouvrière and the Christian unions didn't benefit greatly from the defeat, in spite of, or because of, the shameful government aid they received and the vote by the National Assembly to pay F50 million to those who had suffered acts of violence by the strikers.

There are still few exact indicators of the miners' morale and the depth of their defeat. However, quite recently at Firminy, where a worker was murdered, there was an election for a miner delegate in which amongst almost 1000 workers, the CGT candidate roundly beat the Force Ouvrière and Christian union candidates, but in which almost half the miners abstained from voting.

As for the French working class as a whole, this defeat led to a new offensive against the living conditions of workers and, very importantly, to a further weakening of the union movement. The number of CGT cards taken up in 1949 was very small, but neither "Force Ouvrière" nor the CFTC benefited much from this drop in membership. At the same time, independent unions proliferated in whose orientation was unclear and in which hidden Gaullist elements existed, ordered to remain concealed.

It could almost be said that there are no longer mass trade unions in France; there are several rival centres/leaderships which reflect somewhat the views of parties or political currents in the realm of workers' demands. In general the only people who joined them were the members and closest sympathisers of the political parties.

The French working class still has a large reservoir of combativity; entire industries (engineering and others) were undefeated in the battle. The most elementary needs of workers will push them forward to new battles in defence of their standard of living. The present defence, sporadic though it is, cannot but develop, though at the moment there is no way of foreseeing the rhythm of its development. But certainly an all-out struggle will be much more difficult to achieve. Entire sections of workers, whole factories, will either refuse to move at all or will not move while the struggle lacks an enormous breadth and the workers united front is unrealised. And



Troops occupy Saint Etienne pit during the strike

this united front is so much more necessary because the Gaullist threat is deepening on the very basis of the workers' defeat.

By force of circumstance the Stalinist leaders have been very cautious since the end of the strike. Knowing they would not muster much support they have drawn in their horns, making the smallest demands not so much for the purpose of organising struggles right now, as to strengthen the CGT by agitating around such demands. More seriously, they have kept to their tactic of "rotating" strikes which, at the service of Kremlin diplomacy, led the miners' strike to defeat and runs the risk of damaging a whole series of industries.

The activity of the PCI

With its small forces, almost non-existent amongst the miners, the French section of the FI concentrated its main effort on agitating for the general strike and on the need for the workers, faced with a wavering leadership, to themselves create a new leadership capable of organising and leading the movement.

The PCI's politics found an echo amongst the workers. The proposal to send factory delegates to the CGT Confederal Bureau to demand that it give the order for a general strike was often well received and even carried in the Chenard and Walker factory by the leading members of the PCF cell and union section, in the absence of any organised Trotskyist. This delegation,

which went with full confidence in the CGT chiefs, expressed the thoughts of all the Paris engineers—as is shown by the accounts given in *La Vérité* of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Paris region engineers' union. It was this action which forced Benoît Frachon, the secretary of the CGT, and the Stalinist bureaucracy's most accomplished union leader, to write his "Open Letter" to the workers of Chenard and Walker. In this letter he clearly unmasked himself and showed the PCF leaders' hostility to the general strike. This letter has often been the starting point for important discussions amongst workers. Despite the material weaknesses of the PCI's intervention, the leadership of the Stalinist party thought it necessary to re-issue an old anti-Trotskyist pamphlet, adding about forty lines denouncing Trotskyist activity in favour of the general strike. In the immediate aftermath of the end of the strike, in the climate of defeat, a Stalinist offensive was unleashed to remove Trotskyists from the CGT or from posts they held in the unions. But these bureaucratic measures can neither stop the activity of the Trotskyists, nor put an end to the deep crisis of the Stalinist party. The PCI has emerged strengthened from this tremendous struggle of the French proletariat. Workers—a small number admittedly—have joined its ranks, its roots in the working class are spreading, its campaign for the united front is growing. Its members, despite the dangers threatening the working class, have an increased confidence in the ability of their party in tomorrow's battles.

Twenty-five years of centrism; The USFI 1963-88

Part one; from unification to the Tenth World Congress, 1963-74
by Emile Gallet

Introduction

Amidst the meetings and celebrations surrounding the 50th anniversary of the founding of Trotsky's Fourth International (FI), little has been heard of another anniversary, that of the formation of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) in 1963. The USFI itself has been particularly reticent about this anniversary. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that it has very little to celebrate. Of the two major forces which "united" with the International Secretariat (IS) in 1963, one—the Moreno current—has already split, and the other—the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (SWP)—has organised a *de facto* split. It effectively runs its own separate "International", with its own organisation and press. A quarter century after the "reunification of the world Trotskyist movement", its component parts are largely back where they started.

In 1951 the SWP supported, wholeheartedly, the systematic centrism of the Third World Congress. Yet in 1953 Cannon and Hansen bounced the International into a split rather than confront the IS at a conference. The result was the International Committee (IC) which was set up with Healy in Britain, Lambert in France and, finally, Nahuel Moreno in Argentina. In 1963 the split was ostensibly healed when the majority of the IC, with the exception of the British, the French and a few hangers-on, returned to the fold, fusing with the IS to form the USFI. The USFI was therefore able to claim, not only that the vast majority of avowed Trotskyists were in its ranks, but also an organisational continuity through Mandel, Frank, Hansen Cannon and Pablo with the leadership of the pre-split International.

The USFI's claim to be *the* Fourth International has increasingly come to the fore over recent years as its opponents' "Fourth Internationals" have disintegrated. First the rump of the IC split in 1971, with Healy maintaining the IC and Lambert setting up the Organising Centre for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. In 1980 Lambert and Moreno's Fourth International (International Committee) fell apart after less than a year's existence. Since then Lambert's Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) has undergone a damaging split with its Latin American affiliates (1987) and the Morenoite International Workers League (Fourth International) has been unable to break out of its Latin American heartlands. Meanwhile Healy's IC degenerated into a tiny sect living off handouts from the Arab bourgeoisie, only to explode and disintegrate in 1985.

This debacle of "anti-Pabloism" appeared to confirm the USFI's claim to be the living continuity of the revolutionary FI: the only significant, truly international "Trotskyist" tendency. Like many other centrist currents, the USFI grew rapidly in the new period of class struggle after 1968. The bulk of the new recruits were in Europe, but sections in North and Latin America also experienced substantial growth. By the end of the 1970s it could claim around 14,000 members in fifty countries.

Since this all-time high the USFI has declined and suffered splits, having fewer than 10,000 members at the end of the 1980s. But the losses suffered by the USFI have been less dramatic than those of their "Trotskyist" competitors or the various semi-Maoist and Guevarist centrist organisations. It is therefore little wonder that it remains a pole of attraction, "the mainstream of Trotskyism", even to its supposed "left" critics.

However, neither the claims to organisational continuity nor the relative size and stability of the USFI settle the question of its claim to represent the revolutionary continuity of Trotsky's FI. The key question is that of political, programmatic continuity with the revolutionary FI. It is here that the USFI's claim to be *the* FI stands or falls.

It is currently fashionable within the USFI, when reflecting on its history, to admit that it made "mistakes" and "errors".¹ Of course even a revolutionary International will make mistakes and errors, even on occasion major ones, but what we see in the quarter century history of the USFI is something different. We do not see errors recognised, corrected and learnt from. Rather, we see systematic and grossly opportunist tactics and strategy: programmatic liquidation of the highest order. Errors covered over or only half-admitted many years later. Errors repeated at the first opportunity. This method has a name in the communist movement. It is called "centrism".

In this article we demonstrate that the only continuity that exists in the 25 year history of the USFI is that of chronic and systematic centrist errors. The continuity of the USFI is with the centrism of the post-1951 "Fourth International", not with Trotsky's revolutionary organisation.

The seeds of re-unification

The IS leadership (Mandel/Frank/Pablo), together with Cannon, Hansen, Healy and Lambert, oversaw the political degeneration of the FI over the period 1948-51.

¹ See L. Maitan and E. Mandel's articles in *International Marxist Review*, London, Autumn 1988, No 2, Vol 3

The analysis of Stalinism they adopted, and of the bureaucratic social revolutions which took place in Eastern Europe and China, was a thoroughly opportunist one, involving a gross adaptation towards Stalinism.

By the 1951 Third Congress the *whole* of the FI including Cannon, Healy and the rest of the future IC, agreed that Tito had broken with the Kremlin, was no longer a Stalinist and that he had become some form of centrist. The same analysis was to be applied to Mao Tse Tung in the next few years. This position, as we have explained elsewhere² was a revision of the revolutionary programme, and led directly both to Pablo's project of deep entry into the Stalinist parties, and to the later enthusiasm of the IC for the Maoist led "cultural revolution".

This opportunist method, which was common to all sections of the FI from the beginning of the 1950s, proved fatal to the preservation of the revolutionary programme in the post-war years. The fragile revolutionary continuity, preserved by Trotsky and then by the FI was broken, and the "Trotskyist" epigones of both the IC and the IS became cheerleaders for various Stalinist and petit bourgeois nationalist currents.

It was the Cuban Revolution of 1959, coupled with the increasing weakness of the SWP, which provided the basis for the 1963 "reunification". The SWP, having split the International in 1953, showed little interest in building an alternative international tendency to the Europeans.³ However it took other, material, factors to convince the SWP that "reunification of the world Trotskyist movement" was necessary.

A key element was the SWP's decline in size and influence. The impact of the cold war, McCarthyism and errors of perspective led to a serious weakening of the SWP, and its membership began to plummet. By 1959 all the SWP's industrial fractions had been dissolved. The organisation which had led the 1934 Minneapolis teamsters' strike no longer had any national intervention into the US labor movement. Opportunist electoral blocs brought them no success, either. The party was spiralling away.⁴

In this context, the Cuban Revolution came as a godsend to the SWP. Through their participation in "Fair play for Cuba" committees they began to recruit again. Indeed this was the period in which a good part of the current SWP leadership were recruited. In addition it offered the beleaguered SWP a short cut to the revolution. Joe Hansen, later a self-proclaimed "orthodox" defender of "the Leninist strategy of party building", argued at the time that Castro's July 26 Movement—without the aid of any sort of "Leninist" party and despite the absence of any organs of working class power—had created a "pretty good looking" workers' state.⁵

The IS's analysis was identical. Both interpretations were of a piece with the 1951 Third Congress's position on Yugoslavia, which had junked the need for a revolutionary party in Yugoslavia, having found that a "blunt instrument"—the Yugoslav Communist Party—was able to do the job for them. If these analyses are correct Trotskyism and the FI are relegated to an auxiliary role.

The revolutionary position is somewhat different, of course. True, a workers' state exists in Cuba. But the nature of this state is not qualitatively different from the USSR or the other degenerate workers' states. The key

task for the Cuban masses remains the construction of organs of workers' and peasants' power (soviets), and the building of a revolutionary party capable of leading the Cuban masses in a political revolution. The "Cuban road" is not one that the oppressed masses can follow if they wish to be truly liberated. It leads only to a Stalinist regime of the kind currently found in Havana, one which blocks that road to socialism.

The nature of the 1963 fusion

The 1963 fusion left all the disputed questions of the 1953 split unresolved. As the preamble to the reunification resolution glibly stated:

"The area of disagreement appears of secondary importance in view of the common basic programme and common analysis of major current events in world developments which unite the two sides".⁶

The fact that subsequently the USFI has spent most of its life riven by factions which basically repeat the pre-1963 line-up suggests that this was not the case!

The question of entrism *sui generis* was swept under the table, as were the opportunist excesses of both sides. These were deemed to be historical questions which could be resolved at leisure, even though for the British, Italian, Austrian, Belgian and French sections, for example, opportunist entrism was still being carried out a decade after the SWP had found it necessary to split over the question! Further, there was no common analysis of the various Stalinist regimes and parties.

On the question of the nature of the Castro leadership in Cuba both sides were in agreement. They reached for the opportunist and centrist method used by the FI between 1948 and 1951 to analyse the Tito leadership of the Yugoslav Revolution. According to the USFI the Cuban Revolution was evolving towards revolutionary Marxism, and had "set a pattern that now stands as an example for a number of other countries".⁷ On the question of Maoism, however there was little agreement. Fundamental differences between the two sides were skated over. For the ex-IS leadership, Mao was a "bureaucratic centrist" (implying that Maoism was qualitatively superior to counter-revolutionary Stalinism) and so there was no question of fighting for a political revolution in China.

The SWP held a different view, one based on its 1955 resolution that "the CCP is a Stalinist party and its regime is a bureaucratic dictatorship necessitating political revolution."⁸

The difference was "overcome" by adopting an ambiguous centrist formulation in 1963 which called for "an anti-bureaucratic struggle on a scale massive enough to bring about a qualitative change in the political form of Government".⁹

Each side was able to interpret this as it liked. The SWP interpreted it as meaning political revolution. For the old IS leadership it implied reforms necessary to overcome merely quantitative bureaucratic deformations.

The question of China was to haunt the USFI throughout the 1960s, especially after the Cultural Revolution of 1965-67. All the opportunist appetites of the Mandel/Frank/Maitan wing came to the fore, and their analysis of Maoism as "bureaucratic centrism" was adopted at

2 Notably in *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and In The Degenerated Revolution, Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group*, London, 1982 and 1983 respectively
3 See *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and Permanent Revolution 7, Workers Power*, London, Spring 1988

4 See *Permanent Revolution 7* for a fuller account

5 J Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, New York, 1978, p85

6 *Dynamics of the World Revolution*, New York, 1974, p13

7 *Ibid*, p17

8 See "The Chinese Revolution and its Development", *Education for Socialists*, New York, September 1976

9 Quoted in J Hansen, *The Leninist strategy of party building*, New York, 1979, p540

the Ninth World Congress in 1969. This position, based on an impressionistic acceptance of Mao's "left" rhetoric, and on the fact that he led a social revolution has never been rescinded. The fact that Mao, like Stalin before him, deprived the working class of political power from the outset never troubled the old IS leaders.

These differences over the analysis of Stalinism were to be repeated with respect to the Vietnamese CP where again there was no agreement between the two sides. The unprincipled fusion of 1963 and its method of covering over differences, relegating them to "historical questions", guaranteed a faction ridden unity within the USFI.

This was necessarily reflected in an internal regime that bore no relation to that of a communist democratic centralist organisation. The SWP made sure there was no question of it being treated as a "branch office" of the International as Cannon had put it during the 1953 split. As a result the USFI developed a caricature of democratic centralism which meant that where differences existed a common majority line was never "imposed" on a national section. The USFI developed as a series of "non-aggression pacts", where national leaders held sway in their own countries or continents without fear of "interference" from the International.

Ernest Mandel has recently re-affirmed this attitude in an article on the Fourth International.

"The functioning of such an International—as is already the case with the Fourth International today—must be founded on a two fold principle: total autonomy for national parties in the selection of their leaderships and national tactics, but international discipline based on the principle of majority rule... when it comes to international political policies."¹⁰

The idea that it is possible to have "total autonomy" in national tactics as though they did not flow inseparably from the international programme and policies is a thoroughly centrist one. It is an excuse for federalism—made necessary by the real failure to have programmatic unity. Further the whole history of the USFI—especially in relation to key revolutionary situations in Argentina, Portugal, Iran and South Africa—shows that completely different "international political policies" were practiced and tolerated by the supposedly "Unified" Secretariat.

Another feature of the fusion resolutions is the emphasis on the "world revolutionary process" and the "three sectors of the world revolution". These phrases could merely denote the fact that revolutionary situations develop and recede throughout the world over the years and that different tactics need to be applied in different situations (notably in the imperialist countries, the semi-colonies and in the workers' states).

For the USFI, however, these oft-repeated phrases imply a recognition of an inexorable logic to the spread of revolutions. This "process" is carried out by "blunted instruments" like the Yugoslav or Chinese CPs. According to this view, the role of revolutionaries is reduced to that of cheering on this inevitable sequence of events. The formation of separate Trotskyist parties would prove an embarrassment, indeed an obstruction, to the International's role of friendly adviser to these unconscious Trotskyists or empirical practitioners of permanent revolution.

In the initial period of the USFI, the "epicentre of the World Revolution" was deemed to be firmly in the semi-colonial world, the workers in the imperialist countries could be written off. As Pablo put it in 1962:

"The ideological neo-reformism of the European workers' parties who have betrayed the European Revolution and the Colonial Revolution is thus combated conjointly by the action and by the revolutionary ideology of the forces exterior to the advanced capitalist nations, with whom and from whom will be constituted henceforth the new leadership of the World Socialist Revolution."¹¹

Thus imitating Castro in Cuba or Ben Bella in Algeria was the key programmatic question for the re-born "Fourth International".

This adaptation to "Third Worldism" was in fact a confession of the USFI's inability to find a path to the industrial working class in imperialist countries during a period of relative prosperity. The class struggle was not abolished in these years and moreover, as both the Belgian general strike of 1961 and the French miners' strike of 1963 show, this struggle could reach a high degree of generalisation. However, for the USFI sections buried deep inside the mass reformist parties, the method of using the *Transitional Programme* to relate to workers in struggle had long since been forgotten.

The first crises: Sri Lanka and Algeria

No sooner had the USFI been formed than the problems inherent in the mistaken political method shared by all the participants began to be revealed. The first example was that of Sri Lanka, where the USFI section, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), entered the popular front government of Mrs Bandaranaike in the spring of 1964 in order to help it control and terminate a strike wave. The leader of the LSSP, N M Perera, even became Finance Minister! The USFI, of course, were quick to condemn this action and even expelled all those who supported the LSSP leadership line (75% of the section).

But the opportunist policies and appetites of the LSSP were there for all to see long before spring 1964. Throughout the second half of the 1950s, the LSSP had repeatedly made overtures towards the bourgeoisie, including voting for the Bandaranaike government's budget in 1960. The IS, supported by the 1961 Sixth World Congress, finally criticised the 1960 turn and the LSSP corrected its line, at least to the extent that the LSSP MPs did not vote for the bourgeois budget in 1961! However, the 1963 fusion conference made no mention of the LSSP's rightist tendencies, in the hope of keeping the "world movement" "unified". The message was clear: there was to be no "interference" in the national tactics of the national sections however opportunist they were.

In a recent article¹² reviewing this "painful moment in our history", USFI leader Livio Maitan finds a whole series of explanations for the LSSP's chronic opportunism, including the fact that it was never a Leninist party (true, but this discovery came rather late!). The one possibility he will not countenance, however, is that the IS/USFI leadership bore a heavy responsibility for covering up the LSSP's "social democratic" nature (the phrase is Ernest Mandel's), for only intervening deci-

10 *International Marxist Review*, op cit, p40

11 *Fourth International*, Paris, May-July 1962, p31

12 *Quatrième internationale*, 29-30, Paris, Août-Décembre 1988, pp47-72



Celebrating Algerian independence, 3 July 1962—first steps to a workers' state?

sively once it was too late and then only to wash its hands of the whole affair. The real truth is that the whole FI, including the post-53 splitters, looked to the LSSP as the only mass Trotskyist party—one that might come to power and change the world wide balance of forces. If it was indeed rather a blunt instrument why should the Stalinists have all the blunt instruments? The fact that the LSSP's practical politics were 90% electoralist and trade unionist was conveniently forgotten.

In Algeria, the USFI made a parallel series of mistakes which, once again, miraculously only became apparent to these "Trotskyists" long after the event. From 1959 onward, Pablo and his Latin American lieutenant, Posadas, had been arguing that the "focus of the World Revolution" had shifted to the imperialised world. For Posadas, this was basically an excuse for cutting all links with the IS and resulted in his 1961 split. Pablo's position was somewhat different. His orientation to the Ben Bella government—which he described variously as an "anti-capitalist state" and a "semi-workers' state"—was at one with that of the whole of the USFI.

Pablo's difference was that he wanted to follow the logic of this political analysis through to the end. At the Unification Congress he proposed that the International's centre should transfer itself to Algiers! He went on to take up a position in Algeria as economic adviser to the Ben Bella government and his faction broke with

the USFI majority completely in 1964.

Enthused by the victory of the FLN over French imperialism, and then by the massive nationalisations undertaken by Ben Bella in October 1963, the May 1964 International Executive Committee (IEC) of the USFI called for the construction of a "revolutionary socialist left", "led by the FLN".¹³ As was the case in Cuba, in Yugoslavia and in China, the Trotskyist party and programme were to be shelved in favour of tailing behind petit bourgeois nationalists who had no intention of giving the workers and poor peasants any say in events, beyond a few nods in the direction of "self-management". Instead of genuine workers' control of production these "self-management" schemes meant the involvement of workers in running the plants *in the interests of the capitalist class!*

The USFI, blinded as ever by words, enthused:

"The question that remains to be answered is whether this government can establish a workers' state. The movement in this direction is evident and bears many resemblances to the Cuban pattern. 'Self management', with its already demonstrated importance for the development of workers' and peasants' democracy, offers the brightest opening for the establishment of the institutions of a workers' state".¹⁴

In June 1965, Ben Bella was overthrown by Boumedienne in a *coup d'état*. The USFI's dream of a workers'

¹³ "The workers' and farmers' government", *Education for Socialists*, New York, 1974, p64
¹⁴ *World Outlook*, New York, 21.2.64

state on the southern shores of the Mediterranean faded away. And as the dream faded, the "orthodox" criticisms re-emerged. Four years too late, the USFI saw through Ben Bella and the FLN. It made Pablo the scapegoat for errors all its leaders had made together. The December 1969 Plenum of the IEC argued that the "Pablo tendency":

"... assigned to mass mobilisations essentially the role of supporting the Ben Bella tendency and carrying out the programme of the FLN, failing to appreciate that it was crucial for the urban and rural proletariat and poor peasantry to set up independent organs of power, and clinging to the utopian and non-Marxist concept of the possibility of a gradual change in the nature of the state".¹⁵

Whatever the IEC might wish us to think, this was the programme of the *whole* of the USFI during the first half of the 1960s, not just Pablo's! The resolution also recognised—five years too late—that the USFI "did not correctly estimate the narrowness of the social base on which the Ben Bella team rested... did not sufficiently stress the imperious necessity of establishing independent organs of political power by the urban and rural proletariat" and should have stressed "the need to work amongst the ranks first to create a revolutionary Marxist organisation linked to the Algerian masses".¹⁶ How seriously this "self-criticism" influenced their future conduct is demonstrated by the current USFI line on Nicaragua.

Leftish members of the USFI often defend their organisation's record by pointing to this belated and half-hearted "self-criticism" and saying "better late than never". But "late" is better than "never" only if the

lessons of the error are learned, and if the same mistake is not repeated. Unfortunately, the history of the USFI is littered with such post mortem-style "corrections" of an opportunist line, none of which are used to change the organisation's fundamental *method*. It is rather a way for an inveterate centrist leadership to cover its tracks.

"Structural reforms"

While the "epicentre" of the World Revolution was seen to lie outside of Europe and the main task in the imperialist countries was to aid it, the sections of the USFI were still involved in deep entry work in the Stalinist and social democratic parties of Europe. Within these parties the IS, and later USFI, sections made major accommodations to the reformist leaderships.

The USFI sections were advised to "concretise" the workers' government slogan as "the expression of the political will of the working class, not as revolutionary Marxists would like it to be but as it really is at a given stage".¹⁷ This simply means that a government of the existing reformist leaderships of the working class would be graced with the title "a workers' government". This idea, which conveniently leaves unspoken the *class* nature of such a government—the interests of which class will rule it?—returns again and again throughout the life of the USFI.

In connection with this the IS promoted the idea of the *Transitional Programme* as a series of "structural reforms" which gutted it of its revolutionary content, a method which was happily continued within the USFI. During the 1961 Belgian general strike, Ernest Mandel, as an editor of one of the Socialist Party's papers, *La*



Fidel Castro (centre) with members of the July 26th Movement before their victory in Cuba

15 "The workers' and farmers' government", *op cit*, p64

16 *ibid*

17 *Quatrième Internationale*, Paris, Février 1966, p70

Gauche, put forward a reformist programme which called for cuts in military expenditure, the nationalisation of the big holding companies and power industries, and for the "planning" of the economy through the establishment of a national investment fund. This left reformist programme of "structural reforms" was dressed up as a transitional programme adapted to the Belgian situation!

Again it was left to the logic of the struggle, "the revolutionary process", rather than the conscious intervention of Marxist's around a revolutionary programme to overthrow capitalism. As Mandel put it in 1967:

"Either one stands squarely inside the framework of the capitalist system . . . or one refuses, takes a socialist position, rejecting the road of increasing the rate of profit, and advocates the only alternative road, which is the development of a powerful public sector in industry, alongside the private sector. This is the road out of the capitalist framework and its logic, and passes over to the arena of what we call structural anti-capitalist reforms".¹⁸

Yet over the next few years, this right centrist orientation was to be replaced by a left, sometimes ultra-leftist, one. The impact of May 1968 and developments in Latin America were to blow the USFI off the course of "structural reforms" and into the arms of the petit bourgeois radicals who were incapable of addressing the question of reformism in the workers' movement. However, despite the abrupt left turns, a zig zag symptomatic of centrism, the fundamentally opportunist method remained the same. The USFI could capitulate to reformism or try to kill it with curses but it could not fight it or overcome it.

The origins of the guerrilla turn

At the Ninth World Congress in 1969, the USFI adopted a resolution arguing that Latin America faced a "continent-wide structural instability [and] more precisely a pre-revolutionary situation". The resolution continued:

"Latin America has entered a period of revolutionary explosions and conflict, of armed struggle on different levels against the native ruling class and imperialism and of prolonged civil war on a continental scale."¹⁹

On this basis the USFI argued that guerrilla warfare should be the *strategy* for all the USFI sections in Latin America and that the USFI should work to integrate itself into the current around Castro. The American SWP reacted to this resolution with particular hostility, and launched a faction fight which effectively paralysed the USFI for much of the 1970s.

In their many polemics against the European leadership of the USFI, the SWP liked to present the 1969 conference decision as the beginning of the guerrillaist adaptation by USFI members Mandel, Maitan and Frank. This view is only partly true. Although 1969 certainly marked the codification of this line, from the late 1950s both the IS and the SWP had considered that guerrilla warfare—as practised by Mao and Castro—was a vital element of the "revolutionary programme for the imperialised world".

The uncritical endorsement of the guerrilla strategy used by Castro and Mao to gain power was a complete

departure from the Marxist approach to such tactics. The Marxist position on guerrilla warfare and "armed struggle" of all kinds is that whilst we do not rule out the use of any tactic in the class struggle, it is essential that the tactic be in complete accord with our *strategy*, which is the seizure of power by the working class.

The decisive forces of the working class, based in the factories, workshops and mines, develops the armed struggle against the bourgeoisie, led by a proletarian party, through armed workers' militias. The road to these lies through the organisation of picket defense squads, armed defence of workers' districts, of strike actions and of demonstrations. It is combined with revolutionary work amongst the rank and file soldiers aimed first at encouraging disaffection and, as the struggle develops, winning the troops over to the side of the workers. This amounts to breaking up the bourgeois army.

Certainly rural guerrilla warfare can be a subordinate tactic, especially where the peasant and small farming class is a significant, even predominant, portion of the population. But even here such a struggle must be intimately linked to the proletarian party and subordinated to the seizure of working class power. The guerrilla strategy of Castro and Mao was never based on such a concept. The real struggle was seen as one taking place in the countryside, based on the peasantry. The struggles of the workers in the cities were at best a useful adjunct. Indeed guerrillaism in Latin America has traditionally seen political action in the cities as a method of recruiting workers and students *out* of the cities and into the mountains.

Also the very nature of guerrilla struggle, be it rural or urban (as in the case of the Uruguayan Tupamaros or IRA), demands secrecy and the organisation of armed force in *isolation* from the masses, except perhaps in the final moments where the struggle takes on the proportions of civil war. Even here the fact that the struggle is left up to a minority of fighters, normally outside of the cities, breeds passivity amongst those very layers who should be struggling for their own liberation.

It is no surprise, therefore, that this elitist and individualist conception of struggle finds its most ardent proponents in the movements of petit bourgeois nationalists such as the July 26th Movement, the IRA, ETA or the PLO, and in the petit bourgeois intellectual circles in which the USFI swam in the late 1960s and 70s. Where the Stalinists have adopted such tactics, it has been on the basis of abandoning work in the proletarian urban areas, in favour of mobilising and basing themselves on the peasantry—a petit bourgeois strategy.

"Victories" for such movements, as a result, are never proletarian victories. They put into power either an alien class—popular fronts of bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces committed to preserving capitalism (July 26th Movement, FLN, FSLN)—or they can lead to Stalinist parties expropriating the bourgeoisie and excluding the working class from power, in the process creating degenerate workers' states which block the road to socialism.

In painting up these petit bourgeois nationalist or Stalinist guerrilla movements as "socialist" and "revolutionary" the USFI was yet again abandoning the Marxist programme. This opportunist adaptation was

¹⁸ E Mandel, *An Introduction to Marxist economic theory*, New York, 1976, pg77

¹⁹ Ninth Congress resolution on Latin America in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 7 No 26, Paris, 14 July 1969, p717

reinforced in 1967 by two interconnected events: the attempt by the Cubans to open a guerrilla campaign in Bolivia and the foundation of the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS).

In 1966, Che Guevara, romantic symbol of the revolution for many adolescent revolutionaries of all ages, left Cuba to launch a guerrilla war in Bolivia. Isolated from the masses, completely out of touch with the *real* focus of the Bolivian revolution—the Bolivian working class of the Altoplano—Guevara paid the price with his life in 1967. The “new left” had acquired its martyr, and Che’s poster flowered on the walls of a thousand student apartments. The USFI joined in the funeral orations, but failed to draw any critical political conclusions from this event. Quite the opposite.

Guevara’s intervention in Bolivia was not an individual initiative. He took with him 16 Cuban officers who included four members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. From early 1966 Castro had signalled to the Kremlin that he was discontented with their support for the isolated and threatened Cuba. At the Tricontinental Conference in January 1966, held in Havana, Castro invited, alongside the national Communist Parties, guerrillaist groups from Latin America, many of whom were hostile to their local Stalinist parties.

By July 1967 he had convened the first conference of the OLAS which brought together 160 delegates from “fidelista” organisations in Latin America. Earlier the same year the Cubans had openly backed the guerrillaist wing of the Venezuelan CP, led by Douglas Bravo, which had split from and denounced the pro-Moscow leadership.

Joe Hansen, sent to the conference by the SWP as an observer, declared that “a great advance has been registered” for the revolutionary vanguard. Hansen noted approvingly that OLAS saw launching a guerrilla war as the key tactic:

“The question of armed struggle was thus taken at the OLAS conference as the decisive dividing line separating the revolutionists from the reformists on a continental scale. In this respect it echoed the Bolshevik tradition”.²⁰

Of course it echoed nothing of the sort. Guerrilla warfare, misnamed “the armed struggle” in and of itself is not a Bolshevik method. It is the method of the revolutionary bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie. OLAS itself met under the twin portraits of Guevara and Bolivar.

Castro’s Bolshevik position led Hansen to rave that:

“The OLAS conference thus represents an important ideological advance, offering the greatest encouragement to revolutionary Marxists throughout the world. One of its first consequences will be to facilitate a regroupment of revolutionary forces in Latin America. . . The turn marked at the OLAS conference conforms with the political realities of Latin America and the imperative need to build a revolutionary leadership capable of correctly absorbing and applying the lessons of the Cuban Revolution on a continental scale.”²¹

Moreno added his voice to the uncritical cheerleading of the OLAS declaring it the “only organisational vehicle for power” as did, of course, the Europeans.

Only two short years lay between this apparent una-

nimity in the wake of the OLAS conference and the faction fight, with Hansen and Moreno leading the opposition to the Ninth Congress’s support for “the strategy of guerrilla warfare”, and its avowed aim of “fusion with the current around OLAS”. What caused them to retreat from their previous positions?

The growing leftism in the USFI

Despite both Hansen and Moreno’s great hopes for the OLAS Castro’s left turn was only to be short lived. The 1967 Havana conference was the first and last meeting of the OLAS. By October 1967 Che Guevara had been hunted down and killed in the jungles of Bolivia, the guerrilla “foco” smashed. This disaster, combined with economic pressure from the USSR which included the slowing down of oil shipments, rapidly ended Castro’s flirtation with spreading Latin American revolution through guerrilla warfare. By 1968 he was endorsing the



20 J Hansen, *op cit* 1978, pp215-

16

21 *Ibid*, p226

Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and making overtures to the new military government in Peru.

Both Hansen and Moreno could see which way the wind was blowing as Castro gradually dumped his former guerrillaist allies. The continued enthusiasm of the European USFI leadership for the guerrilla struggle and the direction this was taking the sections in Latin America and Europe thus provided the motive for the development of an opposition tendency led by Hansen and Moreno.

Behind the 1969 Ninth Congress decisions lay a number of factors which had pushed the USFI and other centrist currents leftwards at the end of the 1960s. The Castroite calls for spreading the revolution, the Maoist led "Cultural Revolution", the rising struggle of the Vietnamese against US imperialism, all provided the impetus for the radicalisation of a whole new generation. The explosion in Paris in May 1968 set off a radicalisation of students and young workers throughout Europe.

This radical wind of change filled the sails of various forms of centrism including the USFI. Several sections grew rapidly, recruiting important new layers of youth. This was notably the case with the French section, then known as the Ligue Communiste (LC). From having been an invisible entrust group burrowing away in the PCF, the Ligue burst into the spotlight on the Paris barricades and became the largest section of the USFI.

The recruits, however, were frequently far from "Trotskyist" being heavily tainted by the Maoist/Guevarist conceptions prevalent on the centrist left at the time. Indeed, it was precisely because their politics found a ready echo in the USFI that it was this organisation which gained most, in numerical terms, out of this period of radicalisation. The political instability of many of the USFI sections around the time of the Ninth World Congress is shown by the fact that at the 1969 founding conference of the LC, over a third of the delegates voted against affiliation to the "Fourth International". Many of these leaders were later to organise a Maoist split, called "Révolution!".

The left turn in Europe involved the USFI sections abandoning their deep entry work and the associated perspective of pressing for "structural reforms" within the reformist parties. The new turn meant adapting to the radicalised student milieu. The Ninth World Congress was to describe "the special role played by the university, high school and worker youth as the 'detonator' and spearhead of the movement".²² This was the "new youth vanguard" towards which the European sections turned.

In practice it meant turning away from a struggle in the trade unions, or in the social democratic and Stalinist parties. The task became one of establishing "red universities" and "red bases" where the students could be organised to act as "detonators" to revolutionary explosions involving the workers. The workers to be orientated to were, as the Ninth Congress resolution put it, a "new generation of young workers" which "enjoys much greater freedom of initiation and action because it has largely escaped the control of the traditional organisations".²³

In fact this line represented a retreat from the struggle against the reformist leaders. Both the social democratic



Maoist influenced students occupy the Sorbonne in May 1968

and Stalinist parties retained their grip over the European working class. The lessons drawn from the Paris events of May 68 were precisely the opposite of those that should have been drawn by Marxists. The French general strike and its betrayal by the Stalinists showed the importance of fighting the grip of Stalinism in the heart of the working class movement. The USFI chose instead to try and go round it—from the "periphery to the centre"—concentrating on mobilising students and

²² "The new rise of the world revolution", *Intercontinental Press*, Paris, July 14 1969, p670
²³ *Intercontinental Press*, op cit, p683

young workers and linking them to the "third world struggles".

Among the leaders and membership of the European sections even more wildly adventurist and ultra-left positions started appearing. In 1971 a section of the French leadership, including a member of the IEC (Jebrac), wrote a document which effectively argued for the European sections to take up urban guerrilla warfare. Despite being disowned by Mandel and others, it became clear that a strong guerrillaist tendency, based on a confused admiration of Guevara and the Vietnamese, and fundamentally petit bourgeois in nature, was growing inside the European sections.

Ultra-left positions on the Labour Party and the IRA flourished inside the IMG, the British section at that time. In 1970 the paper that the IMG co-sponsored, *Red Mole*, carried a major article by Robin Blackburn calling for the breaking up of Labour Party election campaign meetings using the methods of direct action developed in the student struggles. Even a mildly critical reply by the secretary of the IMG could not bring itself to call for a vote for the Labour Party in the election. In France a series of firebomb attacks on businesses took place in Paris and were loudly acclaimed by *Rouge*, the paper of the French section.

In June 1973, the LC launched an adventurist attack on a fascist meeting in Paris which was guarded by a massive force of riot police. Over the next few days the Ligue's offices and scores of militants' homes were raided, two Ligue leaders were arrested and the organisation banned, only resurfacing a year later as the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. Whilst all this might have salvaged the consciences of a few petit bourgeois "revolutionaries of action", it did nothing to break the working class from the stranglehold of Stalinism.

All this caused growing concern among the SWP leadership. Not only was Castro retreating from his support for guerrilla currents, but there was a growing move to "armed actions" in the SWP's own backyard which it felt necessary to combat and distance itself from. The Weather Underground, the Black Panthers and dozens of other small groups heavily influenced by Maoism and spontaneist individualism, were being provoked into self-destructive "armed actions" against the state. The last thing the SWP wanted was to be targeted by the FBI as a "guerrillaist" organisation at this time.

We do not sneer at the fact that a thousand or so strong "propaganda society", made up largely of students and white collar workers, did not wish to engage the US state in armed struggle. We do, however, have contempt for centrists who advocate such means of struggle "abroad" but recoil in horror when faced with the question nearer to home.

The Ninth Congress

The Ninth Congress saw the start of the unravelling of the 1963 unification, although at this Congress, the depth of future differences were not apparent. According to USFI reports of the time, there were 98 delegates from thirty countries present. Theses on "The new rise of the World Revolution" were adopted unanimously. This resolution mainly dealt with the situation of the

famous "three sectors of the world revolution" and how the USFI was going to win the "new youth vanguard"—mainly students—who had been mobilised in the wake of May 68.

The main differences expressed at the congress were centred around the resolutions on Latin America and on the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The latter revolved around the differences over the nature of Maoism which had been swept under the carpet in 1963. For a period Mandel, Maitan etc, had agreed that a political revolution was necessary—but only because Mao said he was leading one—the "Cultural Revolution"! Once Mao was in the saddle again they reverted, once more, to their old position. For the SWP the differences over Latin America and "guerrillaism" were more serious.

Hansen and the SWP did not abandon their position on Cuba where they had retrospectively endorsed the guerrilla method of struggle used by Castro. In one of his polemics in 1971 Hansen was proud to quote from the 1963 reunification document:

"Guerrilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semi-proletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial or a semi-colonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the Second World War. It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries."²⁴

The main objection of the SWP to the resolution was that the "Europeans", especially Maitan, were turning guerrilla warfare into a *strategy*. As far as Hansen was concerned:

"What is primary in revolutionary strategy, the minority maintains, is building a combat party: resorting to guerrilla warfare should be regarded as a secondary tactical question."²⁵

So why was the faction fight to become so bitter? One reason was the SWP's fear that this programme might become generalised to the imperialist countries—and therefore implicate them. As a "tactic" for some or all Latin American countries it was acceptable. As a strategy for the whole International the SWP were not having it. As Hansen argued in his June 1969 report on the Ninth World Congress:

"If [guerrilla warfare] is taken as a tactical question, then the use of guerrilla warfare ought to be decided by each section and fitted into a broader strategy."²⁶

No orders from "a few guys in Paris" as Cannon put it.

This was linked to the SWP's fierce opposition to the new statutes of the USFI, which were proposed at the 1969 Congress. These proposed statutes stated that:

"The public expression of major differences with the programme of the Fourth International or the political line adopted by the majority at a world congress" would be disciplinary offences.²⁷

Hansen complained that the majority "advanced the concept of a highly centralised International empowered to intervene in the life of the sections in an energetic and forceful way".²⁸ As the whole history of the SWP shows, democratic centralism is an anathema to our "orthodox" comrades.

24 J Hansen, 1979 op cit, p115
25 Ibid, p85
26 Ibid, p60
27 Statutes of the Fourth International, IMG Publications, London, p16
28 J Hansen, 1979 op cit, p319



Nahuel Moreno

But in 1969 Hansen still expressed an optimistic view. In his report to the SWP on the Ninth Congress he declared that the discussions over the disputed questions would be "rich and educational". In fact the disputes grew increasingly bitter. Between the Ninth Congress and the official end of the faction fight in 1977 the dispute rapidly took in many other questions apart from guerrilla warfare. The Vietnam War, the nature of Stalinism, the national question, the woman question, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Portuguese Revolution, contacts with other "Trotskyist" groups, democratic centralism and the nature of the Fourth International were all the subject of heated polemical exchanges, with the main battle-lines corresponding to those of the IS/IC components of the 1963 fusion.

The SWP and Moreno's Latin American supporters lined up on one side—at least until 1975—in the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT), with the European leadership and a majority of the members on the other, in the International Majority Tendency (IMT). Accusations of factionalism came fast and furious on both sides as the internal functioning of the USFI ground to a halt. World congresses, supposed to be held every three years, were held every five or even six years (1974, 1979, 1985). The IEC, supposed to meet at least twice a year, frequently did not meet from one year to the next.

Bolivia and Argentina: the guerrillaist line in practice

It was in Bolivia and Argentina where the line of the Ninth Congress was to be tested to destruction. The polemics over the lessons to be learnt from these countries dominated the debates in the USFI until the mid-1970s.

Livio Maitan, the member of the IS with particular responsibility for Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, argued that it was necessary to subordinate the work of the International to the areas of the world where a "breakthrough" was possible. In the run up to the Ninth Congress he declared "... it is necessary to understand and explain that at the present stage the

international will be built around Bolivia."²⁹

Far from drawing the conclusion from Guevara's debacle in Bolivia that such guerrilla warfare tactics could only lead to disaster, the majority of the USFI drew the opposite conclusion. In a marvellous piece of double-think Maitan argued "The events which have followed the defeat of the guerrillas have also, in the last analysis, confirmed Guevara's fundamental option."³⁰

It was with this perspective that the Ninth Congress "armed" its Bolivian section, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, known as the POR(Gonzales) after its leader Hugo Gonzales Moscoso.

Links were made with the National Liberation Army (ELN), a guerrilla group which traced its origins to Guevara's group, and which identified absolutely with the "foco" strategy of the original ELN. The POR(Gonzales) preoccupied itself with military preparations. The political perspective adopted for Bolivia in order to justify the military strategy, one that saw no possibility of legal or semi-legal trade union mass struggles arising under the military, was soon to be rudely shattered by the events of 1970-71.

The death of the dictator General Barrientos led to an upsurge of trade union action. Growing mass mobilisations in 1970 led to an attempted coup by right wing generals. The military regime split apart as the masses poured onto the streets in response to a general strike called by the COB, the Bolivian trade union centre. The result was the "leftist" military regime of General Torres supported by a "Political Command" made up of the COB and various left political parties.

The POR(Gonzales) was completely isolated from these mass struggles. Instead it had been organising support for the opening of a guerrilla struggle in Teoponte by the ELN and preparing its own guerrilla actions. The Teoponte Front, opened in July 1970, was a complete disaster. The 75 guerrillas involved were hunted down by the army and slaughtered. Only eight escaped execution by the army.

Despite the mass workers' struggles of 1970-71 the POR(Gonzales) stuck to its guerrillaist perspective. When it finally recognised the importance of the Popular Assembly in 1971—a body drawing together the COB, political, student and peasant organisations—it was only to make propaganda within it for the necessity of organising a "peoples' army".³¹ Rarely had a political line been proved so rapidly bankrupt as was the case with the Ninth Congress decisions. Yet worse was to come in Argentina.

The Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores (PRT) had been founded in 1964 as a result of the fusion between Nahuel Moreno's group, which had broken from the IC and was now in political solidarity with the USFI, and an openly Castroite current, the FRIP. By 1968, however, Moreno was opposing the guerrillaism he had previously fostered and a split with the pro-Castroite wing of the PRT resulted. Moreno led what became known as the PRT(Verdad) while the other wing was led by Mario Roberto Santucho and known as the PRT(Combatiente). Both groups attended the Ninth Congress and asked to be recognised as the official section.

For the old IS leadership in Europe there was no question but that the PRT(C) should be the official

²⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p51
ences and Perspectives of the armed struggle in Bolivia, *Intercontinental Press*, Paris, 2 September 1968
³¹ See "Bolivia 1970-71: a revolution disarmed", *Workers Power* 40, London, March 1983 for a more detailed account

section given it identified completely with the guerrillaist strategy. When Moreno pointed out that the PRT(C) was not Trotskyist the USFI leadership denied it. (Of course Moreno was not on particularly strong grounds as these were his erstwhile fusion partners of a few years before!)

Certainly the PRT(C) did not even claim to be Trotskyist. Their 1968 founding document had declared their aim to fuse together the currents of Trotskyism, Maoism and Castroism! But then these positions were not a million miles away from the position adopted at the Ninth Congress which called for "integration with the historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban Revolution and the OLAS"! Neither did the PRT(C) even recognise the USFI itself to be a revolutionary international, a curious stance for a section of the "world party of socialist revolution"!

At its Fifth Congress in 1970 the PRT(C) announced its "intention of bringing about the proletarianisation of the International, of transforming it into a revolutionary organisation, and of struggling to orient it toward the formation of a new revolutionary International based on the Chinese, Cuban, Korean, Vietnamese and Albanian parties".³²

None of this stopped the PRT(C) becoming the centre of the USFI leaderships attention as offering another possibility of a "breakthrough". Maitan, safe in his professor's office in Rome University, encouraged the young PRT(C) leadership to launch a guerrilla war.

The development of the faction fight

In 1970 this leadership around Santucho launched the "Peoples' Revolutionary Army" (ERP). Over the next four years the ERP engaged in a series of increasingly foolhardy actions which resulted in the virtual destruction of the organisation and led to the murder of hundreds of revolutionaries by the army.

Maitan obviously sensed that this young leadership was not only more on his political wavelength than his old adversary Moreno, but also that it was more malleable. Over the next decade, Maitan consistently encouraged and defended the Santucho leadership, even in some of its more curious pronouncements and disastrous actions, to the extent that he refused to vote for the "self-criticism" on the guerrilla turn made by Mandel and the rest of the USFI majority at the end of 1976.

As in Bolivia the guerrilla line was launched in Argentina in a period when the military dictatorship was coming under increasing pressure from workers' mobilisations. In May 1969 a mass general strike and rising broke out in Cordoba, followed by mass strikes elsewhere. In 1971 there was a second rising in Cordoba, which resulted in a change of government bringing General Lanusse to power with a promise of a return to civilian government.

During these mass struggles the ERP, like the various Peronist guerrillaist movements, concentrated on armed actions. The ERP, following the example of the Uruguayan Tupamaros urban guerrillas, progressed from "liberating" milk floats and distributing the booty in the shanty towns, to "declaring war" on the Argentinian state! Bank raids multiplied, political meetings were held at gun point in factories, managers were kid-

napped for ransoms used to distribute food to the needy.

These "Robin Hood" tactics might have gained some transient popularity for the PRT(C) but they did nothing to gain them a place or hearing in the growing struggles in the factories and trade unions. In March 1972 they kidnapped Oberdan Sallustro, the general manager of Fiat Concord and executed him a few weeks later when the ransom demands were not met. This, together with the Bolivian events, was too much for the SWP. They publicly condemned the shooting, which had been endorsed in the press of many sections of the USFI.

The SWP argued that such actions, isolated from the mass movement and not undertaken in a civil war situation, were defined by Marxists as "terrorism", and had nothing to do with the Marxist tactics of armed struggle. The European leadership replied that the SWP was "tail endist", not willing to lead the masses in the need for armed actions, and "spontaneist" in leaving the question of arms for the workers to be "solved" by the insurrection.

This was the background to the December 1972 IEC meeting which was to give rise to the opposing tendencies. The IMT consisting of largely the old IS leadership, condemned the SWP stand and forbade other sections to publish it. However, even Maitan and Mandel were forced to start voicing *some* criticisms of the PRT(C)'s line in 1972.

As the PRT(C) moved further down the road of urban guerrillaism and away from the USFI so it became increasingly faction ridden. Already its delegates to the Ninth Congress had been expelled and two thirds of its Central Committee of that time either expelled or left. In a letter from six leading IEC members (including Mandel, Frank and Maitan) sent to the PRT(C) in October 1972 they raised the first tentative criticisms of the organisation. They still, however, declared that the PRT(C)/ERP's line "represents an unquestionable gain for the Trotskyist and revolutionary movement".³³

This confidence was ill rewarded by the PRT(C). The leadership denounced the USFI for attempting to organise a faction within their ranks. Having already publicly declared they were no longer Trotskyist, the Central Committee formally broke with the USFI in July 1973. Their leader Santucho was already in Cuba, where he proceeded to found the "Co-ordinating Revolutionary Junta", an organisation that included the Bolivian ELN, the Chilean MIR and the Tupamaros of Uruguay.³⁴

This desertion was a blow to the IMT embroiled as it was in a factional struggle. At the December 1972 IEC meeting critical resolutions on the record of the USFI sections in implementing the Ninth Congress line had been tabled. They were co-authored by Joseph Hansen, Hugo Blanco, Nahuel Moreno, Peter Camejo and Anibal Lorenzo. Both were rejected along with the minorities proposal to postpone the Tenth Congress due in 1974. March 1974 saw the formation of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTT) which largely represented the old IC wing of the fusion. By August the LTT had converted itself into the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTF), aimed not only at changing the line on guerrilla warfare but also the leadership of the USFI.

The key argument that the LTF used to justify its transformation into a faction was that the IMT was in

32 Cited in J Hansen, 1979 op cit, p274-75

33 *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* X(7), June 1973, p22

34 Santucho was later killed in Buenos Aires in an armed action by the Argentinian military in 1976



Ernest Mandel



Joseph Hansen

fact functioning as a "secret faction". As Hansen put it in a way which mimicked Cannon's 1953 discovery that a secret Pablo clique had hijacked the International:

"Later it was discovered that the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency was in actuality functioning as a secret faction; that is, on an undeclared basis. It was discovered, in addition, that some of its leaders favoured working toward a split in the Fourth International."³⁵

This apolitical response to the IMT's manoeuvres marked a distinct down-turn in the quality of the LTF/SWP polemics. Hansen's last major article was written before the formation of the LTF, and the field was increasingly left open to the new SWP leadership

around Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters, drab *aparatchiks* for whom the "organisational question" predominated. Formal lawyer's arguments replaced political debate. Allegations of secret meetings, secret letters and organisational manoeuvres filled the pages of the LTF's articles. The tone was set for much of the SWP's internal life up to the present.

In May 1973 Bill Massey and John Barzman formed the Internationalist Tendency (IT) inside the SWP, on the basis of support for the IMT. The SWP leadership, which since the year before had been in the hands of Barnes (National Secretary) and Barry Sheppard (National Organisational Secretary), was not amused. At the SWP Convention in August 1973, the Nominations Commission refused any places for the IT on the SWP National Committee. The boasted internal democracy of the SWP did not count for much.

The Tenth World Congress

The Tenth World Congress took place in February 1974. 250 delegates were present, from 48 sections representing 41 countries. On all the major resolutions adopted—on the world political situation, Bolivia, Argentina, armed struggle in Latin America, the theses on building of revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe—the congress was deeply divided along factional lines. The minority against the IMT positions consistently received over 45% of the votes at the congress. A third small tendency was formed at the congress—the Mezhrayonka Tendency—often voting with the LTF against the IMT.

The "new youth vanguard" of the Ninth Congress resolutions had been transformed into something bigger. "A new vanguard of mass proportions has appeared" declared the Tenth Congress theses on "Building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe".³⁶ Developing the theme adopted at the Ninth Congress the USFI congratulated itself on the fact that the traditional reformist parties were growing weaker and weaker.

Their policies were "losing credibility". The "electoralist and parliamentary road" was being "increasingly challenged objectively by the broad masses". Indeed it had to be "objectively" since the same paragraph noted an infuriating subjective tendency:

"They continue to vote for the traditional parties"! "The traditional leaderships" the members of the USFI were assured "are no longer successful in winning over very (!) large sectors of the young workers to their policy and concepts."³⁷

Like the Ninth Congress, the Tenth continued its attempts to dismiss and go round the Stalinist and social democratic parties, to ludicrously belittle their influence over the masses and exaggerate the role and strength of a "new mass vanguard".

Quite how distant from reality this position was is clear if it is remembered that in the same year as the Tenth Congress the British Labour Party was returned to power, Mitterrand missed becoming French President by a whisker, the Italian CP was on its way to its highest vote ever (34.4% in 1976) and that in Germany in 1972 the unions and workers spontaneously engaged in strike action against a parliamentary motion of no confidence against the SPD/FDP coalition govern-

35 J Hansen, 1979 op cit, p444
36 *Intercontinenta Press*, Paris, 23 December 1974, p1822
37 *Ibid*

ment!³⁸ This latter event, of considerable significance in indicating the working class' continued loyalty to the reformist parties, isn't even mentioned! For the USFI, all that counted was their impression that "We are seeing the beginning of a re-composition of the organised workers movement as a whole" whatever that meant.³⁹

And what was their programme for winning over these radical layers? As in 1969, the USFI had nothing to recommend except "continuing education of the vanguard"⁴⁰ and "a capacity on the part of the revolutionary Marxist organisations to take political initiatives outflanking the course of the reformists", including "independent actions within the plants".⁴¹ As at the Ninth Congress, once a wave of the USFI magic wand had made the reformists disappear, all that was necessary was a few "exemplary actions" and the "political vacuum" would be filled by the USFI. The similarity between this position, applied to the industrial working class in Europe, and that for the peasant masses in Latin America, is striking. Both are classic examples of a petit bourgeois failure to understand the real dynamics of the class struggle, the real roots of reformism and how to intervene to combat it.

On the question of guerrilla warfare in Latin America and especially the Argentinian question, in the light of the defection of the PRT(C), the IMT had to make some slight retreats. The "First self-critical balance sheet" was a remarkable affair.⁴² It noted that at the time the PRT(C) was admitted to the USFI as the official section it held positions that were "in contradiction with the essential concepts and analyses of the Fourth International". These were:

"... an erroneous conception of Maoism... an apologetic appreciation of Castroism: a centrist and eclectic conception of building the International: an opportunist conception of the struggle against the bureaucracy of the degenerated workers' states, typified by the support they gave to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Kremlin armies, etc."

The resolution goes on to acknowledge that "Although these positions were partly known, neither the Ninth Congress nor the leadership of the Fourth International spelled out a political critique of the PRT".⁴³

After this breathtaking admission of the real politics of the PRT(C) and a retrospective characterisation of it as "centrist" the resolution goes on to say, "The recognition of the PRT as a section of the Fourth International was justified"! Yet after recovering our breath this should come as no surprise. A fairly consistent theme of the Mandel led "Fourth International" has been its willingness to liquidate their International into "centrist" currents if only they were given the go ahead. The IS/USFI has, in its time, played unrequited suitor to Tito, Mao, Castro, Ben Bella and lately the Sandinistas. It is no wonder it could swallow the neo-Maoist PRT(C) without worrying. Programme? Strategy? Tactics? Leadership? These become so much unnecessary ballast when the possibility of the "big breakthrough" is dangled before such inveterate centrists.

The resolution on Argentina, while criticising the erroneous guerrilla strategy of the PRT(C)/ERP for its failure to link itself sufficiently to the masses, for "its insufficient assimilation of the theory of permanent revolution" and for its support for a popular front

between the trade unions and the "progressive bourgeois Alfonsin" (now President) nevertheless could declare that it continued "to appear as the most advanced and most credible existing option in the revolutionary left".⁴⁴

Not surprisingly, given this line, the PRT(V) of Moreno received little mention in the resolution and Moreno's group was refused recognition as the official section, despite its considerable growth since the Ninth Congress. In the Bolivian resolution the line of the POR(Gonzales) was endorsed. And a resolution on "Armed struggle in Latin America" reaffirmed the Ninth Congress resolution on the guerrilla strategy as "one of the gains made by our movement". While "uniting with the Castroite current" remained "a central question".⁴⁵

The Tenth Congress resolutions however only reflected part of the differences that had opened up in the USFI. Before the congress it had been agreed to put off discussions on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party and solidarity work, women's liberation and the Middle East.

Differences over Vietnamese solidarity work in particular led to a major dispute over the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party (1973-74). The SWP had consistently tailed the anti-war movement in the USA, refusing to raise clear defeatist slogans or openly support the victory of the NLF. The European sections, making an equally strong adaptation to the solidarity movement in which they were working, while correctly arguing for the victory of the Vietnamese army, took a completely uncritical attitude to the Vietnamese Stalinists.

They argued that the VCP—like Tito and Mao in their time—were not Stalinists, but "empirical revolutionaries". The SWP replied that they were indeed Stalinists. This was not generalised to a critique of the Cuban Revolution, nor of Castro's Stalinism, however. Further, they were unable to challenge the basis of the majority's position—which is an essential part of the centrist continuity of the USFI with the centrism of the 1951 FI—whereby:

"There is room between the social democratic or Stalinist reformist parties and the Trotskyist revolutionary-Marxist parties for a whole gamut of centrist formations or groups that on the theoretical level are distinguished by revolutionary empiricism"⁴⁶

As in the 1950s, the method was the same on both sides. The only difference was over defining who exactly were the "revolutionary empiricists".

Thus after the Tenth Congress the USFI remained as deeply divided and faction ridden as ever. Where there was agreement, however, at least between Mandel and Hansen, was that a split had to be avoided and the unprincipled fusion of 1963 maintained. While this annoyed the "splitters" in the IMT, (e.g. Maitan, Krivine) it also led to growing divisions over tactics within the LTF. Having been again refused admission as the official section in Argentina, Moreno pressed for the declaration of a "public faction". Seeing the unwillingness of the SWP to go along this path and thus risk a split, the Moreno tendency increasingly organised itself separately and prepared to carry out just such a split itself.

38 The "Barzel coup"

39 *Intercontinental Press*, Paris, 23 December 1974 op cit, p1822

40 *Ibid*, p1824

41 *Ibid*

42 *Ibid*, p1797

43 *Ibid*, p1797

44 *Ibid*, p1794

45 *Ibid*, p1806

46 *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, X (7), June 1973, p3

The tentative agreement between Mandel and the SWP leaders not to split the International did not, however, apply to splitting the national sections as the SWP soon brutally demonstrated.

Barzman's IT—with or without the knowledge of the IMT centre—had been organising themselves separately within the SWP, with their own internal bulletin and conference. At the June 1974 SWP Convention the IT were expelled. In a classic piece of SWP double-think, they were described as having "split", and as being members of the "International Tendency Party". Of the 150 IT members expelled, 17—including Barzman—were later re-admitted into the SWP. The rest drifted off into the political wilderness, after having forlornly tried to maintain the "IT" as an independent organisation. In this they received no support from Mandel or the IMT. In this period factional tensions reached their height, virtually paralysing the USFI as an international tendency.

The SWP leadership claimed that the IMT had organised the IT "split", and called for a Special World Congress to deal with the matter, given that the question now involved "nothing less than the main theoretical acquisitions of the Fourth International since the death

of Trotsky".⁴⁷ The United Secretariat replied claiming that the allegations were "slanderous", "ridiculous" and "unfounded" and called in the International Control Commission to investigate the claims. The Steering Committee of the LTF replied that the IMT leaders had:

"... usurped the Bureau, converting it into a monopoly of their faction. They have reduced the United Secretariat to a formal body that meets in a perfunctory way and cannot even be relied upon to furnish accurate minutes of its own proceedings."⁴⁸

The year 1975 was to be the high point of the factional struggle in the USFI. The Portuguese Revolution starting in 1974 was again to pit the two wings of the USFI against one another. The defeat of the revolution was to lead to a rapid shift rightwards by the IMT. Like the rudderless centrists they were, when reality finally caught up with them after the defeat of the Portuguese Revolution and the retreats of the workers' movement in Europe, these impressionists quickly turned 180 degrees and became, once again, the most craven opportunists and footsoldiers to the same reformist leaders they had previously declared finished! In this situation there was to be a further eruption of factional struggle within the USFI.

47 *International
Internal
Discussion
Bulletin*, XII (3),
January 1975, p3
48 *Ibid*, p6

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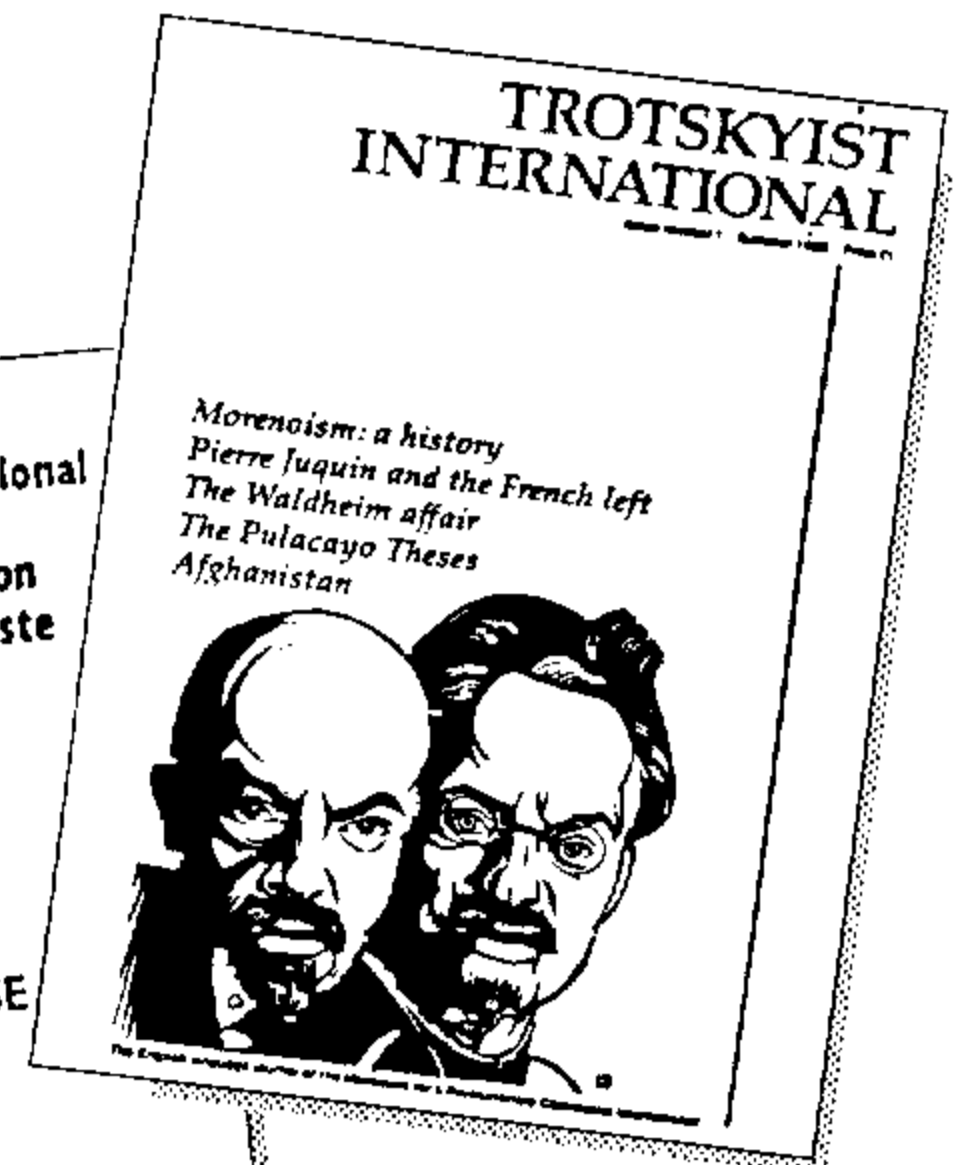
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