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# International Situation 2022

## Draft document for the International Trotskyist Opposition

World capitalism is failing to deal with five acute and interlocking crises: 1) the Covid-19 pandemic; 2) the roller-coaster economy resulting from the coincidence of the pandemic and the exhaustion of the weak recovery from the 2007-09 recession; 3) climate change and environmental degradation; 4) inter-imperialist rivalry and the new cold war; 5) inequality between and within nations, starkly evidenced by the pandemic.

As a result of the crises, social conditions are worsening: For workers suffering job losses, falling real wages, and declining social services. Peasants impoverished and forced off the land by draught and agribusiness. The urban poor unable to make a living in the informal sector. Intensified attacks on oppressed ethnic groups and immigrants. Women forced to work under unsafe conditions during the pandemic or pushed out of social labor to care for family. Attacks on LGBTQ+ people. Gang, street and domestic violence, homicides, suicides, opioid and other drug overdoses. War and displacement.

The political situation is increasingly polarized: Center-left and center-right parties are less and less able to channel discontent into their electoral competition. The reformist parties that once led the workers' and popular movements — social-democratic, Stalinist, and petty-bourgeois nationalist — have collapsed, moved to the right, or become marginalized. Broad left parties rise and fall, promising to end austerity and then capitulating to neoliberalism. Far right and fascist parties are growing. The revolutionary left is small, fragmented, and generally disconnected from mass struggles.

Despite the unfavorable conditions, sectors of the workers and the oppressed continue to resist. In the past decade — and even in the past two years, despite Covid — there have been strikes and demonstrations for jobs, wages, relief, democracy, abortion rights, LGBTQ+ rights, immigrant rights. And against crackdowns, coups, corruption, inequality, price increases, subsidy eliminations, repressive laws, gendered violence, police repression, racism, xenophobia.

These have occurred in Latin America from Argentina and Chile to Mexico, in the US and Canada, in Africa from Tunisia and Egypt to Sudan to South Africa, in Europe from Ireland and Spain to Poland and Russia, and in Asia from Yemen, Palestine and Turkey to Pakistan and India to China, Myanmar and the Philippines.

The struggles have echoed each other, as was the case with the Arab Spring, the Indignados Movement, and Occupy Wall Street in 2011. But they have not been generalized or coordinated. They have sometimes replaced leaders, but never governmental systems, let alone social systems. They are testaments to the courage and yearning for justice of workers and the oppressed, but they have not risen to the level of consciousness, organization, and mobilization needed to win.

Revolutionary Marxists must help build and lead struggles and promote the clarity and confidence of the working class, but our additional and specific task is to overcome the weakness of our own movement. We must clarify our positions, evaluate our differences, and work to build revolutionary parties and a revolutionary International. A component of this is to overcome the disorientation and fragmentation of the heirs of Trotskyism and refound the Fourth International on a consistently revolutionary basis.

## **Covid-19**

The most dramatic failure of world capitalism today is its failure in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The disease itself is no surprise. Its origin is an old story: human activity encroaches on nature, giving a pathogen the opportunity to jump to human beings from another species. Global transportation networks mean that an outbreak of a highly contagious disease anywhere is likely to spread everywhere.

Governments had many tools to combat the pandemic, some of them centuries old. Containment: local, regional and country-wide lockdowns, travel bans. Mitigation: masks, social distancing, hygiene, ventilation, testing, contact tracing, quarantine, isolation, cancelling large events, closing restaurants and bars, closing schools and childcare centers. Treatment: hospitalization, intensive care, oxygen, mechanical ventilators. Pharmaceuticals: in the first year monoclonal antibody therapy, in the second year vaccines, in the third year antiviral drugs.

On the economic and social front, workers who could work remotely or safely distanced could have kept working. Essential workers in healthcare, nursing homes, childcare, teaching, agriculture, food processing, logistics, distribution, etc., could have kept working with the staffing levels, distancing, ventilation, personal protective equipment, and protocols they needed to work safely. If they were exposed to Covid or got sick, they could have been given paid time off to isolate or recover. Non-essential workers whose jobs required contact with others (restaurants, bars, entertainment, sports, travel, tourism, etc.) could have been given alternative work or leave with full pay, whenever the disease made their jobs too risky.

This didn't happen. Instead, the governments, if they did anything at all, alternated between lockdowns that came too late and reopenings that came too soon. Their economies were disrupted, people got sick and died, and an angry minority rejected Covid-related mandates, insisting that they had the right to refuse, whatever the consequences for others.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), at the end of 2021 governments had reported about 290 million Covid-19 cases and 5.4 million deaths. The figures are certainly too low, since most Covid-19 cases and deaths are not reported. For example, the Indian government reported about half a million deaths, but analysis of excess deaths — deaths above what would be expected in normal times — suggests that the real number may be as much as ten times higher.

By WHO figures, the hardest hit regions were Europe, the US and Latin America, with 1.7 million deaths in Europe and 2.4 million deaths in the Americas. 0.72 million died in Southeast Asia, 0.32 million in the Eastern Mediterranean, 0.16 million in the Western Pacific, and 0.16 million in Africa. The countries with the most Covid-19 deaths were, in order, the US, Brazil, India, Russia, Mexico and Peru. The country with the highest mortality rate was Peru, with most of the next twenty from Eastern Europe.

The governments counted on vaccines to end the pandemic. According to WHO 51 percent of the world population was fully vaccinated at the end of 2021. In China 83 percent of the population was fully vaccinated, in Japan 79 percent, Italy and France 74 percent, Germany and Argentina 71 percent, Britain 70 percent, Brazil 66 percent, the US 60 percent, India 45 percent, and Russia 44 percent. With 7 percent fully vaccinated, Africa was the least-vaccinated continent.

How soon Covid-19 will run its course remains to be seen. The virus is evolving, and new variants may be able to evade the current vaccines. In any case, more pandemics are coming. Uncontrolled human encroachment on the environment continues, and the public health systems in most of the world, including in the advanced capitalist countries, are too rickety to contain the consequences.

### **The roller-coaster economy**

The world capitalist economy was headed for a downturn before Covid-19 hit. The 2007-09 recession was the worst since the 1930s by some measures, the worst since 1982 by others. China recovered quickly, the advanced capitalist countries recovered slowly, and the countries dependent on exporting primary products recovered very little. Still, by 2020 the world economy had been growing for more than a decade, and another downturn was overdue.

The Covid-19 pandemic sent the world economy into a tailspin, as illness and lockdowns curtailed economic activity. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) *Economic Outlook* from December 2021, the world's real gross domestic product (GDP) fell 3.4 percent in 2020, compared with a 1.3 percent fall in 2009 and an average growth of 3.3 percent for 2013-2019. In 2020 real GDP fell 3.4 percent in the US, 6.5 percent in the euro area, 4.6 percent in Japan, 7.3 percent in India, and 4.4 percent in Brazil. Only China grew, at a slow (for it) 2.3 percent.

The pandemic and the downturn caused immense suffering, but recovery began quickly. OECD reports and projections show real GDP growth rates in 2021 of 5.6 percent for the world, 5.6 percent for the US, 5.2 percent for the euro area, 1.8 percent for Japan, 9.4 percent for India, 5.0 percent for Brazil, and 8.1 percent for China. World trade, having fallen 8.4 percent in 2020, was reported/projected to grow 9.3 percent in 2021.

Much of the reason for the quick reversal was massive Keynesian intervention by governments, both fiscal (deficit spending) and monetary (low interest rates, bond purchases, loan guarantees). The ruling classes feared economic collapse and the breakdown of social order.

The US government allocated \$4 trillion to economic rescue in 2020 during the Trump administration — about 15 percent of GDP — and \$2 trillion more in 2021 during the Biden administration. The European Union (EU) allocated 4 percent of GDP, and member states added another 5 percent. Britain allocated 11 percent, Japan 21 percent, China 2.5 percent with another 770 billion in loan guarantees, and India 9 percent. Countries with smaller economies allocated less, but recovery in the larger economies helped them too.

While the pandemic hasn't yet run its course, the world economy is approaching pre-pandemic levels of activity. The most acute immediate problems seem to be shortages and price increases.

The anarchy of capitalism means that production was cut back too far and restarted too slowly and erratically. The restart lag has led to shortages, which in turn have led to price increases. These extend back through the supply chain. Components for manufacturing, such as computer chips, are scarce and expensive, as are materials for construction, such as lumber. Logistics are snarled, because ships and containers were idled and in the wrong places for the restart. A shift in consumption from risky services to safer goods has aggravated the imbalance.

Economists, politicians and the commercial media are warning that the world economy is overheating. They argue that inflation is the most pressing economic problem, not unemployment. They want to end the Covid-19 rescue and impose austerity to pay back the debt incurred during their brief flirtation with Keynesianism. They warn of a return to the stagflation (stagnation and inflation) of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Their real concern is that the world economy is recovering too quickly and the labor market is too favorable to workers. Labor shortages mean that workers are in the strongest position since the latter 1990s to get wage increases through union struggles or changing jobs.

For now the wage increases are more than offset by the rising prices of food, energy, housing, transportation, and consumer goods. But workers may be emboldened by the tight labor market and angered by its likely collapse. They may turn to collective action, union organizing and strikes.

### **Overaccumulation**

The underlying problem for the capitalists is that they have accumulated too much: too many buildings, too much infrastructure, too much machinery, too much productive

capacity. They can no longer invest their capital and get what they regard as an acceptable rate of return.

This has been their main concern since the 1970s, when the productive forces recovered from the destruction of World War I, the Depression and World War II, and the US, Europe, and Japan competed for a too small world market. The expansion of manufacturing in South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Mexico, Eastern Europe, and other developing countries aggravated the problem. The rise of capitalist China has made the situation much worse.

The capitalists have to compete, as they did not during the postwar boom. They compete mainly by introducing new products and new methods of production to increase sales and reduce costs. In the past thirty years the most important new products have been based on computers, sensors, batteries and other electronics, and their linking via the Internet. From smartphones to robotics, consumer and producer goods are being sold that were ideas or prototypes thirty years ago.

The new technology has led to a vast restructuring of production. In manufacturing, robots are replacing workers for many tasks. Factories are smaller and more dispersed, connected by “just in time” logistics. Containerization, automation, and information technology have integrated and systemized logistics, as assembly lines did manufacturing a century ago, again converting workers into appendages of machines. Prefabricated construction using factory-made components is gaining in housing and commercial building.

Computers and the Internet have reshaped services too. In poorer countries most retail transactions still take place in person, but in the advanced capitalist countries and the corresponding sectors of developing countries that is no longer the case. Most payments are made via electronic transfers. More and more purchases are made online and downloaded or delivered from warehouses, with no physical retail space. The Covid-19 pandemic has added healthcare and education to the list of services not necessarily provided in person.

The so-called “sharing economy” has brought the informal sector to the advanced capitalist countries. Airbnb, Uber, and other companies exploit not just the labor but also the houses and vehicles of their employees, with no commitment to guaranteeing their income and conditions. Google, Facebook, Baidu, Tencent, TikTok, and other Internet companies capture and mine data from their users, transforming communication, advertising and surveillance.

The restructuring means intensified exploitation of workers, the main way the capitalists offset their otherwise falling rate of profit. China’s rapid growth and workers’ struggles have led to large wage increases there, but in most other countries wages have stagnated since 1980. Labor productivity has continued to increase at past rates, but nearly all the gains from that have gone to the upper 10 percent — in rapidly

descending share order, to billionaires, millionaires, managers and professionals, and tech and other highly skilled/educated workers.

The capitalists continue to use extra-competitive methods to boost their profits. Excess profits from monopoly control of industries. Rent from ownership of agricultural land and land containing oil, gas, lithium, copper, and other resources, even water. Rent from “intellectual property” secured by patents. As an example, Apple reported profits of \$34.6 billion from revenue of \$123.9 billion in the fourth quarter of 2021, a government-enforced rip-off.

In place of productive investment, speculative buying and selling of commodities and commodity futures to take advantage of current or anticipated shortages. Real estate flipping. Ponzi schemes like the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s, the real estate bubble of the early 2000s, and the stock market mania of the past two years.

The capitalists use their control of government to impose neoliberalism: tax cuts for corporations and the rich, cuts in services for workers and the poor, deregulation, privatization, austerity to repay debts. Meanwhile, military and police spending is sky-high.

The capitalists’ ability to automate and shift production as they like, with no government interference, gives them a big advantage. But the main change is the retreat of the workers’ movement. The unions and political parties supposedly representing the working class no longer resist.

But the economic system is vulnerable. The global assembly line is bigger and more decentralized, but it still exists. Strikes in telecommunications, logistics, or manufacturing would stop it. The capitalists have profited from the working-class retreat, but they’re also vulnerable to the resumption of struggle.

### **Climate change, environmental degradation**

Covid-19 is only one way that human encroachment on the environment has brought disaster. Climate change is even more threatening. The starting point is global warming. Industry, agriculture, buildings, and transportation emit carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses. These trap the heat of solar radiation and warm the planet. Climate change is the result.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that human activity has raised global temperatures 1.2 °C (2 °F) above pre-industrial levels. The warming is uneven, with land temperatures rising twice as fast as ocean temperatures and polar temperatures twice as fast as mid-latitude temperatures. The rise, seemingly modest if it were evenly spread, causes many feedback loops which create tipping points beyond which changes accelerate rapidly.



The IPCC identifies 1.5 °C as a tipping point beyond which the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice caps — raising sea levels and diminishing earth's reflection of sunlight — changes in ocean and air currents, melting of permafrost, desertification, and other feedback loops would cause irreparable damage to the biosphere.

Limiting warming to 1.5 °C would require halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. COP26, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, showed once again that the capitalist governments are unwilling to commit to the steps that would be needed to achieve the 1.5 °C goal. They are not even living up to the commitments they have made. Unless the working class intervenes, the world capitalist economy will blow past any goals, and we will all suffer the consequences.

Global warming leads to a general rise in temperature and also to heat waves and stationary heat domes. Paradoxically, it also weakens the northern and southern jet stream and leads to cold waves and extensions of the polar vortex, maintaining cold air over an area for an extended period of time.

Global warming causes more moisture to evaporate and be held and carried in the air. This leads to drought in some places and floods in others. It also leads to more extreme weather: rainstorms, ice storms, wind storms, tornados, hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons. Heat, dryness, wind, and lightning or human carelessness lead to wildfires, even in tundra and other areas that would not have burned until recently.

The ocean absorbs about a quarter of the carbon dioxide released by human activity. As a result, the oceans are not only warming, they are becoming more acidic. The weakening of ocean currents means that oxygen is less circulated, creating dead zones. Ocean levels are rising. This, plus extreme weather, makes coastal living more precarious.

Pollution further degrades the environment. Petrochemicals and plastic pollute land, water, and air. Industrial farming, overuse of fertilizers, and the raising and slaughtering of more and more animals for meat add to the pollution. Forests are cut for agriculture and urbanization. Deserts are spreading. Loss of habitat means loss of biodiversity, the extinction of species.

Climate change and environmental degradation affect everyone, but they affect poorer countries more than richer countries, and poorer people more than affluent ones. The imperialist countries dump their trash in the countries they dominate, and shift their dirtiest production there. The capitalists and the middle classes can work and live away from mining, manufacturing, and industrial farming. Workers can't. Environmental racism exposes workers of color and immigrants to greater dangers. Women disproportionately have to deal with the consequences of this recklessness.

## **No capitalist solutions**

The capitalist and their governments have no solutions. Those who denied climate change now claim that the market will solve the problem. Relative costs will lead energy companies to shift from coal and oil to natural gas, nuclear power, solar panels, and windmills. Auto and truck companies will shift to battery-powered electric vehicles. Corporations will develop techniques to sequester CO2 underground. Green capitalism will save us. To the extent government has a role, it's to help communities adapt to the consequences of climate change, not to prevent it.

There are solutions, of course, but not capitalist ones. A government of the workers and the oppressed could democratically plan a transition to an economy whose principles would be 1) meeting human needs, 2) equality, and 3) sustainability, that is, restoring the metabolism between human society and nature.

The transition would require expanding some kinds of production and reducing or eliminating others. The expansion (growth) would be to provide water, food, housing, healthcare, education, recreation, and culture for all the world's people. To eliminate the burning of hydrocarbons and nuclear fission, and to develop renewable energy. To replace economic activity that destroys the human and natural forces of production with less harmful, less wasteful, more efficient methods. To reduce the hours of work and allow all people to enjoy what life has to offer.

The reduction or elimination (degrowth) would include the military, police and prisons, surveillance, excess consumption of the rich, useless or harmful consumption of all kinds, marketing and advertising, products designed to break or become obsolete, waste of human labor and natural resources, and so on. This could lead to determining that some kinds of supposedly green technology (batteries, hydroelectric dams, perhaps even windmills and solar farms) use too many resources and do too much damage to pursue.

It would be technically possible to achieve the objectives of meeting human needs, equality, and sustainability — democratically balancing them as necessary. But capitalism can't do it.

## **New Imperialisms**

From a great power standpoint, the confrontation between the US and its allies on one side, and Russia and China on the other, looks much like the Cold War before the Sino-Soviet split in 1961. But then the Soviet Union and China were bureaucratically deformed workers' states, that is, states in which capitalism had been overthrown but the party and state bureaucracy ruled, not the workers. Now the confrontation is among imperialist powers on all sides.

First a definition. In his 1916 book *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lenin famously defined capitalism as having five basic features:

1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy; 3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; 4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and 5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.

Russia and China are full participants in the imperialist order, with their own monopolies, finance capital, financial oligarchies, capital export, and place in the economic and territorial division of the world.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Revolution of 1949 overthrew capitalism and established governments that could direct their countries' economic development, despite the hostility of the imperialist powers. They succeeded well enough so that the Soviet Union could defeat Germany in World War II, China could fight the US to a standstill in the Korean War, and the two countries together could supply materiel for the Vietnamese to defeat the US in the Vietnam War.

By the 1980s both the Soviet Union and China were at an impasse. They had developed to the point where they could no longer grow by extensive means — doing more of the same thing — sufficiently fast to satisfy the demands of the bureaucracy, the professional and managerial middle class, and the working class. They had to grow by more intensive means, producing higher quality goods and services, using more efficient techniques.

The Soviet bureaucracy led by Mikhail Gorbachev turned to *perestroika* (market restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) to try to accelerate growth and engage the population. The attempt failed. The Soviet Union collapsed, and the bureaucracy quickly restored capitalism through a process of “shock therapy.” The process went too far and threatened to make Russia a vassal of US and European imperialism. The new capitalist ruling class turned to Vladimir Putin and the security apparatus to restore authoritarian order.

The post-Soviet Russian Federation was born imperialist. State enterprises were partially or wholly privatized and handed over to oligarchs emerging from the party and state bureaucracy. The Russian Federation is an imperialist structure, with the Russian population dominating the non-Russian population. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) inherited a web of economic and military ties from the Soviet Union. Russia, as the strongest economic and military power in the bloc, has an imperialist relationship to the other CIS members.

The Chinese bureaucracy led by Deng Xiaoping embraced *perestroika* but not *glasnost*. They repressed the 1989 Tiananmen protest, with its demands for democracy and against inequality and corruption, and restored capitalism on their own terms. They

managed the transition more smoothly than the Soviet bureaucracy did, essentially offering rising living standards in exchange for acceptance of their rule.

China grew quickly as a capitalist power. The decisive role of the party and state bureaucracy in the economy gives it a big advantage over conventional capitalist countries. India's population is as large as China's, and its resources are almost as great, but its economy is much smaller. China's GDP is now two-thirds that of the US in foreign-exchange terms. It manufactures and exports more than any other country, and is the world's second-biggest importer.

China has monopolies and billionaires aplenty and massive investments around the world. Its "Belt and Road" initiative evokes patriotic images of the former glory days of the Chinese empire. Its military spending is second only to the US. By any measure, China is imperialist.

### **New Cold War**

Russian imperialism seeks to reassemble as much as possible of the former Russian Empire, nearly all of which was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Its energy and other resources and its military allow it to project power outside that region, acting together with its allies China, Iran, Syria, and, more distantly, Cuba and Venezuela. But its immediate territorial ambitions are more limited.

After the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) split off to find their way into the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The other former Soviet Republics formed the Commonwealth of Independent States. Georgia quit the CIS in 2008, after it lost a brief war with Russia over the secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Ukraine quit in 2014, after it lost a brief war with Russia over Russia's annexation of Crimea and the secession of much of the Donbas region.

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have sought and found ways to bypass Russia to export oil and gas, and Uzbekistan hosted a US airbase for missions to Afghanistan until 2005. But all three remained in the CIS and maintained their economic, political and military ties to Russia.

Russia has used both carrot and stick to maintain its hegemony in the region. The carrot is the ties from the Soviet period — not just economic and military ties, but also an intermingling of populations — and Russia's ability to rescue elites losing their grip on power. The stick is invasion or support for secessionists linked to Russia.

The carrot to the elites was on display in January 2022, when Russia sent troops at the request of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to quell protests and perhaps an attempt by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev to return to power. At the same moment, the stick was on display with the mobilization of 175,000 Russian troops on

three sides of Ukraine to block further moves of Ukraine into the NATO or of NATO into Ukraine.

Chinese imperialism seeks to displace the US as the alpha imperialist power. It is growing much faster than its G7 imperialist rivals in North America, Europe and Japan. Its per capita GDP is still only one-sixth of theirs, which limits the surplus it can devote to research and development, investment and the military, but its government can marshal resources more effectively than its rivals can. In the past thirty years US imperialism stupidly wasted \$5 trillion on wars, while China built its economy.

If Chinese imperialism continues on its present course, it will gain on the US enough to challenge it militarily, as well as economically. World War I and World War II show the consequences of past such challenges. World War III would be fought with nuclear weapons, so the consequences would be much worse.

But that's not the only possible outcome. China has an inadequate resource base and depends on imports of energy and raw materials, which it might not be able to maintain. Its growth has badly damaged its environment, and its people may not continue to tolerate the tradeoff. Its population is aging rapidly, and its reserves of rural labor are drying up. Chinese workers have fought for wages and better conditions far more than workers in the other imperialist countries. They and China's middle class may refuse to continue sacrificing for growth.

China's cost advantage in manufacturing may fade. Its competitors may implement industrial policies to replace Chinese imports with domestic production. They may set up trade and investment pacts that cut off China's sources of energy and raw materials, its markets for manufactures, and its spheres of investment. This could lead to China's having to turn in on itself and settling down as a "mature" capitalist country. Or it could be another path to war.

On the other side of the capitalist cold war, the US, Europe and Japan want to contain Russia and China, but they are economically entangled with them, and they compete with each other. They have different interests. For example, Germany is unhappy about Russian threats against Ukraine, but it is more interested in access to Russian gas than in Ukraine's "right" to join NATO.

Moreover, the cold war lineup may not last. Britain quit the EU. Germany, Japan and Italy fought the US and Britain not so long ago. The US defeat in Afghanistan undercuts its ability to manage the other imperialist powers. Other lineups are imaginable, including the dystopian realignment in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with a US-Britain-centered Oceania, a Germany-Russia-centered Eurasia, and a China-Japan-centered Eastasia.

Of course, the most positive outcome would be that the various crises affecting all the imperialist countries lead to workers' revolution before interimperialist conflict leads to world war.

## **The non-imperialist states**

Most states are not imperialist, they're dominated by imperialism. Among imperialist states the level of economic development varies widely, with Russia and China having relatively low levels of per capita output and the rest relatively high levels. Among non-imperialist states the range is even greater, with many variations in internal situation, relationships with the various imperial powers, and relationships with each other.

### **Eastern Europe**

The Eastern European countries formerly in the orbit of the Soviet Union are now mostly capitalist states of an intermediate level of economic development. The countries to the north and west, from Estonia to Slovenia, are more developed and integrated into the European Union than the countries to the south and east. This line runs right through Ukraine, whose north and west orient toward Poland and Western Europe, and whose south and east orient toward Russia. The confrontation along this line is at the level of civil war and great-power conflict.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, US and European imperialism offered the countries of Eastern Europe the prospect of joining the EU and NATO. Most were admitted, but on a very unequal basis. East Germany, reunited with West Germany in 1990, still lags. In 2019 eastern Germany's per capita GDP was 75 percent that of western Germany, and its unemployment rate was 6.9 percent, compared with 4.8 percent in the west. The rest of Eastern Europe is structurally subordinate, a reserve army of low-wage labor.

Many people in Eastern Europe, including workers, hoped that capitalist restoration would bring freedom from foreign rule, democracy, and entry to the land of milk and honey. The reality of capitalist restoration — economic and social insecurity, inequality, corruption, subordination — has led to anger and resentment, expressed on the left as interest in genuine socialism and on the right as racism, xenophobia, and interest in fascism. On one side, fights for abortion rights in Poland, democracy in Hungary, and labor rights everywhere. On the other, attacks on immigrants and Roma.

### **Latin America**

Latin America is the next most economically developed region of the non-imperial world. Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Mexico have a per capita output approaching China's and sectors well-integrated onto the world capitalist economy. But they are well behind the US and Canada. Their place in the world division of labor, like most of the rest of Latin America, is still to export primary products and import manufactures. Their industry is mostly light manufacturing of food products, textiles and clothing, and assembly for local markets or parts to supply manufacturing elsewhere.

The combination of relatively advanced economies, with large working classes, and domination by imperialism makes Latin America the most politically active region of the world today. This is expressed in strikes and demonstrations, the advance of the “Pink Tide” (discussed below), and the success of the revolutionary left in mobilizations and elections, particularly the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores — Unidad (FIT-U) in Argentina. But as in the rest of the world, to the extent the left fails to offer a way forward, the right will get a hearing, illustrated starkly by the 2018 election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

## Africa

Africa is the poorest continent, a legacy of the European slave trade and colonization. South Africa is at Brazil's level of economic development, with some very advanced sectors, although most of its people are poor. North Africa has been part of the Mediterranean world for millennia, but its conquest by Europe stunted its economic development. Sub-Saharan Africa is far poorer, despite a large population and immense resources.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, African was at the center of the national liberation struggle. The victory of the national liberation movements forced the imperialists to shift from colonial to neocolonial rule, that is, rule through local elites, rather than direct rule. The elites are now junior partners of imperialism in the extraction and export of Africa's wealth. The national liberation movements are history.

The population of Africa is growing much faster than the population anywhere else in the world. It is projected exceed Asia's by the end of the century. At the same time, climate change, environmental degradation, and wars over resources are undermining Africa's ability to provide food and water for its growing population, let alone economic development beyond that. The possibilities for misery are endless, but not so long ago Africa was a beacon of hope. It could be again.

## Asia

Asia is the largest and most diverse continent. We have already discussed capitalist restoration in the former Soviet Union and China and the place of Russia and China in the imperialist system. The level of economic development of the other Asian countries ranges from extremely poor (Afghanistan, Nepal) to poor with developed sectors (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines) to highly developed (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea).

India contains the whole range in one country. It also shows the danger that, when the left fails — not only the bourgeois-nationalist Congress Party, but also the Communist Party of India (Marxist) — the right has an opening. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) movement behind it combine a conservative government with Hindu nationalism, religious fanaticism, fascist populism and paramilitarism. They face resistance, in recent years most spectacularly the

farmers' protests of 2020-21. The left survives, for now. But the situation is very precarious.

## Displacement and migration

A consequence of the poverty and wars over resources described above is displacement of people. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that 84 million people were forcibly displaced in mid-2021. Forty-eight million were internally displaced, that is, displaced in their country of origin. The rest were refugees, some seeking asylum, most not.

Under UNHCR's mandate were 6.8 million refugees from Syria, 5.7 million from Palestine, 2.6 million from Afghanistan, 2.3 million from South Sudan, and 1.3 million from Myanmar. Many migrants were on the move informally toward Europe and the US. The situation will get far worse.

In most economically advanced countries, the capitalists and their governments complain about immigrants and deport many. But their economies need immigrant labor, especially as their populations age. Their goal is not to expel immigrant workers, but to keep them vulnerable, super-exploitable.

The capitalists and governments attempt to lure foreign students and tech workers, which puts a downward pressure on wages in the advanced capitalist countries and creates a "brain drain" from poorer countries that badly need the skills of those who emigrate.

## **Class, race, nationality, and gender**

Capitalism is based on a fundamental inequality: The capitalists own the means of production (buildings, equipment, raw materials, energy, patents or licenses, money to pay wages, etc.). The workers do not. So the capitalists hire the workers, pay them wages, and sell the goods and services they produce at a profit — the difference between the value the workers add by their labor and their wages. The process is capitalist exploitation.

Workers and capitalists struggle over the share each will get of the value the workers produce by their labor, the rate of exploitation. In national account terms, over the distribution of income between the wages and benefits of the workers — including social services and benefits — and the profits, interest and rent of the owners.

From the 1940s through the 1970s the rate of exploitation remained about the same. But starting in the 1980s the capitalist offensive and working-class retreat allowed the capitalists to grab more. They increased the rate of exploitation and took nearly all the gains of labor productivity for themselves. Labor productivity continued to rise at nearly the previous rate, but real wages were flat.



Workers were further squeezed by cuts in social benefits and services under neoliberalism. Socially provided pensions, healthcare, childcare, education, housing, and so on, were cut. Working families made ends meet, or tried to do so, by having more family members work, having them work longer hours and more years, and substituting unpaid household labor for social services.

Billionaires have done spectacularly, even during the pandemic. But they are too few to control the masses they exploit. According to an early 2022 Oxfam report the ten richest men in the world own more than the bottom 3.1 billion people. The capitalists need a buffer between themselves and the workers, peasants and urban poor. Small business owners and the managerial and professional middle class provide this buffer, as well as services the capitalists needs. With more contradiction, so do highly skilled and educated workers.

The distribution of income reflects this. According to figures from the Economic Policy Institute, a left-liberal think tank, average annual wages and salaries in the US in 2019 were: for the bottom 90 percent \$38,923, for the 90-95th percentile \$129,998, for the 95-99th percentile \$210,511, for the 99-99.9th percentile \$521,794, and for the upper 0.1 percent \$2,888,192. The income for the top 1 percent is really much higher, since most of it comes from sources other than wages and salaries. The inequality has grown sharply since 1980, including during the pandemic.

Classes other than the working class have suffered too. Peasants have been impoverished and forced off the land by draught and agribusiness. They can't afford irrigation, machinery and chemicals, and can't compete without them. In some places the demand for local and organic food has helped. But food production is increasingly large-scale and capitalist, and small farms can't survive.

Peasants forced off the land and workers unable to find jobs try to make a living in the informal sector, buying and selling goods — legal or otherwise — and selling their services as day laborers or for longer terms, off the books. Whether they remain in the countryside or are forced into urban slums, they suffer from lack of food, clean water, sanitation, housing and healthcare, from police and gang violence. Many try to migrate to the advanced capitalist countries.

Class oppression is compounded by the special oppression of immigrants, people of darker skin or lower caste, women, and LGBTQ+ people. The special oppression allows the capitalists to pay lower wages and divide the working class along lines of nationality, race, and gender. It deludes the native-born, those of lighter skin or higher caste, men, and straight people to think they are superior because they are better-off. They thus become agents not only of the oppression of others, but of their own oppression too.

### **Eclipse of the reformist leaderships**

The reformist parties that once led the workers' and popular movements could make gains from the 1940s through the 1960s and into the 1970s. The capitalists had so

completely failed in the crises of World War I, the Depression, fascism, and World War II that they had to make major concessions to their working classes to head off revolt or, in some cases, revolution. The postwar boom meant that the capitalists could make the concessions and still profit from rebuilding what they had destroyed.

The concessions took the form of trade unions and the welfare state in the advanced capitalist countries, decolonization and neocolonialism in the colonies and semicolonies, and “peaceful coexistence” with the Stalinist states. The 1940s through the 1970s saw sharp conflict between capitalists and workers, between the imperialist powers and the national liberation movements, and between the US and its allies and the Soviet Union, China and their allies. But the overall dynamic was accommodation on all sides, not a fight to the death.

When growth slowed and overaccumulation began to strangle capitalist profit-making in the 1970s, the capitalists prepared a counteroffensive to change the balance of forces. The reformist leaders of all stripes failed to meet the challenge.

The leaders of the trade unions and the social-democratic parties in the advanced capitalist countries put up an ineffectual resistance and then capitulated. The success, from a capitalist standpoint, of the governments of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US, and the failure, from a working-class standpoint, of the governments of François Mitterrand in France and Andreas Papandreu in Greece marked the shift politically. Since then the trade unions and the social-democratic parties have spiraled further downward into neoliberalism.

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders of the national liberation movements similarly capitulated. Voted out of office in 1990, the Sandinistas degenerated into a corrupt gang around Daniel Ortega. Syria joined the US-led military coalition to crush Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War. In 1994 Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa, inaugurating a neocolonial and neoliberal regime led by the African National Congress (ANC). The list could go on and on.

The Stalinist leaderships of the Soviet Union, China, and the other bureaucratically deformed workers’ states — all but Cuba and North Korea — went for capitalist restoration. In Eastern Europe the Communist parties either crumbled or became social-democratic parliamentary parties. In Russia two parties emerged from the rubble of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Putin’s United Russia, dominant, and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, a tame opposition. In China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos the Communist parties became the ruling parties of the new capitalist states.

With a few exceptions, the Stalinist parties in other countries either collapsed or refashioned themselves as social-democratic or even liberal parties. Several have led or participated in capitalist governments. As a component of the ANC, the South African Communist Party participates in the country’s capitalist government. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has led capitalist state governments in West Bengal, Kerala and

Tripura. The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) — unified from 2018 to 2021 as the Nepal Communist Party — have led minority, coalition and majority governments at the federal level, all capitalist.

## **Political polarization**

The prolonged failure of capitalism to deal with its interlocking crises has increased political polarization. In bourgeois democracies center-left and center-right parties are less and less able to channel discontent into their electoral competition. This has led to weaker governments of the bourgeois centrist parties, weak coalitions, technocratic compromises, more extreme confrontations between parties, the victory of parties or factions outside the past range, and other unstable outcomes, depending on the balance of forces in the country. In authoritarian countries the polarization is driven underground.

The shift to the right of the Stalinist, social-democratic and nationalist parties left a vacuum to their left. In several countries broad left parties tried to fill the void, in Europe including the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy, Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Left Bloc in Portugal, and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark. They promised to end austerity, formed or joined capitalist governments or supported them from outside, and capitulated to neoliberalism.

The “Pink Tide” parties and governments in Latin America have followed similar trajectories. With victory in the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, US imperialism — confident that it was now the sole superpower in a new world order — reduced its support for authoritarian governments in Latin America. They weren’t needed to impose neoliberalism, and they were more trouble than they were worth.

As the space for democracy expanded, workers, peasants, the urban poor, and sectors of the urban middle class began to express their dissatisfaction with the neoliberal order. The recovery of the world economy from the 2000-01 recession and the rapid growth of China created a commodities boom, which made it easier for commodity-exporting Latin American countries to pull back from neoliberalism.

Rejection of neoliberalism led to uprisings with elements of dual power, as in Chiapas in 1994, Argentina in 2001, Venezuela in 2002, Bolivia in 2000 and 2003, Oaxaca in 2006. But mostly it led to militant demonstration and strikes over national disputes and the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The global justice movement and the World Social Forum linked the Latin American struggle to the global one.

The Pink Tide was an electoral expression — and cooptation — of hostility to neoliberalism. Hugo Chávez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998 and rescued from a rightist coup by mass protest in 2002. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected president of Brazil in 2002. Néstor Kirchner was elected president of Argentina in 2003.

Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia in 2005. Rafael Correa was elected president of Ecuador in 2006.

The Pink Tide governments promised to end neoliberalism, and Chávez proclaimed “21st century socialism” at the 2005 World Social Forum. But the governments mostly redistributed income from the commodities boom and demobilized the popular movements that had brought them to power. The redistribution reduced poverty and hunger and improved housing, healthcare and education, but it didn’t alter the balance of class forces.

The 2007-09 recession deflated the commodities boom and sharply reduced the income available for the Pink Tide governments to redistribute. Social plans were cut back. The arrogance, complacency or corruption of many officials confirmed the popular view that all politicians are alike. Pink Tide governments were deposed or voted out. The elections of Mauricio Macri in Argentina in 2015 and Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018 were particularly galling.

The Pink Tide seems to be returning with the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in Mexico in 2018 and subsequent elections in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, Chile, and, presumably, Brazil in October 2022. But there is no reason to expect a better outcome this time around. As with the European broad left parties, electoral victories are not enough to secure reforms.

With the reformists providing no real alternative, far right and fascist parties have grown, and parties of the traditional right have adapted to their racism and xenophobia. Far rightists have held power in Poland with the governments of the Law and Justice Party, in Hungary with Viktor Orbán, in India with Narendra Modi, in the US with Donald Trump, and in Brazil with Bolsonaro. In many countries fascist paramilitaries attack immigrants and oppressed racial and ethnic groups and menace the left and the workers’ movement.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary left is small, fragmented, and generally disconnected from mass struggles.

### **Revolutionary perspectives**

Analyzing the world is one thing, changing it is another. In a famous passage from his 1915 article *The Collapse of the Second International* Lenin lists three symptoms of a revolutionary situation, which can be paraphrased as: 1) the upper classes are in crisis and unable to live in the old way, 2) the lower classes are suffering and unwilling to live in the old way, and 3) as a consequence, the masses are drawn into independent historical action. Lenin continues:

Without these objective changes, which are independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties but even of individual classes, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible. The totality of all these objective changes is called a

revolutionary situation ... it is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary *class* to take revolutionary mass action *strong* enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, "falls", if it is not toppled over.

A key element in the subjective change needed for a successful revolution is the existence of a mass revolutionary party. In another famous passage from his 1920 book "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder Lenin explains the condition of the Bolshevik's success:

The first questions to arise are: how is the discipline of the proletariat's revolutionary party maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, self-sacrifice and heroism. Second, by its ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and — if you wish — merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people — primarily with the proletariat, but *also with the non-proletarian* masses of working people. Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided the broad masses have seen, *from their own experience*, that they are correct. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved.

This defines the perspectives of revolutionary Marxists, and from them flow our tasks. The class struggle exists. Workers are fighting their bosses every day. Sectors of the workers and the oppressed are also fighting around the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic collapse, climate change, militarism and war, racism and xenophobia, fascism, and the rights of people of color, immigrants, women and LGBTQ+ people.

Revolutionary Marxists can and should contribute to these struggles, offering our energy, skills, tactical insights, and leadership. We will learn from the struggles and our comrades in the struggle. Our distinctive contribution is to link the ongoing struggles with the perspective of workers' power, internationally, through a system of transitional demands proposing socialist solutions to the problems of capitalist society.

In order to do this more effectively and to build the leadership the working class needs, revolutionary Marxists need to overcome the weakness of our own movement. We must clarify our positions, evaluate our differences, and work to build revolutionary parties and a revolutionary International. A component of this is to overcome the disorientation and fragmentation of the heirs of Trotskyism and refound the Fourth International on a consistently revolutionary basis.

The International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO) offers the documents of our International Congress — this document, “The Programmatic Principles of the ITO,” “The Crisis of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Consistent Trotskyists,” and others — as contributions to the discussions necessary to refound a revolutionary Marxist International and rebuild an international working-class leadership.

# DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL TROTSKYIST OPPOSITION

## 1. The World Socialist Revolution

The aim of the revolutionary action of Trotskyism is the destruction of capitalist society and the development of socialist society. Only the destruction of capitalism on a world scale will make possible a sufficiently powerful development of the forces of production to permit the liberation of humanity from exploitation, poverty, sexual and social oppression, and inequality; from the deterioration and destruction of natural resources and the environment; and from war and violence — the products of a society divided into classes.

The environmental catastrophe objectively underway, with its recurring pandemic outbreaks, actualizes once again the perspective of the international socialist revolution as a decisive condition for the defense of the human species and of nature as a whole, through the socialist reorganization of society and a democratically planned economy.

The abolition of capitalism, the socialization of the means of production and exchange, and the process of constructing socialism presuppose the destruction of the bourgeois state. This is only possible through the armed insurrection of the proletariat — the only consistently revolutionary class in capitalist society — drawing behind it the masses of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie oppressed under capitalism. Only such an insurrection can enable the proletariat to seize political power and to put an end to the inevitable violent resistance by the ruling class and the forces allied with it against the socialist transformation of society.

Trotskyists reject as illusory the expectation of reaching socialism by a peaceful, gradual road as the result of a progressive development of democracy by the action of the proletariat within the framework of the bourgeois state. In the enormous majority of cases such positions mask the desire not to challenge capitalist relations of production and property. Even where they express a genuine anticapitalist impulse, they retain a utopian character and can only lead to the defeat of the proletariat in the face of the violence of the bourgeois state, which history has always shown — even recently — will be manifested in the most brutal forms when the bourgeoisie feels its domination of society to be challenged.

At the same time, consistent Trotskyism rejects any revolutionary strategy centered on rural or urban guerrilla war. In fact, such a strategy leads to substituting for the proletariat another class (the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, or the declassed youth) as the driving force of the revolution and so demonstrates its nonsocialist nature. In the same way, Trotskyism rejects the action of terrorist-guerrilla groups which claim to speak in the name of the proletariat. In reality, even when a majority of their members are workers, such groups represent layers cut off from the working class, and their adventurism is a disruptive element among the ranks of the proletariat.

Trotskyism reaffirms the Marxist and Leninist conception according to which the victory of the proletarian revolution can only be achieved if it is actively supported by the political majority of the proletariat in the context of a revolutionary crisis.

## **2. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat**

The proletariat will replace the destroyed bourgeois state apparatus with its own state — the dictatorship of the proletariat — based on the organs of soviet democracy: the workers' councils in factories, farms, and neighborhoods, centralized through higher levels of the workers' state. One of the central tasks of the proletarian state will be the struggle against the danger of bureaucratization. The dictatorship of the proletariat will provide for the election and recall of all state officials, whose functions must in no case yield them any special privileges.

Trotskyists must promote the fullest democracy within the workers' state. The concrete methods of operation of proletarian democracy will be determined by the concrete situation of the workers' state. As Trotsky explained:

It is a dictatorship. At the same time it is the only real proletarian democracy. Its breadth and depth depend on concrete historical conditions. The larger the number of states which enter on the road of the socialist revolution, the more the forms of the dictatorship will be free and flexible and the more workers' democracy will be broad and deep.

Our aim is precisely this broad and deep workers' democracy, to the point where the proletariat will be able to extend democratic rights even to the enemies of the revolution and fight against them by political means. But we refuse to bind ourselves in advance by legalistic formulae and schemas, which cannot take into account the concrete development of the revolutionary process and, in particular, the international context.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional stage which, together with the progressive development of the forces of production, will lead to the extinction of social classes and to communism. This process can occur only through the international extension of the proletarian revolution and the creation of a world federation of workers' councils. Once communism has been achieved, the coercive functions of the proletarian dictatorship will diminish, leading to the withering away of the state.

## **3. The World Party of Socialist Revolution**

The attainment of these objectives requires the existence of an international organization which represents the historical interests of the proletariat as the only consistently revolutionary class, based on the theoretical and strategic foundations of scientific socialism, leading the revolutionary process of destroying the bourgeois state and building the world republic of workers' councils. Such an organization, then, can be



nothing other than an International, firmly based on the principles of Marxism and Leninism for our time, that is to say, Trotskyism.

National sections of such an International must be created in every country, without exception. The task of the Trotskyist parties is to struggle to raise the proletariat above its spontaneous consciousness — trade unionist in nature — to socialist consciousness, the transformation of the “class in itself” into the “class for itself”, to combat the bourgeois organizations and the agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers’ movement, which today constitute the main leaderships of the workers’ movement, as well as all forms of opportunism and adventurism within the mass movement. In these conditions, the maintenance of the political independence of the Trotskyist parties is a basic necessity. Under these conditions, the maintenance of the political independence of the consistent Trotskyists is an absolute necessity, even when, in the process of building an independent party, it is necessary for them to constitute themselves for a period as a faction within another political organization.

#### **4. The Struggle to Resolve the Crisis of Proletarian Leadership**

The social-democratic parties and reformist parties of Stalinist origin, which in most capitalist states, particularly the imperialist states, represent the principal leaderships of the mass movement, constitute agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers’ movement (bourgeois workers’ parties). The link of these parties with the bourgeoisie and its state is a direct link in the case of the social-democratic parties and an historically indirect link in the case of the Stalinist parties — that is, a link determined and mediated by the politics of the ruling bureaucratic caste of the USSR or the other degenerated or deformed workers’ states. The collapse of international Stalinism at the end of the 1980s has changed the situation. Some parties that in the preceding phase had become progressively independent from the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR and had strengthened their links with their own bourgeoisie (“Euro-Communist” parties) in some cases have transformed themselves into parties of a neo-social-democratic type or directly bourgeois (as in Italy and Brazil). Others, on the contrary, staying strictly linked to the Russian bureaucracy until the moment of its collapse or blocked in a purely neo-social-democratic evolution by the existence of significant social-democratic parties, have maintained the traditional formal reference to “communism”. Nevertheless, their role has not substantially changed. They remain reformist bourgeois workers’ parties, agents of the bourgeoisie inside the workers’ movement. The policies of the social-democratic parties and reformist parties of Stalinist origin are dedicated to defending the bourgeois state and capitalist property relations. In the oppressed countries, the petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations play a similar role.

Vacillating between reformism and Trotskyism, centrist organizations — among which can be included the most radical petty-bourgeois nationalist forces and organizations of the traditional anarchist type — have not in general developed overt and consistent counterrevolutionary activity. But they constitute, with their opportunist policies, a supplementary obstacle to the proletarian revolution.

A task of consistent Trotskyists is to politically defeat the reformist, Stalinist, centrist, and nationalist organizations and to destroy their hegemony and organizational control over the workers' movement, in the process of regrouping around the Trotskyist program the political majority of the proletariat and the broadest possible sectors of other classes oppressed by capitalism. In the same way, consistent Trotskyists struggle to break the masses away from the influence of the reformist and centrist oppositions in the remaining deformed workers' states.

Consistent Trotskyism rejects as revisionist those positions that envisage the transformation of opportunist organizations into "revolutionary leaderships" under the pressure of the mass movement. Similarly, it rejects the conception of the regeneration of the reformist and/or centrist organizations through a process of internal evolution.

Consistent Trotskyism struggles for revolutionary regroupment, that is, for the unification on the programmatic bases of Bolshevism of the forces of the vanguard of the proletariat. For this purpose Trotskyists may adopt — where conditions call for it — the tactic of entrism in reformist, centrist, or petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations, with the aim of provoking the break of the subjectively revolutionary members of such organizations from their respective leaderships and achieving their regroupment on Bolshevik bases.

Consistent Trotskyism rejects as revisionist the policy of "revolutionary unity", that is, the position according to which the revolutionary party of the proletariat can be created through fusion on vague bases and as a result of some sort of compromise between Trotskyism and forces of a centrist type. Similarly, Trotskyism rejects deep or "sui generis" entrism, that is, the policy which seeks to reduce the role of Trotskyists to that of pressure groups within the opportunist parties, on the basis of revisionist illusions about the possible evolution of such parties in whole or in part. Finally, it rejects the positions of those who theorize the substitution for the role of the revolutionary party by alleged revolutionary united fronts, in which the Trotskyist party would be only a component together with preponderant forces of a centrist type.

## **5. The Capitalist States**

The fundamental dynamics among the capitalist states arise from the interaction of the international proletarian class struggle with both interimperialist rivalries and the contradiction between the imperialist and the oppressed nations. These dynamics express the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, the antagonism between its increasingly socialized, interdependent forces of production and its private relations of production, as ever-intensified throughout the epoch of imperialism by the contradiction between the international character of capitalist production and the restraints of national boundaries.

Under these conditions, the class-collaborationist treachery of the Stalinist bureaucracies has repeatedly been decisive in providing the imperialists with the

possibility of avoiding or surviving major defeats and setbacks. Within the colonial and semicolonial world, the treachery of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships has played a similar role. As their contradictions have intensified, the imperialist nations have been forced to rely increasingly on the small number of colonial-settler states (South Africa of the apartheid era, the Zionist state of Israel) and populations (the “Falkland Islanders”) implanted in the midst of semicolonial territories and either imperialist themselves or profoundly dependent on imperialist countries for their survival as privileged enclaves surrounded by oppressed nations and peoples, to assist their efforts to maintain economic dominion over the semicolonial world.

In the present historical epoch, Marxism recognizes decisive distinctions among capitalist nations — above all, between oppressor and oppressed nations. The various capitalist states fall into certain basic categories, based on qualitative differences among them in the level of development of the productive forces and on the specific relationship of each national economy to the entire imperialist system — that is, to the world capitalist economy as a whole. By these criteria, we must recognize three types of capitalist nation-states, based on three essentially different levels of economic development:

1. imperialist states;
2. semicolonial states or, in general, those oppressed by imperialism;
3. states with an intermediate level of capitalist development.

The imperialist states (the principal ones being today the USA, China, Germany, Japan, France, Britain, Italy, Russia and Canada), dominated by monopolies and finance capital with a supranational character (export of capital), represent the overlords of the world, which they exploit and plunder on the basis of the international division of labor. They thus play the role of oppressor states. In these countries the productive forces have reached a high level of development, and the proletariat constitutes the majority of the working population. In the end, the fate of the socialist revolution is determined by the victory of the proletarian revolution in these imperialist centers.

The semicolonial states, or, in general, those oppressed by imperialism (among which a few small territories remain in a colonial situation), comprise a wide range of social situations. The majority of the states of Asia and all the states of Africa (except South Africa) and Latin America (except Cuba) are in this category, as states in which the degree of development of the productive forces in general is low. They are in general subjected to imperialist exploitation and pillage. Nearly always, even where the transformations of the international division of labor have led in the past decades to the massive development of the proletariat, particularly the industrial proletariat, there is a strong presence of the agrarian proletariat (agricultural laborers), the nonproletarian sectors exploited and oppressed by capitalism, especially peasants, and finally the semiproletarian sectors: the impoverished masses of the big urban peripheries.

In the oppressed countries, democratic tasks (real national independence, agrarian reform, political democracy, etc.) have a central importance. Trotskyism responds to this situation on the basis of the perspective of permanent revolution. That is, it takes on the task of regrouping, under the leadership of the proletariat and its vanguard party, the semiproletarian, peasant and, in general, petty-bourgeois masses. It aims at the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, realizing democratic tasks, passes without break on to socialist tasks, doing away with the private ownership of the means of production — with regard not only to imperialism but also to the national bourgeoisie — and replacing it with a planned economy. Trotskyism, therefore, rejects any conception that sees in the theory of permanent revolution only a description of an objective process. For Trotskyism, permanent revolution is a strategy of action and cannot be realized by any other means.

Before the restoration of capitalism in the states of central-eastern Europe the overwhelming majority of capitalist countries were either imperialist or dominated and oppressed by imperialism — colonial or semicolonial. But there existed a small group of capitalist countries that had an intermediate level of development (for example, Portugal and Greece). Capitalist restoration, however, led to the rebirth of countries at that level of development (which, moreover, with the exception of the small imperialist Czechoslovakia, was theirs before the postwar social transformation). These states have not achieved that level of social development which gives rise to large monopolies and finance capital on a supranational scale — or, if they have seen the beginning of such development, are in decline in the present situation. Yet neither can they be regarded as colonial or semicolonial countries. Generally speaking, these countries are links in the imperialist chain.

In the countries where capitalist restoration has taken place, however, there is, as a consequence of the previous post-capitalist economic situation, a strong concentration of the industrial proletariat.

Recognition of the existence of nations which are neither imperialist nor oppressed must not be confused with the revisionist theories of “subimperialism”, which seek to equate the more developed of the semicolonies (such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, or Iran) with imperialist nations or, at any rate, with the less developed or particularly crisis-ridden imperialist nations, in effect denying or at least blurring the fundamental division of the capitalist world into imperialist and oppressed countries.

## **6. The Degenerated and Deformed Workers 'States**

The Russian Revolution of 1917 represented the first consolidated realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat, thereby opening a new historic epoch.

Nevertheless, the backwardness of the socio-economic situation in Russia, the defeat of the international revolution, the consequences for the working class and its vanguard of the civil war 1918-20, and the relative economic difficulties of the new state led to the triumph of a new bureaucratic caste, which had its principal representative in Stalin.

Ascending to power in the 1920s and consolidated in the 1930s, the Stalinist bureaucracy had, from that time, become a parasite on the state created by the revolution and the world revolutionary processes. The bureaucracy and/or the political forces linked to it directed and controlled some of these processes, in particular, in the period immediately following the Second World War, all the way to the overthrow of capitalism.

This provoked the birth, alongside the original degenerated workers 'state of the USSR (to which should be added Mongolia, socially transformed in close connection with the USSR since the 1920s), of a series of workers 'states bureaucratically deformed from their origin.

The degenerated workers 'states (USSR, Mongolia) and the deformed workers 'states (in the approximate historical order of the overthrow of capitalist property relations: Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, East Germany, North Korea, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Cambodia, Laos) were characterized by the contradiction between the socialized (proletarian) nature of the relations of production — and therefore of ownership — and the fact that the proletariat had been robbed of political power by a bureaucratic caste which had a petty-bourgeois character. This caste exercised an oppressive dictatorship over the masses and made use of its dominance to maintain and reinforce the material privileges which it enjoyed by virtue of the bourgeois nature of the relations of distribution. The ruling bureaucracy constituted a fundamental obstacle to further socialist development, and its defense of its material privileges and political power made it an element of fundamental instability, a block to the development of the workers 'state, and a vehicle for bringing the pressure exerted by world capitalism into the workers 'state itself. Thus, the task of the proletariat was to overthrow, by means of political revolution, the ruling Stalinist bureaucratic caste, whose power tended in the end to place in danger the very social bases of the state.

Trotskyism, therefore, rejected the theory according to which there existed between the workers 'state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) and the degenerated workers 'state a difference that was only quantitative and not clearly qualitative. Consequently, Trotskyism also rejected the conception of the parasitic bureaucracy as a part of the workers 'movement. Further, it rejected as revisionist and liquidationist theories of the possibility of the regeneration of some or all of the degenerated and/or deformed workers 'states by an internal process of reform or under the pressure of mass mobilization. All the more, it rejected the revisionist positions that regarded one or more states dominated by a Stalinist bureaucracy (in particular, Cuba) as non-deformed workers 'states.

The situation described above was profoundly and dramatically changed from the late 1980s.

In the Transitional Program of 1938 Trotsky affirmed: "The political prognosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the

world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism”.

In the framework of a negative international situation — characterized also by the absence of a consistently revolutionary international leadership, even if a minority one — and also because of the weight of many decades of Stalinist oppression on the working class of the degenerated and deformed workers' states, the first hypothesis was realized.

In the face of the ever more serious contradictions of its rule the bureaucracy, in its large majority, placed itself on the terrain of capitalist restoration.

This provoked the collapse in somewhat different forms of the USSR, the deformed workers' states of Eastern Europe, and the degenerated workers' state of Mongolia (to which should be added, in a different politico-historical framework, Cambodia) and the constitution of regimes and state apparatuses of a bourgeois character. These have developed the process of capitalist restoration and created new bourgeois states, in general, as already indicated, with intermediate capitalist development. With the exception of Russia, which, thanks to its demographic, military and partly economic weight, has been consolidating as an imperialist country.

In other countries (China, Vietnam, Laos) the bureaucracy succeeded in developing a restorationist project, avoiding the negative repercussions that occurred initially in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Thus it developed this process, while at the same time maintaining bureaucratic state control of the process itself. But this in no way eliminates the capitalist restoration that occurred, which just takes the form of state capitalism — not in the sense of the foolish and anti-Marxist theory of various revisionists of Trotskyism (Cliff, Dunayevskaya) with respect to the previous bureaucratically ruled workers' states, — but in the proper one (used, for example, by Lenin), that is, of a capitalist economy with strong control by and also economic presence of the state and its managerial apparatus.

Understanding this element is essential for Trotskyists today. In fact, the above process has led China to develop in an imperialist sense, becoming the second world power after the USA — indeed, their confrontation constitutes the fundamental aspect of world politics — and it would be absurd not to understand it and not to take it into account in the international policy of revolutionary Marxists.

The Cuban bureaucracy, which would have liked to have maintained the previous situation, was incapable of developing a revolutionary perspective and has resigned itself to following the previous examples, but at the pace of a tortoise, of opening a process of gradual restoration. The qualitative leap has not yet taken place, but Cuba is today a deformed workers' state in dissolution.

Now only North Korea remains a deformed workers 'state in the original terms (despite some limited openings to small internal neo-bourgeois sectors and the existence of special foreign investment areas), subordinated to one of the most oppressive Stalinist regimes in history.

## **7. Wars between States or Nations**

In the face of conflicts between diverse states and nations, the positions of consistent Trotskyism are determined as follows:

1. Trotskyism adopts a position of revolutionary defeatism in conflicts between imperialist states, which are caused by the struggle for markets and for economic domination of the world.
2. Trotskyism unconditionally defends the oppressed colonial and semicolonial states or nations over against the imperialist powers and the "intermediate" capitalist states. The unconditional defense of these states in no case signifies political support for the feudal-bourgeois, bourgeois, or petty-bourgeois regimes of the oppressed states.
3. Trotskyism unconditionally defends the right to self-determination of all oppressed nations and their struggle to realize it. In first place, against imperialist oppression, but also against oppression inflicted by other semicolonial states or those, in turn, oppressed by imperialism (for example, Kurdistan by Iran, Iraq, and Syria, as well as by Turkey).
4. Trotskyism unconditionally defends the still-extant deformed workers 'states in conflicts between them and capitalist states. Such a position does not in any instance signify political support for the ruling parasitic bureaucracy.

In all cases, Trotskyists seek to exploit the situation created by war in order to overthrow the bourgeoisie or the parasitic bureaucracy and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. They reject the simple pacifism of the "progressive" or "isolationist" bourgeois sectors and, above all, of the sectors of the petty-bourgeois democratic left. The only way to save humanity from war is, in fact, the socialist revolution. In the imperialist countries, in particular, Trotskyists fully affirm the Bolshevik tradition towards the First World War: declaring that the main enemy is in their own country, they fight for the transformation of the imperialist war into class war against their own bourgeoisie.

## **8. The Transitional Program**

The Transitional Program, adopted as the central document of the Founding Congress of the Fourth International in 1938, constitutes a fundamental reference for the action of Trotskyism. Trotskyists defend the method, the strategic indications, and the general tactics of the Transitional Program. It is only on this basis that a revolutionary politics can be built today. Trotskyists reject the revisionist conceptions according to which the

Transitional Program is an outdated and superseded historical document or a document whose method alone can be maintained. Such conceptions merely represent a disguised abandonment of the very essence of the Transitional Program as the program of action of Bolshevism. Consistent Trotskyists take on the task of developing and updating the Transitional Program itself in the light of the events since World War II and the contemporary situation.

## **9. The Struggle for the Workers 'Government**

The struggle for the workers '(or workers 'and peasants') government is a central part of revolutionary strategy. In the general strategic perspective, the term "workers 'government" is a popular expression for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this sense, the workers 'government is only realizable as a government of the Trotskyist party or a government that is led by the Trotskyist party. To the extent that the proletarian and peasant masses are not led by the Trotskyist party but are instead led by bourgeois workers 'parties or petty-bourgeois nationalist parties, Trotskyists must counterpose to class-collaboration the need for the unity of the whole workers 'movement and the masses on the basis of an anticapitalist program — that is, Trotskyists must advance the perspective of a workers '(or workers 'and peasants') government. As the Transitional Program declares:

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

The essential purpose of this tactic is to counterpose the anticapitalist aspirations of the proletarian and mass base to the counterrevolutionary policies of their petty-bourgeois leaders, in order to facilitate the revolutionary regroupment of the vanguard and to develop the consciousness of the masses and the evolution in a revolutionary direction of the class struggle.

Trotskyists reject the revisionist conception according to which the creation of a "workers 'and peasants 'government" by the opportunist organizations is an inevitable stage in the development of the struggle for the socialist revolution. Trotskyists put forward the slogan of struggle for a workers 'and peasants 'government based on an anticapitalist program. We deny on principle any political support to any government — whether it be a government of bourgeois workers 'parties or a petty-bourgeois nationalist government — that is based on a program of defending private property and the capitalist state, such a government being nothing but a masked form of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Moreover, even in the exceptional case (but not impossible, as the



postwar experience shows) where the petty-bourgeois parties break effectively with the bourgeoisie and form a “workers ’and peasants ’government”, Trotskyists “promise them full support against capitalist reaction” (the above quote from the Transitional Program) but not unconditional political support. The attitude of Trotskyists will always be determined by the central aim of their activity: the creation of a workers ’government over which the Trotskyist party has hegemony — the sole guarantee of the revolutionary continuity of the workers ’government.

To this end, we fight on the basis of our program of demands against both capitalist and bureaucratic Stalinist governments for the construction of organs of workers ’control of production, workers ’self-defense, and workers ’power — factory committees, occupation committees, workers ’militias, and soviets. Only on the basis of such organs of dual power can the working class — led by a revolutionary party — develop the necessary independent strength to carry through the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

## **10. The United Front**

### **A. The Proletarian United Front**

The tactic of the struggle for the “workers ’government” is a central aspect of the larger policy of the united front. In general, Trotskyists fight for the unity of the proletariat and the oppressed masses on the basis of anticapitalist demands. In this context they propose tactical agreements — even long-term ones — to the opportunist organizations of the workers ’movement. We recognize that only in the fight to win sufficient forces to our program can we hope to force the established leaders of the workers ’movement into an alliance with us. The aims of this policy are the same as those indicated for the workers ’government tactic: to counterpose the anticapitalist aspirations of the proletarian base to the politics of the leaderships; to facilitate revolutionary regroupment; to develop the consciousness of the masses; and, moreover, to the extent to which the united front is effectively realized, to win partial successes, both defensive and offensive, against the bourgeoisie.

On all occasions where the proletarian united front is actually realized, the aim of the Trotskyist party is to assert its own political hegemony over the united front. Consistent Trotskyism rejects the revisionist positions that transform the united front into a strategy for anticapitalist action, for building the party, or for the proletarian seizure of power, and so renounce the role of the vanguard party. Trotskyists also reject the conception of the establishment of the united front as a positive achievement in itself, without regard to the objectives it is based upon. They also reject united-front agreements that seek to end political struggle between the parties involved.

### **B. The Anti-Imperialist United Front**

In most oppressed countries, where there is a vast presence of poor nonproletarian sectors oppressed by capitalism and democratic demands play a pivotal role, Trotskyists may establish tactical agreements for an anti-imperialist united front with petty-bourgeois nationalist parties or organizations. Within such anti-imperialist united fronts, Trotskyists fight generally for the maximum of unity and leadership of the proletarian forces and, in particular, for the revolutionary leadership of the Trotskyist party.

Consistent Trotskyism rejects the revisionist position that, starting from the nature of the countries oppressed by imperialism and the centrality of the struggle against imperialism, maintains the possibility of establishing anti-imperialist-united-front agreements with the national bourgeoisie of an oppressed country. For Trotskyists, the anti-imperialist united front means, as Trotsky argued, “a bloc of the workers, peasants, and petty bourgeoisie...directed not only against imperialism and feudalism but also against the national bourgeoisie, which is bound up with them in all basic questions” (“The Revolution in India, Its Tasks and Dangers”, 30 May 1930). To the extent that the parties of the national bourgeoisie actually enter into conflict with imperialism, it is possible to establish limited practical agreements with them — in order to implement the policy of unconditional defense of the oppressed nations against imperialism — but never a united-front agreement.

### **C. The United Front against the Stalinist Bureaucracy**

In a manner analogous to that which applies in capitalist countries, in the still-extant deformed workers' states (i.e., as indicated in point 6, only Cuba and North Korea) it is possible (as in the past in the then numerous degenerated and deformed workers' states) to establish united-front alliances with reformist and centrist opponents of the Stalinist bureaucracy, although not with proimperialist and capitalist-restorationist elements. Essentially, such a united-front policy is simply an application of the proletarian united front to the special conditions of these countries.

In part, the aim of the united front against the Stalinist bureaucracy is to unite the working class in these countries both against its Stalinist bureaucratic oppressors and in defense of the collectivized property relations against the threats and distortions of the imperialist system, against the bureaucracy's false claims to be the “defender of socialism”, and against the bureaucracy's own role in blocking the full development of the collectivized forces of production. And such a united-front policy also has the fundamental aim of facilitating the struggle of Trotskyists to gain leadership of the workers' movement in the still existing deformed workers' states, through winning the political majority of these workers, through their own experience in concrete struggles, from the conceptions of the reformist and centrist leaders to the Trotskyist program of political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish a healthy workers' state based on revolutionary soviets, a struggle which today becomes a struggle for the defense of the workers' state and the socialist conquests against a bureaucracy which,

also in consideration of what has happened in the vast majority of degenerated and deformed workers' states, becomes ever more restorationist.

Further, in those deformed workers' states where large peasant masses suffer along with the working class from the tyranny of the bureaucracy, Trotskyists must fight for united-front alliances between the most oppressed elements of the peasantry and proletarian forces opposing the bureaucracy, in order to win the peasants away from capitalist-restorationist tendencies and to accept the leadership of the working class in a struggle for the rapid, socialist development of agriculture, in a carefully planned relationship with the socialist development of industry.

## **11. The Proletarian Class Struggle and the Orientation toward the Advanced Workers**

The main arena of intervention for revolutionaries is the working class, to win its vanguard to join the revolutionary Marxist party and its political majority to support the party's program and action. Since the elementary form of working-class organization is the trade unions, a central task of Trotskyists is intervention there. In most countries where unions have some degree of independence from the state, they are led by petty-bourgeois bureaucracies — direct or indirect agents of the bourgeoisie. The central task of Trotskyists is the struggle to remove these bureaucracies from the leadership of the unions and to replace them with a revolutionary leadership which ensures the independence of the unions from the bourgeois state.

In order to achieve their aims within the unions, Trotskyists should organize revolutionary trade union caucuses under their political leadership, open not only to members and sympathizers of revolutionary Marxist parties, but to all consistent class-struggle activists. The program of these caucuses must be based on the general strategic and tactical lines of the Transitional Program. Trotskyists can certainly participate in larger antibureaucratic oppositional groupings in the trade unions ("broad lefts"), but they must see such activity as a transitional step, maintaining their goal of building — starting from activity in such broad regroupments — true revolutionary class-struggle trade union caucuses.

Consistent Trotskyism rejects the position that — since the role of unions is different from that of the revolutionary party (essentially the defense of the proletariat's living and working conditions) — unions cannot be won to a true revolutionary program but only to militant economic struggle. Trotskyists maintain that, although unions cannot achieve a finished program and full revolutionary activity, unions can and must be transformed into auxiliary organs of proletarian revolution, breaking from both pure trade unionism and support for the bourgeois state.

In their work in the trade unions and in all their work taken as a whole, the primary orientation of Trotskyists is toward the most politically advanced workers — those workers most ready, both in word and deed, to oppose the capitalists and generalize the lessons of their struggles to an understanding of the exploitative and oppressive nature

of the capitalist system as a whole and the necessity of its overthrow. Trotskyist parties therefore seek actively and systematically, not only to intervene in workers' trade union and other struggles and to fight for leadership of them, but also to win worker-communists to the Trotskyist parties from these struggles and to develop these fresh worker cadres politically. In this way Trotskyists both deepen the roots of Trotskyism in the working class and deepen the proletarianization of the Trotskyist parties.

## **12. Uniting All the Oppressed and Exploited under Proletarian Leadership**

The proletariat and its party must act as a "tribune of the people", championing the struggles of all the oppressed and exploited. In fact, the majority of humanity suffers forms of oppression of a specific type that cannot be reduced simply to class oppression. Starting from different historical roots, they include in the first place: the oppression of women, lesbians and gay men (or, more generally, LGBTQ + people), youth, the racially oppressed, the disabled, and those oppressed as national, religious and caste minorities.

The revolutionary party must build mass movements of the oppressed and exploited around these issues, mobilizing not only the proletariat but also the nonproletarian oppressed and the middle layers.

These mass movements are not exclusively proletarian. They attempt to struggle around contradictions which cannot be resolved without the overthrow of the bourgeois state and capitalism. They are therefore continually brought into conflict with the capitalist class and its state. Trotskyists must intervene with a method analogous to that adopted in intervening in proletarian struggles, based on the method and content of the Transitional Program.

They must fight against the petty-bourgeois (or sometimes bourgeois) leaderships of these movements, struggling for proletarian leadership of the nonproletarian mass movements. This perspective implies two simultaneous aspects: on the one hand, the struggle within the proletariat for it to take over directly the demands of the nonproletarian mass movements, which implies a struggle directly against any reactionary ideology and attitudes within the working class regarding these movements (for example, racism, sexism, antigay bigotry); on the other hand, action within these movements to defeat bourgeois and reformist ideology and "autonomist" or "separatist" positions and to lead each such movement to the understanding that only participation in an alliance led by the revolutionary working class in the struggle against the bourgeoisie can lead to real victory.

In particular, where the specially oppressed sectors of the working class tend to be especially militant and class-conscious, the intervention of Trotskyists in the mass movements and struggles of the specially oppressed is an essential part of the process of mobilizing the proletarian vanguard, winning the most advanced workers to the revolutionary program, and building the revolutionary leadership of the working class.

In all mass movements, which are generally barely organized, due to their instability, Trotskyists struggle for the building of well-structured mass organizations. Where such organizations do exist or are being built under opportunist leaderships, Trotskyists must act as they do within the unions: they must organize revolutionary caucuses based on the general line of the Transitional Program, aiming to win the leadership of these organizations. Consistent Trotskyism rejects as liquidationist those positions which assume that mass movements should develop in an “autonomous” manner and which, therefore, lead Trotskyists merely to participate in these movements without fighting to win them to a proletarian perspective.

### **13. International Democratic Centralism**

Trotskyism sees democratic centralism as the primary and essential base of the structure of the revolutionary political organization. Democratic-centralist principles imply the right to free internal debate as well as the duty of external discipline, with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democratic centralism includes the right to build both tendencies and factions within the revolutionary organization. It must be in force at both the national and the international levels, both within the refounded Fourth International and also in the different stages of organization of the consistent Trotskyists during the struggle against revisionism.

Consistent Trotskyism rejects the conception that democratic centralism should apply fully only at the national level while at the international level it is limited by the autonomy of each national party. It also rejects the practice of world organizations whose different factions carry out essentially independent policies. Further, it rejects practices that invoke “democratic centralism” to block any possibility of effective tendency or factional struggle. Similarly, it rejects any conception that discriminates between “major” national organizations, with the right to decide on lines and principles, and “minor” organizations, which must be subordinated to the “major” organizations. Finally, it rejects any conception which accepts the perspective of democratic centralism only for the future refounded International but not for the stages of international organization transitional to that end.

# THESES ON THE CRISIS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE TASKS OF CONSISTENT TROTSKYISTS

## 1.

A truly revolutionary International, dedicated to the overthrow of capitalist society and the construction of a socialist society, must necessarily be based on the political program and practice of revolutionary Marxism. On the theoretical, strategic and tactical bases elaborated in the first place by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and by the political movements that had them as leaders. Updated based on the historical development of society and the experience of the workers' movement, but always starting from themselves and their general content, still valid today. In this sense, the only current consistent reference for a truly revolutionary International is Trotskyism, which represents the revolutionary Marxism of our time.

Orthodox Trotskyism rests on the firm foundations laid in the documents elaborated — following the line of the theses and resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International — by the first three international meetings of the Fourth International: the Conference of the Movement for the Fourth International (1936); the Founding Congress (1938); and the Emergency Conference (1940).

In the documents of these international meetings, the general programmatic, strategic, and tactical lines are indicated which, as developed and brought up to date on the basis of the historical evolution of the subsequent decades, still constitute the political foundations of orthodox Trotskyism.

## 2.

The death of Leon Trotsky and World War II struck hard blows at the International. Not only did the war mean the cessation of direct relations among the different sections, but repression eliminated many of the International's most important leaders, in particular in Europe.

The International Secretariat, under the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (SWP/US), was able only partially to fulfill its responsibilities of political and organizational leadership of the international Trotskyist movement.

Nevertheless, the Fourth International met the test of the war, politically and organizationally, for example, by holding its clandestine European conference under Nazi occupation in February 1944, and between 1943 and 1946 completely reorganizing itself, relocating its administrative center to France.

## 3.

In the period following World War II, notwithstanding a certain growth in membership and increase in the influence of almost all its sections, the International did not become a mass organizing center, as, before the war, Trotsky and the entire Trotskyist movement had erroneously predicted would happen. The International attempted to deal with this fact by substituting a voluntarist orthodoxy for dialectical method: under the leadership of Pablo, the International acted as if the crisis of proletarian leadership were approaching resolution and the development of the International as a mass organization could be easily realized, possible relatively quickly.

At the same time, the principal section of the International, the SWP/US, using as a pretext the reactionary Voorhis Act, which prohibited any American organization from maintaining an international affiliation, and starting from an ultra-optimistic view of the prospects of the class struggle in the US (the so-called American exceptionalism of the 1946 theses), was shifting to a position of privileging national action with respect to the rest of the movement. In taking this stance, the SWP expressed what were actually federalist positions on questions of international organization.

Only the British section (Revolutionary Communist Party, RCP) maintained a balanced assessment of the situation, grasping the reality of world capitalist recovery and the not-accidental expansion of Stalinism, and therefore the difficulty of significant development of the International in the next period. Few other groups (in part the one headed by Nahuel Moreno in Argentina) shared the position of the British.

It should be added that in the only situation in which the Trotskyists, having broad mass support, could have set themselves the task of leading a revolutionary process, that of Vietnam, they were physically massacred, on one side, by the Franco-English imperialist reaction, on the other, by the Stalinists, a minority in the working class, but a majority among the peasantry and the subproletariat (1945).

Nevertheless, despite all its mistakes, the International continued to base its politics on orthodox Trotskyism. The theses of the Reorganization Conference (1946) and the Second World Congress (1948), although containing errors, should be included as part of the historic legacy of our movement.

#### 4.

The first serious opportunist failure on the part of the International occurred in 1948 on the occasion of the break between Yugoslavia and the Kremlin.

Instead of limiting itself to defending Yugoslavia against any possible military attack by the USSR, the majority of the International (once again against the British section and some minorities in other sections) considered Tito's break with Stalin as an expression of the revolutionary potential of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The Yugoslav CP was characterized as "left-centrist" and was regarded as moving towards Trotskyism, while over and over attempts were made to reach agreement with either the Yugoslav CP or

with pro-Tito forces in capitalist countries. These policies were maintained until 1950. Clearly this involved a ~~total~~ misunderstanding of the nature of the Titoist bureaucracy, resulting from the desire to find, at any cost, a shortcut to reaching the masses. Still, the desire, however illusory, to win the Yugoslav CP to a full revolutionary international program, and the 1950 condemnation of its alliance with imperialism (a vote in favor of UN military intervention in Korea), make clear the difference between the policy of 1948-1950 and classical Pabloism from 1951 forward. The opportunism of 1948 opened the way to Pabloite revisionism but definitely did not reach the depth of the opportunism of actual Pabloism.

## 5.

Pabloite revisionism, which emerged at the end of 1950 and triumphed at the Third World Congress in 1951, represented an opportunist deviation of a centrist type. Drawing a false lesson from the unexpected events of the postwar period (the consolidation and expansion of Stalinism with the creation of deformed workers' states through the social transformations in the countries occupied by the "Red" Army and in the victorious revolutions in Yugoslavia and China; the cold war; and the failure of development of the Fourth International), Pabloite positions went so far as to deny the necessity of the struggle to build mass Trotskyist parties in all the countries of the world. The role of the revolutionary instrument was, in effect, assigned to the ruling bureaucracy of the USSR and the Stalinist parties, driven to assume this role by the revolutionary pressure of the masses and confrontation with imperialism and the "inevitable" formation and possible triumph of internal centrist tendencies. The sections of the Fourth International, placed within the Communist parties according to the strategy of "entrism *sui generis*", had to limit themselves to functioning as small groups for discussion among cadres, in order to aid the objective development of the revolutionary process under the leadership of the Stalinists. In this way, disappointment over the lack of success in achieving transformation into a mass organization led to political liquidationism.

## 6.

The counterposed theses presented at the Third World Congress (1951) by the majority of the French section, although containing some mistakes and lacking a balance sheet of the previous errors, constituted a defense of orthodox Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism. The defense of its position cost the majority of the French section expulsion from the International in 1952.

## 7.

The emergence of ultra-Pabloite internal tendencies, which carried liquidationism to its extreme conclusion, drove the British section (from which the old leadership group of the 1940s had now been excluded by an opportunist tendency led by Gerry Healy) and the SWP/US to launch, in 1953, the struggle against Pablo. Conducted on the basis of the SWP's federalist conceptions, and so on the basis of relations among the separate



national leaderships, this struggle did not come near to achieving all the results which were possible.

On 16 November 1953, using Pablo's bureaucratic methods as the reason, the SWP, with an open letter, broke with the Pabloite leadership on the eve of the Fourth World Congress, so refusing to wage a struggle to win the majority of the International to opposition to Pablo (even thinking that the prestige of the US section would bring the majority to its side without the need for a congressional fight). One week later, on 23 November, the expelled majority of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI/France), the English section, the Swiss section, and the SWP founded the International Committee of the Fourth International (IC), which declared Pablo and his International Secretariat removed from power, proclaimed itself the new leadership of the movement, and invited Trotskyists all over the world to group themselves under its banner. This call received a positive response from a few sections of the International (China, Canada), from the faction led by Moreno (Argentina), and from minorities in a few other sections. The refusal of the anti-Pabloites to wage a struggle to win the majority, combined with incorrect tactics at the moment of the split, meant that two-thirds of the International remained with Pablo.

## 8.

In practice, the International Committee, based on organizational federalism, did not in any way represent a Bolshevik response to Pabloism. It proved incapable of drawing the right lessons from the crisis of the International. The successive policies of its different organizations clearly demonstrated that the International Committee itself — even if obviously in a less serious form than the Pabloite International Secretariat — suffered from opportunist deviations of a centrist type, which its federalist character could only exacerbate.

Already in 1954 this could be said for the French section, in which the majority sector, led by Pierre Lambert, tended to develop opportunist positions towards reformist trade union sectors, both social-democratic and “pseudo radical-libertarian” in the union “Force Ouvrière” (FO). It expelled or forced out the most coherent sector of the PCI (Majority), a sector which then gradually flowed back towards Pabloism. At the same time, confronted with the Algerian revolution, it adapted to nationalism, denying the need for a fight for an independent Trotskyist party in this struggle and supporting one of the two organizations into which it was divided, the Algerian National Movement (MNA), which, moreover, was totally defeated in the fratricidal clash with the other petty-bourgeois nationalist organization, the National Liberation Front (FNL), to which the Pabloites completely capitulated.

In the same year, the organization headed by Moreno in Argentina made a 180-degree turn with respect to the positions it held until then (correct, with a touch of sectarianism) towards Peronism, shifting to adaptation to and support for this not even radical bourgeois nationalist movement, exalting Peron, inserting itself into the Peronist movement, and extending this support to all the bourgeois Bonapartes, even on the

right, absurdly seen as progressives and anti-imperialists. Thus the *morenistas* came to support the initial successes of the reactionary dictator of Cuba, Batista, considered anti-imperialist, against the movement led by Fidel Castro, seen as a man of US imperialism (sic!). Even on the level of the revolutionary party, Moreno revised the Leninist position on the vanguard party, inventing the perspective of the so-called Revolutionary United Front (FUR), that is, a programmatic bloc between Trotskyists and left-centrists, which could replace the functions of the vanguard party.

The SWP, despite the difficulties of the McCarthy period and its clear weakening in the working class, tried to keep itself on the ground of consistent Trotskyism, but the crisis of the American CP after the XX Congress of the CPSU and the events in Hungary in 1956, pushed it onto the ground. of a hypotheses of regroupment with semi-Stalinist and progressive petty-bourgeois formations. Although this hypothesis failed, it marked the party's policy thereafter by pushing it towards minimalism, the abandonment of workers' centrality, and democratism. The reality of the Cuban revolution finally led it to adapt to these forms of radical, then Stalinized nationalism.

For the fourth most significant organization of the International Committee, an oddly opposite phenomenon occurred. "The Club," as the entrism organization led by Healy was cryptically called, had adapted since 1949 to centrist sectors of the Labour movement, merging with them and placing itself on minimalist terrain. It was thus the most opportunist of the organizations that gave birth to the IC in 1953. But in this case, contrary to the US, the crisis of the British CP in 1956 freed many valuable militants from Stalinism. Healy's group managed to capture several hundred of them. This pushed the organization to the left and led in 1958 to the birth of the important Socialist Labor League (SLL) which went on to develop a really methodologically Trotskyist entrism in the Labour Party (LP), which led to its gaining a majority in the youth organization of the party (for which it was expelled from the LP in 1964).

In the early 1960s. The SLL could have built itself up as a consistently Trotskyist organization with several thousand militants. Unfortunately, the paranoia of its principal leader, Gerry Healy, led it to turn into a military barracks organization. Any dissident tendency or militant was quickly expelled. In this context, many individually abandoned the organization, and many others who could have joined it were repelled by the methods they saw used. Furthermore, Healy replaced the materialist method of analyzing reality, and the programmatic bases of adhesion, with a strange voluntarist-idealist Hegelianism, according to him the basis of Leninism. He also developed ever more abstrusely catastrophic positions on the crisis of capitalism, the imminence of the revolution, and the centrality in all this of Britain, of the SLL and of himself personally. This led to the progressive abandonment of the method of transitional demands, towards a "maximalist" sectarianism (more similar to that of third period Stalinism than to Trotskyism). The analysis of Cuba as a bourgeois Bonapartist regime ruling a state capitalist economy was in this framework.

The reunification achieved in 1963 between the Pabloite International Secretariat and a wing of the International Committee led by the SWP/US, was the product of capitulation by the SWP to Pabloism, originating in the SWP's own ongoing shift to the right. A fundamental element in this shift had been the impact of the Cuban revolution, which the SWP analyzed in impressionistic rather than Marxist terms, going so far as denying, at least with regard to Latin America, the necessity of the struggle to build mass Trotskyist parties, and openly abandoning the Leninist strategy of proletarian revolution. At the same time, the International Secretariat, which agreed with the SWP and its allies (Palabra Obrera of Argentina, the name of the *morenista* group conducting an entry into Peronism, Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Chile, etc.) on the analysis of the Cuban Revolution and Castroism (which was presented as a revolutionary Marxist current, although with theoretical limitations), continued to be based essentially on the entire policy of liquidationist Pabloism. In fact the International Secretariat had discarded only a few elements of Pablo's analysis (for example, the imminence of a third world war) which had obviously been shown to be false, while its fundamental positions remained the same as in 1951, in fact with a more open capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism in the colonies and former colonies (particularly the FLN regime, seen as a workers' and peasants' government, to be supported uncritically) — positions which were connected to an impressionistic evaluation of the new period of capitalist development which followed the war. From 1964 on, this evaluation would lead to the theory of "neocapitalism" with the consequent underestimation of the actuality of the socialist perspective and the revolutionary role of the proletariat in the imperialist countries.

Despite such areas of political agreement, the 1963 reunification represented an unprincipled bloc, insofar as a number of fundamental political issues (such as entrism "*sui generis*" in Stalinist and social-democratic parties in Europe), on which profound differences persisted between the International Secretariat and the wing of the International Committee led by the SWP, were not confronted, in order to avoid disturbing the process of unification, while in essence an agreement was established which guaranteed the reciprocal independence of the original Pabloites with regard to Europe and the SWP with regard to the US.

It is in this context that in 1964 the organizations belonging to the Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism (SLATO), led by Moreno, also entered the International Secretariat. These included the Chilean POR, which abandoned consistent Trotskyism — which it had defended until then, even clashing with the positions of Moreno — and joined with Castro-Guevarist sectors to form the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), from which they were expelled in 1969 for refusing to support the strategy of the guerrilla "foco" à la Guevara.

Significantly, it was precisely in the period immediately preceding and following this reunification that important splits took place from the right wing of Pabloism: the split in 1962 of the faction of the International Secretariat led by J. Posadas (significant in Latin America), still attached suprahistorically to all the formal aspects of original Pabloism,

including the imminence of a third world war, and evolving toward openly pro-Stalinist positions; the expulsion in 1964 of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), numerically the most important section and the only section of the United Secretariat with a large mass base, which had gone over to counterrevolutionary reformism, entering the bourgeois government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike; and in 1965 the split of the Revolutionary Marxist Faction, led by Pablo himself, at the time an adviser to the Ben Bella government of Algeria, which carried to an extreme the position of the United Secretariat (USFI) on the priority of the colonial revolution over the proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries and capitulated to Khrushchevism, among other things supporting the USSR in polemics with China, over against the rest of the USFI.

## 10.

The struggle within the International Committee against the capitulation of the SWP was conducted primarily by the Socialist Labour League (SLL) of Britain and the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI/France, which in 1963 would become the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [OCI/France]). This struggle, however, was not based on a genuine balance sheet of the experience of the postwar Trotskyist movement or of the International Committee itself. In effect the SLL and OCI combined sectarian attitudes (on the unification itself — refusing to participate in the reunification in order to fight Pabloite revisionism within a united International, as would have been correct to do — as well as on the character of the Cuban state) with the maintenance of essentially left-centrist politics.

The International Committee, maintained by the SLL and OCI with the support of a few other organizations (Greece, Hungary, and a left minority in the SWP), although attempting in its initial period (1963-1966) to draw certain lessons from its own past history, did not have a qualitatively different political character from the International Committee of 1953-1962.

## 11.

The Third Conference of the International Committee (1966) decisively blocked any possibility of its evolution to the left. In fact, the Conference reaffirmed the federalist character of the organization (a rule requiring a unanimous vote for a proposal to be adopted) and signaled the suppression of serious political discussion with the exclusion of the Spartacist League of the US for expressing generally correct positions on a number of fundamental questions, including the nature of Pabloism and the crisis of the Fourth International, the origin of the deformed workers 'states and the character of the Cuban state, and the evaluation of international economic and political perspectives.

The essentially bipolar condominium of the SLL and OCI established at the 1966 Conference contained in embryo the premises of the split of the International Committee into two counterposed blocs. The deepening of the differences between the two blocs ' policies (the OCI's adaptation to international social democracy, its opportunist

spontaneism, and its conception of the united front as a general strategy; the SLL's national Trotskyism, verbal sectarianism — in particular regarding the Labour Party question — and idealist conception of the relationship between party and class) in fact provoked first political paralysis and then the definitive breakup of the International Committee in 1971.

## 12.

The USFI also revealed itself to be an unstable structure. At the end of the 1960s an acute factional struggle developed in the USFI, which, in reality, recreated the division between the old Pabloite component, on the one hand, and the SWP and its allies, on the other hand. The first component, the majority, adapted to the petty-bourgeois "*gauchisme*" which dominated the radicalized sector of the student youth. It adopted a line of vanguard guerillaism for Latin America. And subsequently, during the 1970s, it theorized the "imminence of the decisive clash", in which the role of revolutionary leadership would be played by the so-called "new vanguard with mass influence", that is, the confused mixture of spontaneist and centrist organizations built from the youth radicalization.

To this the SWP and its allies — among which the Argentinean Socialist Workers Party (PST, the new name of the organization led by Moreno) acquired more and more importance — counterposed the defense of formally "orthodox" positions. This was, in reality, an expression of a deeper adaptation to the political framework of bourgeois democracy and a more classic revisionism, as shown during the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75 and the Argentinean crisis of 1975-76.

This factional fight developed in unexpected ways in the second half of the 1970s. On the one hand, the Argentinean PST, clearly more determined than the SWP to lead a struggle against the USFI majority and rejecting the more openly opportunist positions of the SWP, built its own international faction, the Bolshevik Faction (BF). On the other hand, the SWP made a change of line, shifting to a completely Castroite position and deepening this until it finally broke with the USFI in 1990.

The sharpening of the factional fight in the USFI led to a split by the Bolshevik Faction in 1979 over the adaptation of the USFI majority to the leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and its consequent open condemnation of the activity of the Nicaraguan and other Latin American Trotskyists who had intervened in Nicaragua on the basis of the policy of the Bolshevik Faction.

## 13.

The crisis of the Fourth International provoked more and more organizational division (which we do not examine in detail in this document) but did not mean a complete passage of the forces of the Trotskyist movement to the ground of reformism and the acceptance of capitalist society or bureaucratic rule.

In fact, few organizations of any importance broke decisively with the perspective of international socialist revolution: the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) of Sri Lanka, which entered the People's Front Government of Bandaranaike in 1964; the Posadaist "Fourth International", now reduced to a political ghost, which shifted to a semi-Stalinist position following its support for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968; the majority of the Brazilian section of the USFI "Socialist Democracy" (DS, inside the Workers' Party, PT), when faced with the unveiling of the reformist nature and bourgeois character of the politics of the PT government and its leader maximo Lula — while the major part of the left of the PT broke and left the party — fully adapted, receiving in exchange ministries and other government and sub-government positions; the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) of Sri Lanka, born in the 1970s as a left split from the LSSP, which totally degenerated after 2015 to create an organic political bloc with a conservative bourgeois party.

Some other organizations, without shifting to the ground of reformism or of full Stalinism, have broken with their Trotskyist origins. They represent, at their present stage of development, organizations of a centrist type. The most important examples of these are three parties of a few hundred militants in the USA: the above-mentioned Socialist Workers Party; the Workers World Party (WWP), which was born in a split from the SWP/US at the end of the 1950s and is characterized by pro-Stalinist positions; and the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which split from the WWP in 2004 and has similar pro-Stalinist positions.

However, the great majority of organizations that present themselves as Trotskyist have gone through a more limited process of political degeneration, which has led them to express politics of a centrist or left-centrist type without having broken their links with the Trotskyism. These organizations live a contradiction between their claim to Trotskyism and the centrist character of their policies. Taken together with the forces remaining on the ground of consistent Trotskyism, they form the world Trotskyist movement, the present Fourth International.

The Fourth International, as a united revolutionary Marxist organization, or even organizationally divided into two factions, as in the 1950s, is certainly dead, but there remains an international Trotskyist movement which, divided into a multiplicity of separate organizations, national and international, must be considered the terrain on which to develop an international political and organizational struggle to arrive at the refoundation of the revolutionary Marxist International, Leninist and Trotskyist.

#### 14.

The major centrist forces of the international Trotskyist movement are those listed below.

##### *A. The Fourth International (ex-United Secretariat of)*

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) a few years ago changed its official name, taking back that of “Fourth International,” with an operation which, in the context of the current situation of the Trotskyist movement, was abusive and incorrect. It remains the political heir of liquidationist Pabloism. This is expressed, first of all, by its denial of the need to build mass-based Trotskyist parties in every country as necessary instruments for the victory of the socialist revolution. Absolutely consistent with this, the USFI’s goal is not the building of a mass Fourth International, but rather the building of a so-called “New Revolutionary International”, without a complete and consistent programmatic basis.

In reality, the USFI continues the old Pabloite project of liquidating the Trotskyist movement into a confused centrist amalgam or even left reformism. The failure of this project is due to the fact that the various “partners” sought by the USFI, even when they really existed and were not merely figments of its imagination, were not interested in an international perspective, even of a centrist or left-reformist type, because that went far beyond their nonrevolutionary programmatic and political horizons.

For seventy years the Pabloites have searched for mythological “centrist trends evolving to the left” with which to fuse, but they have never found them, because the trends either were, in reality, more or less nonexistent, like the “left currents” in the Communist Parties in the 1950s or the “new vanguards with mass influence” in the 1970s, or were not evolving to the left.

This Pabloite policy led the USFI to adapt itself politically, programmatically, and organizationally to various centrist and left-reformist forces. The type of adaptation has varied from one period to another. So, from 1968 to the mid-1970s the USFI capitulated to the confused forces of the spontaneist centrist organizations produced by the “New Left” youth radicalization. But at the end of the 1970s the USFI changed direction and began to adapt politically to the social-democratic and Stalinist leaderships of the mass movements.

The leaderships of the USFI and its most important sections once more began to see their relationship with the working class as necessarily mediated by the leaderships of the mass parties and trade unions or by particular sectors of these leaderships. From this derives the myth of the “unity of the proletariat”, interpreted as the need for strategic unity of the organizations of the workers’ movement, unconditional support for the formation of national or local “left” governments — for example, the initial attitude of the USFI’s French section, the LCR, toward the Mitterrand government in France in 1981 — and adaptation to the reformist left of the trade unions in various countries.

This policy has continued in the framework of the new situation of general crisis of the international workers’ movement. The opportunist policy of the USFI particularly addresses itself to the left reformists. Examples are the uncritical support the USFI gave to the former leader of the French Communist Party, Juquin, in 1988 and to the Green

Voyney in 1995, and its attitude toward the reformist majority of the Workers 'Party (PT) of Brazil and toward the leadership of the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), presenting this reformist party as an example to follow and its ultra-opportunist leader Bertinotti as a quasi-revolutionary, to the point of supporting (even with a loyal vote in parliament and even after having been forced to break with the PRC) the center-left imperialist government of Prodi. Similarly, support for bourgeois governments was given by the sections of the USFI in Denmark and Portugal. In none of these cases, unlike in Brazil (where the entry had been direct, with a minister), was there any break or criticism on the part of the International. However, it should be remembered that before and even more than the Italian PRC, the USFI's reference point had been the Brazilian PT, also seen as an example to be internationalized for liquidating the Fourth International into such an amalgam.

In the oppressed nations the USFI maintains an adaptation to the policy and the ideology of the radical petty-bourgeois nationalist movements, as shown, for example, by its uncritical political support from the experience of Algeria in the early 1960s, to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua in the years following the 1979 revolution, even going so far as to present the latter as the regime of a proletarian dictatorship in the framework of a healthy workers 'state.

In all the nonproletarian mass movements the USFI, on the basis of the false theory of the right to complete autonomy of movements, adapted to the dominant petty-bourgeois ideology and positions.

In the period of the existence of the degenerated and deformed workers 'states the USFI leadership adapted to the reformist oppositional forces, continuing in fact to deny the perspective of a real political revolution and, from an opportunistic, gradualist viewpoint, relying on " liberal-progressive" bureaucratic forces or politically petty-bourgeois leaderships of anti-bureaucratic movements.

The revisionist positions of the USFI majority are based on the objectivist conception of the revolutionary process that Pabloism developed at its origin. This conception involves an undervaluation of the decisive role of the conscious, subjective factor — the Trotskyist party and its program — and the need for a conscious, organized, and determined struggle to develop revolutionary socialist consciousness in the masses. This objectivism necessarily means the misrepresentation of the active Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution as a sort of objective and more or less automatic process.

But in its process of development the revisionism of the USFI leadership has gone so far as to challenge some key elements of revolutionary Marxism. These include the role of the vanguard party as a necessary instrument for socialist revolution and the understanding of proletarian democracy as counterposed to any form of bourgeois democracy.



The revisionist development of the positions of the USFI leadership was shown clearly in the attitude it took toward the crisis of international Stalinism. After decades of adaptation to Stalinism under the pressure of the petty-bourgeois attitude dominant in the official workers' movement and also among the masses, the USFI shifted to a Stalinophobic attitude. The USFI showed itself incapable of developing a policy based on the intransigent defense of collectivized property in the means of production and on the counterposition of the perspective of the democracy of workers' councils to both the bureaucratic dictatorship and the shift toward formal democracy of the bourgeois type. On the contrary, the USFI leadership has fallen into a fully centrist democratism, confusing bourgeois and proletarian democracy and applying formalistic criteria to the problem of the self-determination of the republics of the former USSR and Yugoslavia.

Beginning with the international crisis of Stalinism, the politics of the USFI have shifted further to the right. Far from taking from the events as a confirmation of the Trotskyist prognosis and an opening, even on the basis of a serious defeat of the proletariat, of a new opportunity for the Fourth International, the USFI has drawn liquidationist conclusions, confusing the fall of Stalinism with the defeat of the socialist perspective. Thus, under the pressure of reformist and petty-bourgeois democratic "public opinion", it has come to speak of the closing "for a historical phase" of the perspective of socialist revolution and to characterize the strategic perspective for the workers' movement in the next phase as a utopian "radical democracy". Although joined to formally more "orthodox" elaborations, this is the essential frame of reference of the USFI today.

This aggravates further the negative function of the USFI, as evidenced by the fact that, while its politics move more and more away from Trotskyism and while this moving away is even affirmed openly, the USFI still maintains the pretence of presenting itself formally as "the Fourth International". Thus the content and the form of the historical perspective of the Trotskyist International are mocked at the same time, and the pretence is maintained instead, with the aim of preventing its refoundation on a consistent basis. In this is expressed one of the most antirevolutionary aspects of the USFI and its nature as an obstacle to the development of the international revolutionary Marxist project.

Inside the United Secretariat, thanks to a more democratic (and also more anarchic and federalist) functioning, various left-wing factions or tendencies have developed, which have subsequently ebbed or split.

Today, however, on substantially consistently Trotskyist bases, a left faction present in various countries (the most important national section is the Anticapitalism and Revolution tendency of the New Anti-capitalist Party [NPA]) has been established under the name of Tendency for a Revolutionary International (TRI), which presented a programmatically correct text at the world congress of the USFI.

Furthermore, there are comrades who are more properly close to or on the positions of the ITO. They are, first of all, the Radical Socialist (RS) organization of India (close to

our positions) and the Refoundation and Revolution (R&R) tendency of the US organization Solidarity, which was part of the ITO until its dissolution in 2004, when it became the US section of the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (CRFI) and which takes full part in our process of reconstitution.

### *B. The Committee for a Workers International (CWI)*

The Committee for a Workers 'International (CWI) developed as the international projection of the British "Militant" Tendency (MT), led historically by Ted Grant, starting from the significant success the MT had in its "enlist" work in the Labour Party from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The MT had its origins in the majority faction of the British section of the Fourth International in the 1940s, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). In the international congresses of 1946 (Reconstitution Conference) and 1948 (Second World Congress), the RCP developed a generally correct critique of the political analysis of the International leadership, in particular on the questions of the capitalist recovery in the West and the expansion of Stalinism in the East.

The faction led by Grant had been marginalized in the International, because, ironically with respect to the future, it had not followed the policy of total entry into the Labour Party (LP) proposed by the International Secretariat and applied with its support by a large minority led by Gerry Healy, which had separated in practical activity from the RCP. In fact, since the attempt to build a minimally significant party to the left of the LP proved to be completely impossible, and indeed the RCP was progressively weakening, its old majority dissolved it in 1949, reuniting with the enlist faction and accepting its policy. As soon as possible, however, Healy under various pretexts expelled Grant and the few dozen militants who had remained closely tied to him. Because of this, the Grant faction was not directly involved in the split of the Fourth International in 1953. In the second half of the 1950s, however, two unexpected events occurred. The Pabloite International Secretariat was left without a section in Great Britain. Grant's group offered, without consideration of past and present divergences, to become one, and the IS, just as opportunistically, accepted (1957). The second unexpected event was that in 1959 Grant drew up a text called "Balance Sheet of Entism," in which he overturned the positions held in the 1940s, passing over to supporting a hypothesis of strategic enlistment for an indefinite period. and not only for Britain. Clearly, with these two decisions, the Grant group moved from Trotskyism to centrist revisionism.

For more than ten years after that, a contradictory relationship existed between the group led by Grant and the Pabloite International Secretariat (subsequently the United Secretariat). After the mid-1960s the Grant group separated from the USFI, and what became the Militant Tendency, from the name of its newspaper, had its own autonomous development, first as a national organization and subsequently with its own international extension, being known by the "popular" name International "Militant" Tendency (IMT).

The IMT was characterized by a general strategy of decades-long “strategic entry”, first into the British Labour Party and then, internationally, into forces of a social-democratic type. In this period the IMT expressed extremely sectarian positions toward the other forces of the Trotskyist movement, calling them “the sects at the margins of the worker’ movement”.

The IMT’s strategic entry strategy produced a policy of adaptation, partly formal, partly real, to reformist positions, for example, on the nature of the bourgeois state and the necessity of a revolutionary mass insurrection to destroy it. Developing a spontaneist conception of the “socialist consciousness” of the working class, the IMT openly criticized the Leninist conception of the party expressed in *What Is to Be Done?* Claiming to apply the method of the Transitional Program, the IMT has tended in reality to limit itself to general propaganda, without trying to transform transitional demands into agitational slogans, where possible.

The IMT developed a serious adaptation to imperialism, particularly to British imperialism, masked by a demagogic “socialist” and “internationalist” rhetoric. This is shown clearly in its attitude toward the Irish question. The MT demagogically and moralistically condemned the actions of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), equating the IRA activists with Loyalist paramilitaries and calling them “green Tories”. In the Malvinas war in 1982 the IMT took an effectively dual-defeatist position: no support to Britain, but for “workers’ sanctions against Argentina” and for the abstract hypothesis of a “socialist war” against Argentina. The IMT refused to give consistent support to the Palestine liberation struggle.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the CWI made a left turn. The basis of the turn was the long process of expulsion of MT supporters from the British Labour Party, including the two MPs elected to Parliament. The turn was realized through a faction fight which put the former leader Ted Grant, who remained linked to the totality of the old positions, in a small minority. The large majority of the British section lined up against Grant, under the leadership of Peter Taafe. In most of the other national sections the balance of forces was more equal, although even there a majority lined up with Taafe.

The left turn was caused by a break with the policy of entristm in the Labour Party and in various social democracies on the international plane, with the constitution of independent organizations, in first place the Socialist Party (SP, previously Militant Labour, [ML]) of England and Wales (in Scotland there is a separate section). The turn also brought to an end the absolute sectarianism toward the other revolutionary Marxist organizations.

On other grounds, however, the turn has been very partial. The most evident change is that the CWI has developed a serious attitude toward the struggles of the specially oppressed, although that only brings it to positions that the majority of the far left has been expressing for many years. The CWI opposed the Gulf War and the more recent imperialist mobilizations against Iraq, but it has not modified its position on Ireland. Its

recent willingness to work with other political forces is positive, but this exposes the CWI to the pressures of forces not only to its left but also to its right. In general, the CWI continues to express a tendency to adapt to democratist positions, particularly on the questions of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. And it continues to express strong elements of adaptation to the level of spontaneous consciousness of the masses.

Limits which do not seem to have been overcome with the recent developments that have led to a dramatic crisis and split from the CWI itself (see point D. on the International Socialist Alternative).

### *C) The International Marxist Tendency (IMT)*

The old minority of the CWI formed the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) in 1992, under the leadership of the elderly Grant (who passed away in 2006) and Alan Woods. It defended all the old revisionist positions of the CWI. It also totally capitulated to the Bonapartist regime in Venezuela headed by Chávez, presented as a great revolutionary socialist leader. In this total capitulation, in addition to renouncing the principles of permanent revolution and class independence, Woods went so far as to theorize the existence of a state that would be neither bourgeois nor worker, but nevertheless revolutionary and a step towards a workers' state.

Since the international capitalist crisis of 2008, the IMT has moved to a kind of optimistic catastrophism. It thus demonstrated that it did not understand that, as Trotsky in particular brilliantly examined, there is no direct relationship between economic crisis and revolution, but that revolution is the product of the explosion of capitalist contradictions — social, economic (therefore also of crises, but not always and not necessarily), and political. In this framework, a global radicalization of youth has been invented (present in some countries, but not in many others, in particular in Europe). In this situation, the IMT has achieved a small and very partial evolution to the left, even ceasing to practice, in some countries, strategic entry into social-democratic or, in general, reformist parties.

However, this does not change the essential. Despite its claims, the IMT remains an organization that revises Trotskyism in a centrist sense, that separates itself from many principles and methods of Marxism in a fundamental way.

### *D) The International Socialist Alternative (ISA)*

The CWI suffered a grave crisis in 2018-19, starting from a very sharp internal clash that saw the split of at least half of its militants. The origin of the crisis was the clash between the majority of the International Secretariat (IS) and that of the International Executive Committee (IEC). Behind this was the confrontation initiated by the leadership of the principal and "historical" section of the CWI, the Socialist Party of England and Wales (SPEW), against the leadership of the important Irish section (also Socialist Party, SP), which has a parliamentary presence well.

The fundamental political basis of the clash was around the questions of the centrality of the working class and the maintenance of the traditional political bases of the CWI. The majority of the IS accused, not without elements of reason, the Irish section and its international supporters (including the most important section of the CWI after the SPEW, Socialist Alternative [SA] of the US) of abandoning both, privileging mass movements without a directly proletarian character (feminist, LGBTQ+, etc.), adapting to them and reflecting their petty-bourgeois ideology. In reality, there was also another problem, the questioning by the majority of the International Executive Committee of the running of the international organization by the Secretariat in a top-down and Anglo-centric, even if formally democratic, manner.

The character of the clash led to a dramatic, major split (accompanied by other minor ones) in 2019, without the realization of the hypothesized world congress. In the congress it was probable that the old Secretariat would find itself in a minority, albeit slight, which hastened its decision to break, by proclaiming its faction as a refounded CWI. While talking about a minority split by the supporters of the IS, the other main faction decided, presumably considering the revisions in line with respect to the past, to change its name and call itself the International Socialist Alternative (ISA, its acronym in English).

As mentioned, the adaptation to petty=bourgeois movementist positions appears to be a real characteristic of this revisionist organization. In addition, it seems, in reference to the subsequent split of some small sections, that the levels of top-down control and restriction of democratic debate are worse in the ISA than in the old CWI, accompanied by moralistic codes of behavior for militants, expressions of ideological positions outside those proper to the simple communist ethics of revolutionary Marxists.

#### *E. The Fourth International (Reproclaimed, Lambertist)*

After the break with the Healy sector of the International Committee (which exploded on its own in the mid-1980s, ceasing to exist in the previous terms), the current directed by Lambert formed the Organizing Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (CORQI ). Since then the Lambertist current has had various international experiences and names, up to the point of proclaiming the reconstruction of the Fourth International in 1993. What is certain is that the Lambertist current (in which practically all the national sections are strictly subordinate to the French section, marked by a profound national-Trotskyism) has progressively gone more and more to the right.

Lambertist politics are characterized historically by capitulation to international social democracy; political adaptation to the trade unionist level of consciousness of the working class; transformation of the tactic of the workers 'united front (and the anti-imperialist united front in oppressed countries) into a permanent strategy; Stalinophobia; political-economic catastrophism with the perpetual theory of "imminent revolution"; the absurd theory, contradicted previously by Trotsky's texts of the 1920s, as well as by common sense, that the productive forces have ceased to grow since 1913; and the

assumption of “democracy” (bourgeois) and the defense of nations, including imperialist ones (e.g., in relation to the European Union), as a strategic programmatic axis,

The Lambertist organizations are characterized by a complete lack of any real internal democracy, especially in the French section. Its leaders are notorious for slander campaigns and gangster methods used against political adversaries, particularly on the occasion of the major international splits of the predecessors to the CIR: the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (CORQI, 1972-1980) in relation the splits that gave life to the organization led by Varga in 1972-73 and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in 1979; and the short-lived bloc with the *morenista* tendency in the Parity Committee (1979-1980) and the Fourth International (International Committee) (QI[CI], 1980-1981).

Developing more and more anti-Leninist positions, Lambertism, like the other revisionist tendencies, liquidates the perspective of building Trotskyist parties in every country and building a mass Fourth International.

Thus it tries to create the conditions for unifying the so-called “legitimate tendencies of the workers ’movement”, claiming to base itself on the tradition of the First and Second Internationals, in counterposition to the “organizational sectarianism” of the Third International.

In developing this perspective, it combines extreme opportunism — linking itself with tendencies and organizations marginal on an international scale and essentially reformist or semi-reformist, like the Venezuelan MIR — with the most demagogic bluffs. Thus in January 1991 the CIR, with only its own forces plus some tiny reformist and petty-bourgeois allies, proclaimed a so-called Workers ’International Alliance for the Workers ’International and a continental section, the European Workers ’Alliance.

In France in November 1991 the PCI proclaimed, on a minimalistic and semi-reformist basis, a so-called “Workers Party”, which was supposed to unify the consistent Trotskyists, anarchists, socialists, and communists. This Workers Party was nothing more than a structure bureaucratically controlled by the PCI, which regrouped essentially its own members and strict sympathizers plus a small number of individual worker militants deceived by the Lambertists ’demagogy.

This absurd and ridiculous position continued in the further transformation of the French Lambertist organization into the Independent Workers Party (POI), in which formally the section of the International is only the Internationalist Communist Current (CCI), which obviously has by itself the absolute majority of the members of the POI.

In 2015 it underwent a major split, which saw the break of over a third of the militants, including the three members of the National Secretariat. Faced with electoral failures, the majority of the Central Committee, against the Secretariat, wanted to focus all the party’s work on trade union intervention (in general, rather opportunist, particularly in the

social-democratic union Forza Operaia [FO]). In addition, there was an old hostility between the majority of leaders and leading cadres from the generation of 1968 or earlier and the successor designated by Lambert (who died in 2008), the general secretary of the POI, Daniel Gluckstein, who had been with the Pabloites in 1968 and had unexpectedly joined the Lambertists, with an important split, only in 1980.

From the POI split the Independent Democratic Workers 'Party (POID) was born. On the ground of pure image the POID appears less sectarian than the POI, but essentially nothing has changed. The POID remains the party of all the "legitimate tendencies of the workers' movement," and the formal organization of the Trotskyists within it is the Internationalist Communist Tendency. The central reference slogan of the POID remains that of the POI, that is, "For the Republic, Democracy and Socialism." And when the POID established its international organization (taking the name of the Organizing Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International [CORQI]), gathering there too a minority of world Lambertism, it placed as the first article of its program, "The productive forces of humanity stopped growing in 1913. and this opened the phase of the socialist revolution" (sic!, with all due respect, obviously, to Marx, Engels and the Paris Commune).

#### *F. The International Socialist League (LIS)*

The International Socialist League is an international grouping that was formed starting from one of the fragments of Argentine and international *morenismo*. Having strengthened after the end of the military dictatorship in Argentina in 1983, *morenismo* formed an organization called Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) with several thousand militants, albeit on the basis of a distorted and very "attenuated" Trotskyist program. The same thing happened in the same period in Brazil, with the establishment of the "Convergencia Socialista" (CS) current of the Workers Party.

As seen above, the *morenista* tendency has always been characterized by wide variations and contradictions in its political positions, both throughout its history and in different countries at the same time. It has in practice carried out an extremely broad range of different perspectives: from the most marked adaptation to the trade union bureaucracy to anti-trade unionism; from open support for a popular front policy to the rejection of all united front tactics towards petty-bourgeois reformist or nationalist organizations; from the embellishment of Stalinist regimes to forms of Stalinophobia.

The basis of this chaotic zigzagging is given by an accentuated opportunistic unscrupulousness, the true and proper ideology of *morenismo*, which has made it a chameleonic current unable to develop the process of building revolutionary parties on serious Trotskyist bases.

This zigzagging revisionist policy continued after the break of the *morenista* current with the United Secretariat (1979) and the establishment, after the short period of a bloc with Lambertism, of the International Workers 'League (1982, better known by its initials in

Spanish and Portuguese, LIT). The Argentine MAS, like its predecessors, had indeed a record of consolidated centrist politics, characterized, despite some oscillations and turns to the left, by adaptation to the union bureaucracy, bourgeois nationalism and populism, and by masking the revolutionary nature of its program. Furthermore, for many years the MAS followed a policy of electoral and political blocs with the Argentine Communist Party, also in this case with some zigzags. Starting from an erroneous conception of the united front, the *morenistas* transformed their bloc with the Communist Party from a specific tactic for concrete goals into a strategy, despite the politically reformist and organizationally bureaucratic character of the Communist Party itself.

But after Moreno's death (1987) the latent contradictions exploded, also as a consequence of the fact that the MAS believed that Argentina in the late 1980s was on the eve of a revolutionary explosion in which the MAS really could take the power. The impact of the non-realization, even in partial form, of these absurd perspectives could only be disruptive. *Morenismo* shattered into several organizations. The furthest to the right and probably the most significant (with a thousand militants) was the Socialist Workers 'Movement (MST), which, along with the rightmost sectors of the LIT (important in Brazil), founded the International Workers 'Unity (UIT) in 1997.

The MST continued the MAS policy of political-electoral blocs with reformist, petty-bourgeois, and leftwing Peronist forces, not as a tactical choice, but as a strategy to place itself on the left of these blocs, transforming an eventual electoral alliance (moreover, within the given framework, absolutely opportunist) into a left=reformist political bloc without a class characterization (Movimiento Proyecto Sud). In the course of the development of the revolutionary crisis of the early 2000s, the majority of the MST correctly (although with elements of adaptation) participated in the *piqueteros* (organized unemployed) movement. This action clashed with the sectarian positions of a large minority of the party, which eventually split, constituting Izquierda Socialista (IS). The split had the support of the majority of the UIT.

This left the MST for several years without its own international organization, at least from a formal point of view, maintaining only a telematic network with a few organizations, particularly in Latin American, approaching, but never entering, the United Secretariat. In this period, in stark contrast to other organizations of *morenista* origin, it had a position of full adaptation to *chavismo*, exalting the so-called "Bolivarian revolution."

The MST has made a partial left turn in recent years. It broke with the forces of the center-left and joined the front of the other main Argentine Trotskyist organizations, the Left and Workers 'Front (FIT), which in the 2021 elections took 6 percent of the vote.

In addition, on the international plane, it in fact broke with *chavismo*, with its Venezuelan section (Marea Socialista) opposing President Maduro from the left.



This small turn, however, did not change the revisionist and centrist character of the MST politics. In fact, in the FIT it immediately posed the problem of a broadening of the FIT towards more moderate forces, while the battle against Maduro was fought, in large measure, in the name of “original *chavismo*.”

In this framework of partial modification, the MST and its allies broke with the USFI and gave impetus to a regroupment operation that mainly involved two organizations. The first was the Pakistani organization The Struggle, formerly a section of the International Marxist Tendency, which had developed a long process of “strategic entry” in the progressive bourgeois Pakistani People’s Party (PPP). The Struggle had been expelled from the IMT in 2016, because the International, as part of the above-mentioned “catastrophic” vision of the world situation, had wanted the Pakistani organization cease its entry into the PPP, and it had refused to do so (only to exit the PPP two years after the break). The second was the Socialist Workers’ Party (SEP) of Turkey, coming from the “Cliffite” tradition of theorists of the state-capitalist character of degenerated and deformed workers’ states.

The International Socialist League (LIS) was born from this regroupment in 2019. Although in the devastated context of the international Trotskyist movement a hypothesis of regroupment, rather than division, appears positive, it seems that this is not a unification really on a common programmatic basis, but rather of convenience, unless such a basis is provided by a perhaps probable “colonization” of the LIS by the MST. In any case, the LIS presents itself, like the MST, as a revisionist organization with politics of a centrist type.

#### *G. The Internationalist Communist Union (Lutte Ouvrière)*

The Internationalist Communist Union (UCI) is the international projection of the French organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO) with small groups, the most important of which are in Haiti and in the “French” departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

The LO originated from a group formed in France during World War II on sectarian positions (the Communist Group-Class Struggle, after World War II the Communist Union), which in 1944 refused to unify with the other Trotskyist tendencies in the new French section of the Fourth International.

LO’s politics are characterized by an economism rejects the method of the struggle for transitional demands and only occasional makes use of the transitional program. This economism is accompanied by an abstract popular propagandism on the communist perspective, partly positive, but not connected dialectically — that is, with the transitional method — with daily struggles. LO has a myth of building a “genuine workers’ party”, wrongly identifying the cause of the crisis of the Fourth International — a crisis that it considers to have originated in the period of the formation of the Fourth International — in the petty-bourgeois composition of the organization. This conception

shows LO's national outlook, because, although the French section had this objective problem at the end of World War II, other sections had a much larger proletarian composition — for example, the British RCP, the Belgian section, the SWP/US, the Bolivian POR, and the LSSP of Sri Lanka — and this prevented neither the crisis of the Fourth International nor the national degenerative processes.

On the basis of those positions, LO adopted non-Leninist methods of intervention, organization, and internal functioning. Its politics are characterized by a constant underestimation of the level of social crisis and class struggle and by a misconception of the potential that the political-social crises offers to the workers' movement. This was particularly true in the revolutionary crisis of May 1968 and continued in each successive rise of the mass movement, in which all the centrist limits of LO's politics came to light.

LO has traditionally had a semi-state-capitalist analysis of the degenerated and deformed workers' states, recognizing the USSR as a degenerated workers' state — a characterization which it still proposes ahistorically for the states produced by its explosion — but considering the deformed workers' states as state-capitalist.

LO's workerist positions lead it to abstain from many political struggles. This has extremely negative consequences for its positions on special oppression, especially women's oppression and lesbian/gay oppression. With regard to these, LO largely reflects the reactionary positions of backward sectors of the masses.

Despite the centrist limits of LO's politics, its capacity to develop abstract communist propaganda, the coherence of its constant independent electoral presentation, and its maintenance of a clear opposition to social-democratic and Stalinist reformism led LO to gain, beginning in 1973, an electoral success that consolidated, between 1995 and 2002 reaching 5-6 percent of the total vote (about 1,500,000 votes). But LO has been unable to exploit this important success for the construction of a true revolutionary party of the proletariat. In fact, it has ridiculously minimized the significance of its success in order to safeguard its present political-organizational reality and not put in question its own organizationally anti-Leninist and sectarian characteristics.

Moreover, it began to zigzag between sectarianism and opportunism: On the terrain of opportunism, for example, it appeared in 2008 in the local lists together with the reformist "plural left" to try not to lose, with this unprincipled ploy, its presence in administrative institutions, as was probable due to the drop in votes.

LO's overall politics, far from real revolutionary practice and common sense, made it impossible for it to face the difficult political challenges of the last decade, in the first place the birth of France Insoumise of the social-chauvinist and reformist demagogue Mélenchon, once a Lambertist "infiltrator" in the Socialist Party and later a Mitterrand minister. Today LO is organically weakened, but above all it has lost the big electoral support of the past, getting results below 1 percent.

## 15.

In addition to the revisionist tendencies we have indicated, there are many other tendencies. Some are national organizations, in some cases with a relatively significant role in their own country, and some are international tendencies, formally or informally constituted.

The most significant of these forces are located on the left of the Trotskyist movement and place themselves — sometimes with limits and errors — on the ground of consistent Trotskyism.

### *A. The Partido Obrero (PO, Argentina) and the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (CRFI)*

The Partido Obrero of Argentina was until a few years ago the main organization of the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International. Born in 1964 with the name *Política Obrera*, it had been the second Argentine Trotskyist organization, placing itself clearly to the left of the centrist revisionism of *morenismo*.

At the end of the 1960s it joined the important Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Masas) (POR, Masas after its newspaper), which had historically remained independent of both the International Secretariat and the International Committee. It then followed the POR into the Lambertist International (CORQI), from which it was shamefully expelled with a corollary of political slander in 1979 (when Lambertism attempted the above-mentioned maneuver of unification with *morenismo*). In this case as well, the POR solidarized with PO, and together with a few other South American organizations brought to life to the Fourth International Tendency (TCI).

Although clearly aligned to the left of centrist revisionism, the TCI was affected by the positions and the political nature of the POR, which behind an orthodox and sometimes ultraleft demagogy hid a real politics closer to an ideological and sectarian left-Menshevism, as seen in its attitude of renunciation (the exact opposite of the Leninist method) in the revolutionary processes in Bolivia of 1952 and 1984.

The political-programmatic errors of the TCI derived from a conception of the anti-imperialist united front in the dependent countries that tended to hypothesize the presence within the front even of leftwing bourgeois-nationalist forces, a conception that had importance in the opportunist attitude of the POR in the revolution of 1952. On the electoral question, its positions oscillated from the conception of electoral presentation as an expression of a united front — and not, like the traditional Trotskyist position, of revolutionary Marxist propaganda (albeit in a flexible way) — to an opposite one, of sectarian abstention (the POR rarely appears in elections in Bolivia and, as regards external support, just consider that it and its present very small international current called for abstention in Chile in 2021 between Kast and Boric).

The TCI and the POR, first of all, expressed completely sectarian positions towards the revisionist organizations of Trotskyism, classifying them *tout court* as “counterrevolutionary,” renouncing in sectarian terms some fundamental interpretative categories of revolutionary Marxism, such as that of “centrism”.

Another area of important error is analysis of the capitalist crisis and the development of the mass movements. The TCI tended to have a catastrophist view of the economic-financial crisis of capitalism. Equally and linked to this, it tended to overestimate the significance of the political crisis and the response — actual or potential — of the masses to the capitalist crisis. In this area too it was somewhat dialectical and was far from the hyperoptimistic views developed in the past by other tendencies of the Trotskyist movement (for example, the *morenista* tendency, with which the PO polemicalized with theoretical acuteness in this area in the 1980s and 1990s). But these analytical errors need to be critiqued on behalf of a more coherent and dialectical approach to reality as a basis for elaborating correct tactics for the activity of consistent Trotskyists.

A positive leap for the PO took place in the early 1990s, when it and some organizations related to it (the Partido de los Trabajadores [PT] of Uruguay and the Partido da Causa Operária [PCO] of Brazil) broke with the Bolivian POR (leading to the dissolution of the Fourth International Tendency), with correct criticisms, in particular of its renunciatory and substantially opportunist attitude in revolutionary situations. And above all, the concrete attitude of the PO in the class struggle appeared to be consistently Trotskyist (beyond a few errors, such as the electoral block on one occasion with a Maoist force).

For this reason, in 1994, as the ITO, we decided to send a delegate to Argentina to propose to the PO to unify our two tendencies. In this central attention to the PO, then much weaker than today (2022), there was also a precise knowledge of the party and its character. This had first matured in a common “critical” presence in the Lambertist CORQI of the PO and our Italian comrades who would participate in the subsequent developments that led to the ITO. Then in initial discussions in 1979-82 to verify the possibility of unification between the TCI and the then Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC, from the initials in English), a predecessor of the ITO. The discussion was also difficult because of the monstrous military dictatorship in Argentina, and ended due to the crisis of TILC in 1982-84.

The PO and its top leader Jorge Altamira, the real “big boss” of the party (in terms that surprised us and led some comrades of the ITO to raise objections to the hypothesis put forward), partially and slowly accepted our proposal. This led to the birth in 1997 of the Movement for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (MRFI). The MRFI saw the coming together of three different experiences, that of the PO and the Latin American organizations linked to it, that of our ITO, and that of the Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) of Greece, which came from the tradition of the Healyite International Committee.

This regroupment was completely principled, in the tradition of the orthodox Trotskyist method. Having indicated the essential points for the regroupment (the “four points”),

the Movement objectively posed itself as an intermediate phase towards the Refounded Fourth International.

Unfortunately, Jorge Altamira's understanding of the consistent method of the fight for the refoundation of the Fourth International was unknown. Moreover, the MRFI was not established on a democratic-centralist basis, but on a federalist basis. But above all, Altamira thought that the process must essentially pass through the winning of significant organizations or currents of both the Trotskyist and centrist (or sometimes even reformist or left-Stalinist) movements, convinced essentially on the basis of the dialectical and theoretical abilities of Altamira himself and the development, certainly important, of the PO in Argentina. He did not understand — beyond criticism, at times formally exaggerated, of the revisionists — that the majority of them were headed by self-centered groups or cliques. Or that one of the fundamental aspects of the fight for regroupment and refoundation (besides, obviously, concrete intervention in the class struggle in countries where they are present with some force) is factional struggle inside the centrist or left-reformist forces, even starting from very small groups of comrades and propaganda activity. In fact, the only relatively important gain was, through the EEK, that of the Revolutionary Workers 'Party (DIP) of Turkey.

So for Altamira, in contradiction to his catastrophic analyses, times could always be long. Thus the MRFI was maintained with a totally federalist functioning until 2004. In that year Altamira, also on the basis of the development of the PO, starting from its role in the revolutionary situation in Argentina in 2001-2002, decided to carry out the transformation of the MRFI into a democratic-centralist organization, the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (CRFI). Although quite chaotic, the congress was the only moment in the history of the MRFI / CRFI in which there was a significant political discussion (with the presentation by the majority of the comrades of the former ITO of seven important amendments, of course rejected, to the CRFI program). Naturally, at the very moment of the opening of the congress we dissolved the ITO (and this explains why the amendments were not all presented by all the delegates from ITO).

However, the congress was not the premise for the development of the serious functioning of the CRFI. Meetings always ended with resolutions, generally catastrophic, generally generic. Even the publication of the International Journal *El Obrero Internacional* was interrupted. No translations of texts, no real international bulletins. No international action was seriously undertaken. So Altamira continued, in his political analysis, his constant empiricism, little related to the principles and history of the Trotskyist movement (naturally, always in a concrete revolutionary Marxist framework), even developing a polemic (absurd for a Leninist and consistent Trotskyist) against "democratism." Thus, also in this case, given that even the birth of the CRFI did not attract significant international attention and that the a-Trotskyist centrist contacts (e.g., in Brazil and Bolivia) capitulated to reformism, Altamira quickly passed to a passive attitude towards the activity and the very existence of the CRFI.

The second congress of the CRFI, scheduled for 2007, never took place, and the little discussion that took place did not really involve all the militants of the various CRFI organizations (with the exception of the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori [PCL] of Italy, the principal organization originating from the old ITO, which constantly had specific international conferences and specific points in its congresses dedicated to the situation of the CRFI, translating the maximum material possible).

The non-functioning became clearer starting from 2011, when the international bodies of the CRFI ceased to function, even if only formally, all and always by the unequivocal decision of Altamira. And even more clear in 2014, when, starting from Altamira himself, the evident was recognized, that is, that the CRFI, as a democratic-centralist organization, had long since ceased to exist.

In all international meetings the PCL constantly fought this situation, which it rightly defined as anarcho-Bonapartist functioning, but was unable to change it. This is also due to the contradictions and political cowardice of the other two main parties of the CRFI (after the *de facto* exclusion, formally incorrect, in large measure its own fault, of the Brazilian PCO), that is, the EEK and the DIP. Both opposed the attitude of Altamira and supported the need to carry out the second congress and to develop the discussion on organizational problems among the whole CRFI, but unable to develop a political fight with us, as expressed in a three-way meeting in 2013, in which they rejected our proposal to launch a joint tendency in the CRFI to try to rectify the situation. In this context, in 2014 or 2015, it would have been logical, without breaking with the framework, albeit largely fictitious, of the CRFI, to re-establish the ITO, returning to the situation of the MRFI. Not doing so was a mistake.

While the situation dragged on between the hypothesis of finally realizing the mythical second congress and the political discussion of this, the DIP in particular continued to zigzag between the hypotheses of a common fight and the withdrawal of the same hypothesis. Finally, in 2017, came Altamira's exclusion of the PCL from the CRFI, completely against the statutes and without process, presumably based on the fear that we were (obviously not true) joining the Trotskyist Fraction (FT, led by the Socialist Workers Party [PTS] of Argentina).

The EEK and, above all, the DIP declared that they disagreed, but once again quickly capitulated. Thereafter, the positions of the two parties became more and more distant from ours, moving towards a "campism" (defense of Russia and China) and an adaptation to left-wing Stalinist forces.

At the same time, however, there was an epochal change in the PO. Unexpectedly defeated by a young PTS leader in the FIT primary for the presidential elections of 2016 and with a markedly diminished prestige, Altamira decided (with the evident purpose of later regaining his lost prestige) to exit from all the leading bodies at that year's PO congress (the PO holds annual congresses). After a year, in 2017, he presented himself again with the usual attitude of "Capo Massimo," harshly criticizing everything and everyone and, above all, the preparatory documents for the congress. But this time the

overwhelming majority of the leaders of the PO, fresh from a year of altogether more serious activity without *altamirista* domination, rejected this method and the *altamirista* hypothesis of returning to the previous situation.

From that moment Altamira tried to create the conditions either to take back the party or to organize a split. Finally, at the 2019 congress, having gotten 23 percent of the votes on a document presented with the support of a few other old leaders, he carried out a break. After having sworn to the congress that he wanted to maintain the unity of the party, he asked for the right of public faction, incredibly affirming that he was thereby defending democratic-centralism, which he had always ignored and violated, especially at the international level. Then realizing the creation of a new organization, demagogically called Partido Obrero (Tendencia) and today more and more known by the name of its newspaper *Politica Obrera*. Almost all of the CRFI (EEK, DIP, PT) has in fact sided with Altamira, albeit with uncertainty. But after some hypotheses of revival, the CRFI has plunged back into real political non-existence.

The break of the PO with Altamira is a very positive fact. Although no one can deny Altamira's significant political abilities, which allowed the PO to grow continuously from 1964 onwards, his Bonapartist, erratic and empirical leadership, first of all on the international level, limited the possibilities of the PO to play an even more important role. And in any case, the persistence of this situation called into question, as in every analogous case, the future of the party. Fortunately, the PO had alongside Altamira a leadership of great political worth, who managed to preserve the party in this difficult situation.

But it is not only from the point of collective and democratic leadership that the break with Altamira had a positive aspect. Apart from secondary issues, there are two important political issues on which the majority of the PO clashed with Altamira. The first is the problem of typically *altamirista* conceptions of a catastrophic type. Without theoretically questioning them from a general point of view, the majority of the PO opposed the concept that in a context of crisis it was impossible to have a situation in which the bourgeoisie was the dominant force. The position of the majority of the PO represented, beyond all its possible limits, the questioning of the political center of the catastrophic conception that Trotsky fought all his life, that is, the direct relationship between capitalist crisis and revolutionary development.

The second important point was that of the central demand of the "Constituent Assembly" at all times, as a supposed transitional slogan. A position that Altamira, having criticized for decades — when (in a zigzag, as always) it was Moreno's own — has for several years made his own, and in an increasingly central way. Rightly, the majority of the PO, without taking a position of rejecting, anywhere and in any situation, the "Constituent Assembly," recalled that the progressive character of this slogan depends on the political and social situation. Sometimes it can simply be without any sense, at times (see Venezuela) it can be agitated by rightwing forces, because its realization would have reactionary results.

If the PO is able to be consistent in the development of the various positions that forced Altamira to break, it could play a fundamental role in the refoundation of the International. Finally, it should be noted that today an important area of political discussion with the PO and mutual verification of positions is that around the analysis of the world situation, in particular on the decisive point of the nature of China (and Russia), a point that affects the orientation of Trotskyists in the current world scenario.

As for the dying CRFI residue of Política Obrera, the EEK and the DIP, if we cannot, in spite of everything, consider its components as “centrist,” these are forces that progressively move away from consistent Trotskyism. In particular, the most important, the Argentine one (probably a thousand strong), has gathered militants essentially on the basis of loyalty to the “big boss” while mixing opportunism and sectarianism.

### *B. The International Workers League (LIT)*

The International Workers League (LIT) exists mainly in Latin America. As we have seen, its principal leading figure was Nahuel Moreno, and historically, its leading section was the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS;) of Argentina, which Moreno led. Today, instead, the center of the LIT has moved to the United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) of Brazil, produced by the 1995 exclusion of the important *morenista* tendency from the reformist Workers 'Party (PT).

The LIT is the political heir of the old Bolshevik Faction of the USFI, constituted after the short period of formal unification with the Lambertist current from 1979 to 1981.

We have already seen the opportunistic and contradictory characteristics at the extreme of *morenismo*. The basis of this chaotic zigzagging was an opportunist lack of scruples, the true and proper “ideology” of *morenismo*, which has been a chameleonic current incapable of developing the process of building revolutionary parties on sound Trotskyist foundations.

On the central question of the building of the Fourth International as the leadership of the future international socialist revolution, the LIT, despite its criticism of the opportunism and liquidationism of the USFI, expressed confused and contradictory positions, which were also potentially liquidationist. For example, the LIT put forward in its 1986 International Manifesto the perspective of an “extra-Trotskyist” mass international, which would regroup diverse forces, in which the Trotskyists (meaning those with Trotskyist positions) might be a minority.

In the 1980s and 1990s the LIT was marked by an analytical approach to reality characterized by a hyperoptimistic evaluation of the situation in the class struggle and a catastrophist conception of the situation of capitalism. So, at the height of the difficulties of the international workers 'movement, it spoke of the development of a prerevolutionary or even revolutionary situation on a world scale. Confronting the developments in the East, the LIT picked out only the phenomenon of the fall of



Stalinism (in itself positive) and not that of the capitalist-restorationist counterrevolution, the historical success of world imperialism. It spoke — in ambiguous and substantially non-Marxist terms, in the given conditions — of the “triumph of the democratic revolutions”, dreaming of nonexistent revolutionary mass movements and denying, for a phase, the process of capitalist restoration.

The clash with reality of the whole of these analyses and the perspectives that didn't follow were the cause of a series of crises that struck jointly, upsetting both the LIT and the Argentinean MAS. As we have already seen, in recent years the LIT has given rise to diverse international organizations, all claiming the *morenista* tradition.

In Argentina the failure of the absurd hypothesis advanced in the mid-1980s of a revolutionary development in which the leading role would be played by the MAS, in alliance with the Communist Party or without it, led to the explosion of this party — once numerically the strongest in the international Trotskyist movement — into a good dozen organizations of varied consistency, of which the most significant today is the Socialist Workers Movement (MST) of which we will speak later.

At the end of the 1990s the leading group of the LIT (centered around the Brazilian PSTU) evolved positively, beginning with a break with the previous hyperoptimistic approach, recognizing the process of capitalist restoration in the East and, therefore, the defeat of the proletariat on this ground. It also reaffirmed, against movementist and revisionist positions developing inside the Argentinean MAS (or rather what remained of it), a general defense of the traditional Leninist and Trotskyist positions. The PSTU finally broke with its preceding adaptation to the popular front, which led it briefly to join the “Frente Brasil Popular”, the first form of inter-class alliance realized by the PT with “progressive” petty-bourgeois sectors.

The whole of this development has led the LIT to a break with what remained of the Argentinean MAS. This break occurred when the latter — under the influence of the Italian organization Revolutionary Socialism (SR), which for years was a section of the LIT — put in question the very fundamentals of Leninist and Trotskyist theory and, therefore, of revolutionary Marxism, with the development of movementist “libertarian” positions (in words, since the Italian SR has a totally repressive internal regime), revising the traditional Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist and “democratist” bureaucracy and defending and developing the most negative past LIT analyses of the major world events of the last historical period.

After this, the positive development of the LIT was, unfortunately, interrupted and even turned back towards “classical” *morenismo*. The LIT has thus returned to evaluating every mass movement as progressive, regardless of its character. So it was in Ukraine with the Maidan Square movement, in Venezuela with the movement against Maduro, in Brazil itself with the one against Lula and Dilma. This last position led to a split (unfortunately, of a clearly centrist character) of the PSTU, which lost 700 of its approximately 1700 militants there.

Moreover, the LIT, as it was before, with respect to the Argentine MAS of Moreno, remains today more a political extension of the PSTU than a real international organization, as well as, naturally, considering itself, beyond the phrases, as the unique nucleus of the Fourth International. It is, therefore, the umpteenth “international faction” that does not really set itself the task of the reconstruction of the International.

### C. *The International Workers Unity (UIT)*

The International Workers Unity (UIT) was born in 1996 through the fusion of the most important of the organizations originating from the crisis of the Argentinean MAS, that is, the Socialist Workers Movement (MST), a few organizations connected with it (essentially in Latin America), and the small current — of distant “Lambertist” origin — centered around the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR) of Spain, led by Anibal Ramos.

The split of the MST in 1992 was the fundamental base of departure of the explosion of the MAS. The MST took with it, in particular, the majority of the trade union cadres of the party and its representative in the national parliament (Luis Zamora). Compared to the MAS in progressive decomposition, the MST has represented a relatively stable organization, which has sought to reproduce the old traditional *morenista* politics, above all in their opportunist aspects. In particular, the MST has resumed and maintained a strategic bloc with the Argentinean PC under the name United Left (Izquierda Unida [IU]), with an ambiguous policy toward the forces of the Argentine center-left.

In fact, these were the reasons that led the MST and its international supporters (particularly strong in Brazil, where they formed the minority of the *morenista* current in the PT, opposed, at the time, the break with the PT that gave rise to the PSTU) to break to the right from the LIT in 1996, and to set up the UIT. In doing this they just repeated the catastrophic analyzes of the previous period and announced as a great victory the collapse of the political-social system of the regimes of the Eastern European countries, starting from the USSR, confusing the two aspects (precisely political and social) of the events and speaking of “great democratic revolutions carried out by the proletariat.”

In the early 2000s, the MST split in two. The minority (a very large minority) formed a new organization with the name Socialist Left (IS). The IS questioned the more moderate positions of the MST, in particular with respect to the *piquetero* movement and the strategic alliance with the Argentine CP. A minority in Argentina, the IS, however, found itself to have the support of the majority of the International, so the UIT remained centered around it and the Brazilian current.

The UIT, like the LIT, has not been able to distinguish between progressive and reactionary movements, also supporting the latter, from Ukraine to Venezuela and other countries.

Given the lack of positive development of the positions of the LIT, logic would suggest that there be a reunification of the two organizations. The main obstacle is the different choice of the two organizations in Brazil. The PSTU has a more “orthodox,” even sectarian, conception of the vanguard party, which it feels is already realized with itself. It maintains its control over a small (in particular for Brazil) vanguard trade union confederation Conlutas (about 200,000 ), all the more significant as the PSTU has very modest electoral results (sometimes below 0.1%). While the Brazilian section of the UIT is deeply inserted inside the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), a centrist organization with a parliamentary presence, born from the confluence of the different trends that quit or were excluded from the PT following the governmental experience of President Lula, totally subordinate to the national and international bourgeoisie.

With its overall politics that — undialectically — mix hyperoptimistic and catastrophist analyses of the real situation and its concrete opportunism in many situations, the UIT is the political continuator of *morenismo*, and the historical critical judgment on this current of the Trotskyist movement cannot fail to touch this organization too. However, the fact that it broke with the clearly centrist MST affected its politics. While on the one hand, it supported reactionary movements in different countries in pure *morenista* style, on the other hand, on the terrain of Argentina it has tried in recent years, with the IS, to remain anchored to the left, in particular with its participation in the FIT. Also, in PSOL it is not part of the more moderate majority. In short, lacking a more zigzagging and opportunist king of chameleonism like Moreno, it no longer presents — pointedly unlike the Argentine MST — positions of a political bloc with nationalists, reformists or Stalinists, or even of a “popular front” type.

However, one thing is certain. The UIT is a dogmatically *morenista* organization ideologically (something of which even the other currents deriving from *morenismo* accuse it), and in reality it does not have any hypothesis of regroupment that is not on these bases, also aided by maintaining the anti-Leninist conception of the FUR. It will be able to play a positive role only if it is involved, as a non-hegemonic component, in a larger regroupment, of which it certainly cannot be at the origin.

#### *D. The Trotskyist Faction - Fourth International (FT-CI)*

The leftmost of the organizations resulting from the crisis of the old Argentine MAS was the Socialist Workers Party (PTS), which was the first important split of that party. It arose from the break in 1988 of a leftwing faction of the party, which among others included the majority of the broad leading group of the youth. This faction accused (not wrongly) the majority of the party of lacking internationalism and of national Trotskyism, because they believed that Argentina would inevitably be the center of the revolutionary situation in the world and that, consequently, all efforts should center on the development of the MAS and not of the LIT (in which, however, they had no support).

Initially, the PTS presented itself as orthodox *morenista* and indeed accused the MAS leadership of having abandoned the teachings of the “master.” Progressively, however, the PTS revised the history of its current and abandoned any reference to *morenismo*,

with a real evolution on the level of political positions. With attention to the study of the historical positions of Trotskyism, the PTS expressed several times (for example, with respect to catastrophism or the united front) more orthodox positions than those of the empirical Altamira. Furthermore, always on the basis of the reference to the Trotskyist method, it began to develop interventions in various countries abroad, starting from very small propaganda nuclei and with entrust interventions, which effectively allowed it to build, almost from nothing, important organizations in Brazil, Chile and France (while Altamira, instead, also for banal questions of character, did not conceive of anything of the kind, being interested only in already organized groups of some consistency, an evidently absurd position for a Trotskyist).

However, the PTS, despite this success and having arrived, in general, on consistently Trotskyist terrain, had in fact more limits and defects than the PO, even at the time of Altamira.

In the first place, as seen, *morenismo* was not only a politically revisionist current but also a chameleonic and maneuvering one. If the PTS cannot be accused of political chameleonism, it certainly can and must be accused of maneuvering. Indeed, although other organizations of *morenista* origins are not exempt from this defect, the PTS is by far the worst of them on this ground. Just to give some examples. While an international leader of the PTS and FT declared (2016) to our comrades of the Italian PCL, that they were not interested in dividing the PCL, taking away a small group of supporters, which they hardly knew existed, he was organizing the process of splitting this group from the PCL.

In 2021 the situation in the French NPA made it clear that at the next congress (2022) the bloc of left currents would take an absolute majority over against the remaining Pabloite elements (which probably would have split) and changed the nature of the party. At this very moment the important FT current broke with the party by publicly declaring that it had been expelled from the NPA. The expulsion was a total invention. Despite the attempts of the FT militants, not one of their comrades had been expelled or even suspended, But despite the public denials of the NPA, they continued to affirm the total falsehood, to appear victims. The break had been decided by the PTS / FT precisely to avoid taking over the party with other currents, consistently Trotskyist or close to its conceptions, because then it would have been difficult to break with them (and, moreover, it thought it would be able to present one of its own leaders, a worker, young and of Maghreb origin, and exploit his candidacy in order to launch its own organization).

Because the PTS / FT, while declaring and arguing that it wants to carry out a process of revolutionary Marxist regroupment, both in Argentina and internationally, is totally sectarian and self-centered, and thinks it is the sole nucleus of the Fourth International to be refounded. It also re-proposes, at least on the political-organizational level, the national Trotskyism against which the PTS was born. It is no coincidence that we are talking about PTS / FT. Because, in fact, the FT is nothing more than the pure projection of the Argentine party. The FT is not based on democratic-centralism. It holds

“congresses” every year, but they are not real congresses, just meetings in which the various sections come to be “instructed” by the parent party.

We also add that if, from the point of view of classical Trotskyist theory, as we have said, the PTS / FT has been able to rediscover much of orthodox Trotskyism, thus breaking with the centrist revisionism of *morenismo* on the political level, placing itself, despite all its limits and defects, on the ground of consistent Trotskyism, on the level of subsequent theoretical development, the PTS has revealed severe limits in knowing how to use the method and content of Trotskyism and, more generally, revolutionary Marxism, in the face of new phenomena. For example, despite having fully grasped the characteristics of the first phase of capitalist restoration in China, it then stopped, failing to grasp China’s development in an imperialist sense, denying this reality with insubstantial arguments.

In recent years, the leadership of the PTS / FT (starting with its principal leader, Albamonte, “the cult leader,” as in the tradition of *morenismo* and of other organizations, such as Lutte Ouvrière) has “fallen in love” with the original leader of the Communist Party of Italy, Antonio Gramsci. Like almost everyone, he turned not to Gramsci, a communist and revolutionary political leader between 1917 and 1926, but to his writings from the period of his incarceration in a fascist prison, collected in the *Prison Notebooks*, written between 1929 and 1935 in a situation in which, for obvious reasons, Gramsci could only write cryptically. Thus the term “modern prince” conceals that of “revolutionary Marxist party,” but it has been confused by thousands of “left intellectuals” of all types and political positions. The term “hegemony” conceals the terms “leadership of the proletariat” in the revolution or “dictatorship of the proletariat” with the revolution, but it was seen as a great new concept of the development of Marxism.

The PTS has been added to this game of overturning the thought of Antonio Gramsci. In particular, ruminating around the concept of hegemony. So it has developed a confusing theoretical shift to the right. This has recently been expressed in the “discovery,” like and more than Altamira, of the Constituent Assembly as a “transitional” demand everywhere in the world (e.g., in France and Spain), leading towards a democratism alien to orthodox Leninism-Trotskyism.

#### *E. The Socialism or Barbarism Current (Nuevo Movimiento al Socialismo - Argentina)*

Socialism or Barbarism is an international current of modest size, centered on the Argentine organization Nuevo MAS and with a minor role of the Brazilian section, now positioned as a left opposition tendency within PSOL (the left split from the PT).

It is an organization that beyond the name, which can cause misunderstandings, is not the direct continuity of the old Morenist MAS, even if some of its original militants come from that party and, above all, from the PTS. Established in early 2000, since 2004 it has matured and publicly declared its break with Moreno’s central positions. This with

particular reference to the latter's revision of the theory of permanent revolution, transformed from the program of action of revolutionary Marxists for the proletarian conquest of power into an objective process ("unconscious workers and socialist revolution"), and / or into a general scheme of revolution by stages that absolutizes and distorts the experience of the Russian revolution (the "theory of February and October") in the service of of a minimalist and subaltern politics.

The Nuevo MAS rejects catastrophic economic-political analyses, recognizes the imperialist nature of China and Russia, takes a consistently Leninist defeatist position with respect to all imperialist poles, has rejected any support for mass movements of a reactionary nature, as in Venezuela. It does not seem to have a self-centered and sectarian position on the question of the refoundation of the revolutionary International. Given our recent knowledge of this organization, these and other aspects will naturally need to be deepened.

## 16.

Finally, there are small Trotskyist groups in the world, at times internationally connected with nuclei or individuals in other countries in international mini-factions, which are placed on the terrain of the Trotskyist program and, in general, of the anti-Pabloist tradition.

What characterizes them in general is an accentuated sectarianism, which explains, at least in the majority of cases, their isolation from the main forces that refer to Trotskyism. Some of them regroup valuable cadres, who could be important in building sections of the refounded revolutionary International in countries where there are no other organized forces of the international Trotskyist movement, or in significantly strengthening their scant presence.

In this context, it is not possible to make an exhaustive and specific list of these forces: in the future, or when conditions allow / recommend it, a discussion with each of them would be desirable to verify the possibility of involving them in whole or in part in a process of Trotskyist regroupment.

## 17.

The Fourth International has suffered a grave process of political degeneration and organizational fragmentation. As a united, organized revolutionary political force, as the nucleus of the international proletarian leadership, as the world organization of genuine revolutionary Marxism, it has obviously ceased to exist. This fact poses the fight for the international proletarian leadership in an extremely elemental form as the primary task facing proletarian revolutionaries today.

The first problem of international strategy that consistent, orthodox Trotskyists must, then, take up is the question of how actually to proceed in this elemental fight for the international proletarian leadership.

Despite its acuteness, and the political degeneration of its various fragments, the historical crisis of the Fourth International still differs qualitatively from the historical crises of the Second and Third Internationals.

In August 1914 the betrayal of proletarian internationalism by almost all the national social-democratic parties at the outbreak of World War I signaled the conversion of social democracy into a counterrevolutionary agent of the imperialists within the workers' movement, whose primary political function was to prevent the revolutionary unity of the proletarians of all countries and the revolutionary seizure of power by the working class of any country. The social-democratic program of reforms, real and illusory, became primarily a means of inhibiting the militant development of the proletarian class struggle and tying the workers of each nation to "their own" bourgeoisie and the economic development of "their own" national capitalism. The essentially counterrevolutionary role of the social democracies was confirmed by their responses to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the revolutionary situations that developed throughout the world in the aftermath of World War I.

In 1933 the most important section of the Third International outside the Soviet Union, the German Communist Party, thanks to the grotesque "third period" line of the Stalinist Comintern, proved utterly incapable of mounting a serious struggle against Hitler's seizure of power. Instead of openly drawing the lessons of this catastrophic failure, the entire Third International pretended no serious political errors had been committed, while moving, initially behind closed doors, from the bureaucratic ultimatism and adventurism of the late 1920s and early 1930s to the crassly opportunist policies of popular-frontism in 1934-1936. Popular-frontism and global class-collaborationism became the fundamental strategy of the Third International, to which the actual organization of the Third International itself was sacrificed in 1943.

The incapacity of the German Communist Party or the Comintern to respond in any sort of communist fashion to the victory of Hitler led Trotsky in 1933 to turn from the strategy of fighting to regenerate the bureaucratic-centrist Third International to the strategy of fighting to build a Fourth International, seeing the Comintern as still bureaucratic-centrist but no longer capable of regeneration. And with the adoption by the Stalinist government and Comintern of policies openly endorsing the "right to national self-defense" of the "democratic" imperialists, the Comintern became itself, by the time of its seventh world congress in 1935, a counterrevolutionary force, in practice social-patriotic and committed to preventing world proletarian revolution.

In the aftermath of World War II, Stalinist parties betrayed the working classes throughout Europe and Asia, preventing or aborting revolutionary struggles. The bureaucratic extension of collectivized property in Eastern Europe and, eventually, East Asia and Cuba, did not alter the essential character of Stalinism as an international counterrevolutionary force.

The Fourth International has not gone through such a decisive transformation. Its degeneration and fragmentation have led to the development of a set of organizations which, with a few exceptions — essentially the LSSP of Sri Lanka and the Posadists — cannot be regarded as consolidated counterrevolutionary organizations within the workers' movement. The international and national organizations presenting themselves as Trotskyist differ qualitatively from the essentially counterrevolutionary social-democratic and Stalinist formations.

The great majority of the forces which have degenerated from Trotskyism maintain politics which are generally revisionist and centrist — or, in a few instances, ultraleft-revisionist — without breaking openly and completely with revolutionary Marxism.

The Pabloites have distorted the Trotskyist program and adapted it to various nonrevolutionary petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic currents. They have subordinated or denied the role of Trotskyist parties as the necessary expression of the political independence of the working class, in favor of adaptation to these nonproletarian and nonrevolutionary forces. The organizations of the International Committee of 1963-1971 tended to combine national-Trotskyist adaptationism with extreme forms of national-Trotskyist sectarianism (Lambert most clearly characterized by capitulation to social democracy, Healy by collapse into crazy sectarianism).

But from both sides of the 1953 split and in the various fragments from the successive breakups — or previous breakups, as in the case of LO of France — organizations and tendencies survive whose opportunist and sectarian revisions of Trotskyism have not yet produced a complete and decisive break with the programmatic bases of revolutionary proletarian politics. These organizations continue to relate themselves positively, in various ways, to the Transitional Program of 1938. Programmatically they still advance, even though in some cases with many contradictions, the perspective of the proletarian dictatorship based on soviet democracy, still formally reject popular-frontism, still declare their commitment to proletarian internationalism, even while revising and distorting these principles and adapting to currents hostile to them. They are essentially centrist organizations, but centrist organizations of a special kind.

In continuing to proclaim their adherence, even in a distorted fashion, to the revolutionary program of Trotskyism, these organizations continue to attract militants breaking towards revolutionary politics from social democracy, Stalinism, and conventional forms of centrism.

The actual and potential role of these Trotskyist-centrist organizations as apparently revolutionary Marxist poles of attraction to advanced workers internationally and in the majority of individual countries, creates a highly contradictory, complex and historically unprecedented situation with fundamental implications for the strategic perspectives of orthodox Trotskyists fighting for the refoundation of the World Party of Socialist Revolution, which was the original Fourth International.



Not only do these organizations themselves vacillate between revolutionary and opportunist policies. In continuing to claim to base themselves on revolutionary positions, they retain the capacity to expose cadres, however inadvertently, to actual Trotskyist positions. Their constant vacillation between Trotskyist and revisionist policies tends to generate not only frequent splits but also frequent clashes of internal tendencies and factions, in which, over and over again, some militants rise to the defense of at least some Trotskyist positions against revisionist ones.

All of this means that, even though, by and large, the leaderships of these organizations are hardened in their revisionist and adaptationist positions, these organizations, viewed as a whole on an international scale, tend: to contain militants who are moving toward orthodox Trotskyist positions; to be subject to a constant process of limited struggles for Trotskyist positions; and to display a constant tendency to draw toward themselves advanced workers searching, in reality, for the revolutionary alternative of Trotskyism.

For the orthodox Trotskyists to turn their backs on the advanced workers being drawn toward Trotskyist positions by the Trotskyist-centrist organizations and the militants fighting for Trotskyist positions within them, would be an act of sectarianism of historically tragic proportions.

All this is true also and above all because, since the crisis of 1951-53, there has never been a serious, consolidated and organizationally significant International faction capable of appearing on a world scale as the consistent and orthodox reference for all Trotskyists. The International Committee constituted in those years — to which, in any case, our critical support historically goes — was unable to be it, as we have seen. As for the ITO and the organizations that preceded it, they were too weak organizationally to be it.

As for the more important MRFI and CRFI, they also were too weak on a world scale. They could have developed in this sense, but as we have seen, political and organizational contradictions did not allow them to do so.

The task of orthodox Trotskyists is to develop an international tendency oriented strategically toward refounding the International through linking up with, supporting, and organizing every struggle for Trotskyism, every genuinely Trotskyist development throughout the world, whether independent or inside the major Trotskyist-centrist organizations.

With their own independent organizations, orthodox Trotskyists must develop exemplary work in the class struggle in ways that will make them genuine poles of attraction to advanced workers, as well as inside the Trotskyist-centrist groupings.

Within the Trotskyist-centrist organizations, Trotskyist factions must struggle for the political regeneration of sectors of these organizations, as broad as possible, basing themselves both on the political and theoretical struggle and on struggles arising from

the problems of revolutionary intervention in the development of the proletarian class struggle.

In the sense that in many of the organizations derived from the crisis of the Fourth International and claiming to base themselves on the Transitional Program, a struggle for the International has taken place, is taking place, and must take place in the next period — in this sense, we must recognize and define the contours of a somewhat amorphous international movement in which consistent Trotskyists must fight to develop and unify all the genuinely Trotskyist forces in a refounded International.

By this perspective we do not mean that orthodox Trotskyists in any way identify or confuse their program with the concrete program and policy of either Pabloite or anti-Pabloite revisionists. Nor do we mean that any form of centrism or revisionism, can somehow in and of itself be treated as a consistent, revolutionary Marxist trend. Nor do we mean that these Trotskyist-centrist organizations derived from the crisis of the Fourth International should be the sole arena of the struggle to refound the International.

An international Trotskyist faction could decide to enter as a whole into one international organization of the Trotskyist movement, to work principally within a certain number of such organizations, to function primarily as a group of independent organizations, and so on — all depending on the real conditions best favoring the fight for the refoundation of the Fourth International.

What the recognition of the special character of these centrist groupings does mean is that orthodox Trotskyists must maintain a strategic orientation toward them. Further, their special character has a number of specific practical implications.

Within the Trotskyist-centrist organizations, we must promote the formation of orthodox Trotskyist factions, united on an international basis with each other — independently of the various international or national organizations in which they may respectively be intervening — and with the independent orthodox Trotskyist organizations, all the components together forming an international Trotskyist faction, organized on a democratic-centralist basis both internationally and in its national sections.

Such tactical considerations do not imply that there is a clearly established, guaranteed course of action which necessarily leads to the refoundation of the International. Nor, much less, that it is probable that we will actually succeed in regenerating any one or more of the extant “Trotskyist-revisionist” formations. However, only the flexible, dialectical strategy of such a struggle for political regeneration, combining independent work in the proletarian class struggle with factional intervention within the “Trotskyist-revisionist” organizations, will allow us to complete the actual complex process, however it may develop concretely, which — through splits, fusions, partial regenerations, and growth of independent work — will enable the consistent Trotskyist forces to win the political majority of the militants orienting to Trotskyism throughout the world and to refound the International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

Certainly, a whole series of practical alternatives for the development of the activity of consistent Trotskyists will present themselves. Trotskyists must be prepared to adjust their tactics to the concrete development of the struggle to refound the International and the concrete development of the international struggle of the working class — on the sole condition that they maintain the absolute political independence of the consistent Trotskyist forces.

Today the ITO is engaged fully in the process for the refoundation of the ~~Fourth~~ International undertaken starting from the birth of our current in the 1970s (in Italy with the Bolshevik-Leninist Group [GBL]; in the United States with the group of the same name [BLG]; in Britain and Denmark with comrades in or linked to the Workers Socialist League [WSL]). It sees all the difficulties, in particular with the failure of the CRFI, but also the opportunities. It wants to go forward, trying to involve, on a principled basis, the widest arc of forces of the Trotskyist movement and also sectors originating from other forces of the proletarian vanguard that seek a revolutionary Marxist response to the defeats of the past and a perspective for the future.

A process to which, in any case, we are already fully committed. Thus we proposed to the Tendency for a Revolutionary International to immediately begin a process of unification, for which, in our opinion, the political bases exist. Unfortunately, the TRI rejected our proposal in favor of a simple declaration of fraternal relations, thus demonstrating, beyond the correctness of their general positions, the limits of their understanding of the need for the programmatic unification of consistent Trotskyists and the need for a rapid process on this ground. Provisionally accepting the decision of the TRI with regard to fraternal relations, we will continue fighting to convince them of the need for the unification of our forces.

And then we will resume dialogue with the Argentine Partido Obrero. This large organization (compared to the forces of Trotskyist organizations in the world), purged of the negative elements of the Altamirista tradition and firm on the positive ones (even today, as mentioned, we cannot consider Altamira and his faction to be centrist revisions), with a strong and collective leadership, could be central to the development of the process of refounding the International. We will do all we can to clarify with them perspectives, political positions, and also the existing differences, in the first place, as mentioned, on the imperialist development of China and Russia.

And again there may be smaller organizations (some of which we are in contact with) that could participate with us in this process.

It is in this sense that the ITO considers its current role important, however modest its forces. The ITO is neither the nucleus of the future refounded International nor the international orthodox Trotskyist faction, but rather a transitional regroupment structure of consistent Trotskyist militants in a struggle to develop, without opportunism or sectarianism, the fight for the Fourth International.

Although the development of the ITO is today important to this aim, it remains our firm intention to dissolve ourselves not only when International is refounded, but also when the process toward the refoundation leads to a broader regroupment than ourselves on a politically and organizationally consolidated basis.