

NAHUEL MORENO
writing as Darioush Karim

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DICTATORSHIP
OF THE PROLETARIAT

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The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat
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Preface

This polemic book against the resolution “The Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy” presented by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, was finished in July 1978. The manuscript was shown to an important group of political friends, who returned to me with some modifications and suggestions. None of them brought substantial changes to the original text, with the exception of that made by an Italian friend, on the definition of the revolutionary dictatorship. His view was to add to the six points with which I had defined revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat one which defined its nature. I picked up this observation, as well as all the others.

When the present work was about to go to the publishers, lacking only the final touches, I left on a visit to certain countries of the Middle East as a tourist journalist, intending to return within two weeks. While in Iran, I was arrested along with several socialist comrades. This caused me several months of inconvenience, because of the time taken to regain my freedom and then reorganize my activity. These were the circumstances which delayed the printing of this book.

I generally write the preface after I have finished the main text. For this reason, due to the loss of time I had looking after my personal affairs and the attempt to write an introduction of interest to young readers of the left — to whom my work is primarily addressed—, the work was not finished until December. All these drawbacks, however, gave me time to add the examples of the Shah and the mobilizations in Iran, in those passages which, in the initial text, referred to Somoza, Pinochet, Franco and Salazar.

I am convinced that, during the six months since I virtually finished this book, the acceleration of world revolution has confirmed some of the central points in this work. I believe that there are two that deserve to be especially featured. One of them is the attack on the ignorance reflected in the resolution on the possibility of wars or invasions between proletarian dictatorships, as well as the lack of a policy towards those inevitable situations. A few months later Vietnam invaded Cambodia.

Another central point of my criticism to the United Secretariat (USec) is for not recognizing the need for violent armed confrontation with the counter-revolution under certain circumstances, and for its insistence in that this confrontation should always adhere to written laws. Everything that has happened in Iran supports my criticism. The Iranian masses have had to arm themselves before they could execute the assassins of Savak and confront troops loyal to the Shah. Luckily, they did not follow the dictates of the USec resolution. It did not occur to any Iranian worker, peasant or student to hold a public trial without recourse to “retroactive delinquency” for the murderers and exploiters of the previous regime. They did what all revolutionaries in history have done: they democratically judged and executed the murderers wherever they found them.

These two examples clearly show that this book deals, at least, with current and fundamental problems to the development of world revolution. The title sums up my position: I have rejected “The Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy” of the USec in order to return to the sources, to revive the old Marxist formula. Put another way, a dictatorship to develop the revolution, rather than immediate “Socialist” democracy”.

Darioush Karim [Nahuel Moreno], February, 1979

Introduction

When the major western Communist Parties, French, Spanish, and Italian, withdrew from their programs the slogan of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” a debate generalized on the phenomenon that has been termed “Eurocommunism”, that is the abandonment of the Marxist-Leninist concept of the state along with a superficial criticism of the worst features of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies.

In this as in all previous major controversies, the Marxist teachings which have been corroborated and enriched by more than a century of revolutionary experience are at stake. In order to defend these teachings, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International passed a resolution entitled “The Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy” in which the authors proposed a public debate. It was the right thing to do, given that the subject is of great interest to all western and European left.

And it is no coincidence that the Communist Parties decide to withdraw the slogan of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” at the precise moment that Europe is experiencing an upturn in workers’ struggles, which are also spreading to Latin America, the USA and the colonial masses of Asia and Africa.

In reality, the Communist Parties are simply adjusting their theories to their old daily practice: the abandonment of the class struggle, and its conclusion, the dictatorship of the proletariat. And they do this precisely at the moment when their respective imperialisms have increased pressure on the Communist and Socialist Parties to accept their austerity plans.

The strongest Communist Parties of Western Europe find themselves under twofold pressure: the imperialist offensive on the standard of living and employment of the working class and the latter’s refusal to bear the brunt of the capitalist crisis.

To confront the resistance of the workers, imperialism —European, Yankee or Japanese—appeals to the bourgeois democratic prejudices of the workers. By means of its enormously powerful mass media, it subjects the masses to a permanent campaign extolling the virtues of bourgeois democracy and freedom, while criticizing the lack of democracy and freedom in the workers’ states. Instead of comparing the colossal gains of the working class —expropriation of the bourgeoisie, planning, full employment, etc.— a terrain in which the workers’ states far surpass the most democratic bourgeois states, the media compares formal freedoms and questions the repressive, totalitarian character of the workers’ states. Day after day, the left-wing parties and the workers are challenged by arguments like the following: “We give you full freedom to oppose us. We only use repression if you rise up against the national democratic constitution; if, for instance, you resort to wildcat strikes, terrorism, or try to impose your will on the nation and reject the results of the elections or the decisions of the freely elected parliament. On the other hand, in the workers’ states there are concentration camps; all citizens who do not conform to the ruling Communist Party’s opinions are sent to prison or interned in psychiatric clinics. We are democratic: we give you freedom of speech, of the press, and freedom to run in elections; and we will even allow you to take over the government if you win. The choice is between the freedoms of the capitalist countries or the totalitarianism of the proletarian dictatorships. However, in order to maintain this system you must accept the sacrifice of working longer hours and earning lower salaries. The choice is yours: freedom or totalitarianism.”

These statements are addressed to the bourgeois democratic prejudices of Western workers. Anyone who has been active amongst the students or workers of the advanced capitalist countries will have come across this belief, that capitalism, despite its faults, offers freedom of choice: where to live, where to work, what to study, etc. This belief does not take into account the relative nature of these privileges and, what is even more serious; it does not understand that these advantages, scarce as they are, belong exclusively to the rich nations, which exploit the rest of humanity. Over the last decades, the Communist parties have joined the Social Democrats in aiding and abetting these sentiments. Other factors have been the economic boom, which has permitted a higher standard of living for the working class and the modern middle classes; the tragic spectacle of the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe and especially the USSR; the terrible experience of the fascist totalitarian regimes; and finally the victorious struggle against

the Greek colonels, Salazarism and Francoism, that initiated a period of democratic privileges which the masses are afraid to lose.

Not satisfied with that, each imperialism makes the following demands of their respective workers' parties, particularly the communists; "are you willing to help us overcome our national economic crisis in order to safeguard democratic freedoms and the parliamentary system? Will you be serious and trustworthy politicians, ready to convince the working class that it must make a sacrifice in order to safeguard the economic development of the nation? Are you on the side of patriotism and economic development, or for the defence of the USSR and the sectoral interests of the workers?"

For now, many communist parties are immune to these questions. Because of their weakness and their lack of positions in parliament, trade unions and government of their respective countries, their leaderships remain dependent on aid from Moscow. This means that, for the time being, they maintain their traditional positions.

But, for the stronger parties, such as the Italian Communist Party., this means the following: "What do you want? To lose millions of dollars in trade with the USSR, or your municipal incomes? To lose thousands of supporters who will lose their jobs? Do you wish to lose your enormous part in the bureaucratic apparatus of the major cities in order to return to a dependency on the USSR, like that of the weaker Communist Parties? What for? Are you really losing any influence in the parliamentary system with these austerity plans? Our system guarantees your jobs and privileges. Is it too much to ask in return that you discuss with us labour contracts and laws in order to convince workers to earn a little less or work a little more?" For this reason, Communist parties have accepted with open arms collaboration with the austerity plans of the bosses, as already seen in Italy and Spain.

However, the awareness that this policy could produce serious crises—to be overtaken by the mass movement or to lose votes in elections—, leads them to compensate by making concessions in other areas. Basically, the same concessions as those made by the bosses, but with Marxist guise.

The Communist Parties have "democratized" their program and their policies, and attempt to direct everything into discussions which alienate their militants and the vanguard from the resistance to the economic plans of the bosses governments. For example, relying on the just repudiation of the masses, they attack American imperialism, instead of identifying the imperialist bourgeoisie of their own country as the principal enemy. For the same reasons they question the political monopoly and the one-party system of the sinister Russian bureaucracy by criticising the worst features of the relentless repression exercised by the USSR and the other bureaucratized workers' states against their oppositionists and other workers' states. They also defend the martyrs of the Moscow trials, the other victims of Stalinism, and Czechoslovakia.

And when they withdraw the dictatorship of the proletariat from their program, openly defending the parliamentary system and universal suffrage, they do it in order to foster the false democratic illusions of the working class and gain credibility with the bourgeoisie. They advocate an absolute multi-party system both before and after the seizure of power on the basis of the workers' belief that everything will be put in order through peaceful, parliamentary reformism. They have even asserted that, should they reach power and then lose the elections to a reactionary party, they will abide by the result out of respect for the sanctity of universal suffrage. Inevitably, this has led them to patriotism towards their own imperialisms which can be counter-posed to the old blind "Russian patriotism" which characterized the early stages of Stalinism. For the same reasons, they have started to introduce, albeit more timidly, freedom of dissent within their own parties and the workers' organizations they control.

Against the Trotskyists, they employ the same arguments that the imperialists use: "Don't be dogmatic. Forget the class struggle and the proletarian revolution and dictatorship envisaged by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and adapt yourselves to the times and to contemporary advanced Western societies. Why not commit yourselves, as we have done, to unfettered political freedom if you seize power? Leave aside the mistaken notions of class struggle, workers' revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and pledge to defend democratic freedoms and the parliamentary system. Why not defend universal suffrage, parliamentary democracy and majority rule?"

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International wrote and published its resolution precisely in order to reply to the Euro-communists and defend the positions of Lenin and Trotsky on these issues. All this would have been extremely praiseworthy and gained our unconditional support had the USec

not committed a veritable theoretical, political and historical crime by ascribing to the dictatorship of the proletariat objectives and a program 90 percent of which are outlined in the Euro-communist programs and diametrically opposed to those of our teachers.

According to the USec the dictatorship of the proletariat will be duty-bound to guarantee the restorations bourgeoisie and its political parties “unfettered political freedom” from the first day of its inception and forever more so long as these parties do not take up arms and declare civil war. “This is our programmatic and principled position: unfettered political freedom for all those who in practice respect collective property and the workers state’s constitution.”¹ What does “in practice” mean? “This means that freedom of political organization should be granted all those, including pro-bourgeois elements, who in actual practice respect the constitution of the workers’ state, i.e. are not engaged in violent actions to overthrow workers’ power and collective property”.²

It seems ridiculous that we should have to explain why there can be no “unfettered political freedom” or “universal suffrage” under a class dictatorship and that there should be a debate to establish that dictatorship is counterpoised to “unfettered political freedom” for all inhabitants, since dictatorship implies by its very nature some form of oppression, of political compulsion for someone, because otherwise it is not a dictatorship. The debate moves from the absurd to the tragic when we apply this concept to the political arena (“unfettered political freedom for Somoza, Pinochet, and the Shah of Iran until they take up arms against the workers’ dictatorship without standing trial for their past crimes”).

The USec tries to justify its position by referring to Lenin and Trotsky, but it is easy to demonstrate that its new program has nothing to do with what the latter did and said.

For Lenin it was not political liberty but only dictatorial power that was “unfettered” after the October Revolution: “The scientific term ‘dictatorship’ means nothing more nor less than authority untrammelled by any laws, absolutely unrestricted by any rules whatever, and based directly on force”.³ In *The State and Revolution* Lenin quotes Engels: “so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist”.⁴ In the *Program of the Russian Communist Party* written by him and ratified in 1936 by Trotsky, Lenin emphasizes the “restrictions... of freedom” until socialism is won and the exploitation of man by man disappears: “...withdrawal of political rights and all other restrictions of freedom are merely provisional measures which will cease to be necessary when the objective possibility of the exploitation of man by man ceases to exist...”

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, the same book on which the USec attempts to base its “programmatic and principled norm”, Trotsky insists that under the dictatorship of the proletariat there must be “strict limitations of freedom”: “To be sure, a revolutionary dictatorship means by its very essence strict limitations of freedom”.⁵ Close to exile he had warned us that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is inconceivable without the use of force even against sections of the proletariat itself”. In 1938, the *Transitional Program* repeats these statements “...the formulas of democracy (freedom of press, right to unionize, etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat...”⁶

The traditional programmatic norm of Marxism is therefore sufficiently clear: “unfettered political freedom” will only be given when “the objective possibility of the exploitation of man by man ceases to exist”, that is, when imperialism has been definitely defeated and the class system has disappeared. Until then, there will be “strict limitations of freedom” according to Trotsky, and a “withdrawal of political rights” and “restriction of freedoms” according to Lenin. This “unfettered power” will be necessary for the defence of national and international socialist revolution. We do not simply wait for the counter-revolutionaries to declare civil war against the new government in order to limit their freedom, we do not allow them to take up arms and organize. Therefore, we are not committed to give them “unfettered

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Vanguard Press, Toronto, 1977, p. 27.

2 Ibid, p. 2.

3 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich: “A Contribution to the History of the Question of the Dictatorship”, 1920, in *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, vol. 31, p. 353.

4 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich: “The State and Revolution”, 1917, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., vol. 25, p. 440.

5 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, 1936, Pathfinder Press, 1977, New York, p. 278.

6 Trotsky, Leon: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, 1938, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, 1973, New York, p. 101.

political freedom”. This does not mean that we shall outlaw counter-revolutionaries altogether. They shall have limited “political freedom” according to the requirements of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We believe that the above quotations, as well as our arguments, sufficiently prove that the USec has completely revised the revolutionary Marxist position on the dictatorship of the proletariat. We do not mean to say at this point that the USec is mistaken. We are merely proving the significant fact that its present views are opposed to the traditional Marxist position. Thus, one of its most enthusiastic adherents admits with complete honesty: “Concretely, I believe that this is a positive and necessary correction, with which I emphatically agree. This must be clearly stated. It is necessary to establish the material bases and political logic which lead us to adopt the present position. Otherwise, we would be suggesting that the resolution states the traditional position of the Fourth International, the Left Opposition, and the Bolshevik Leninists, which would not be a serious attitude on our part.” And further: “Our program at this stage is not that of the Bolsheviks in 1917 nor that which we have traditionally adhered to.”⁷

The reader will wonder: how this change has come about? Since it cannot be a theoretical “mistake” or “omission”, is it a capitulation? If not, what is it? How do we define what is happening?

What is happening is that a section of the Western and European Trotskyist movement has become a transmission belt for the bourgeois democratic prejudices of Western workers, combined with the ideological traces of the ultra-left influences until recently so prevalent in the European student movement.

These prejudices are manifested in their program of “unfettered political freedom” and the ultra-left influence is shown in the formal, academic, negation of bourgeois democratic institutions.

However, these influences are gradually being replaced by bourgeois institutions as shown by Mandel’s desire to impose “universal suffrage” upon the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What happens in the ranks of this part of Trotskyism is a phenomenon symmetrical to that of Eurocommunism: the programs of the current leadership of the Fourth International and the Western European Communist Parties is that of “unfettered political freedom”, although the USec presents it as a program for the proletarian dictatorship, while the Eurocommunists raise it in the context of the capitalist and transitional system. They do this for similar reasons.

The Communist International under Lenin and later the Trotskyists, have insistently remarked the existence of bourgeois democratic prejudices amongst the Western masses. The strength of the Social Democratic and Communist parties is a clear political expression of this fact. These parties embody the ideal synthesis: they are “working class parties” and give articulate expression to its prejudices. They are not imperialist: they criticize the workers’ states from the “democratic” angle. Nevertheless, the European crisis and upsurge, while eroding those prejudices, also strengthen them. How? Very simple. The upturn of the struggle, which means in a way more power to the workers, makes them believe that everything will be solved when their parties take office peacefully, through elections.

This poses a theoretical-political problem. The Fourth International of Europe and the USA lives in a society and with toiling masses which are immersed in bourgeois democratic prejudice. Inevitably, some leaders and currents of our movement must reflect these prejudices. Who can these people be? Unfortunately this question answers itself: the USec majority. Who else could it be? Someone must reflect them. At the end of the 1960’s, when the European student movement gave massive support to the Cuban Revolution, made Che Guevara its hero, and guerrilla warfare its method, this socio-political phenomenon was also represented in our International. This is to be expected since a living international which is not a sect will always reflect the socio-political processes of its time. This has always been the case and will always continue to be so. In no way, however, does this mean that our international should transform itself into their mouthpiece. Together with Trotsky, we believe that in order to lead the revolution, we must “swim against the stream”.

What is happening now is that the USec expresses the bourgeois democratic prejudices of Western workers in its documents, its politics, and within the Trotskyist rank-and-file. The resolution on “Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” is the most perfect synthesis to date of the new revisionist tendency which has begun to crystalize. Trotsky, in his time, compared fascism and Stalinism as parallel phenomena provoked by the worldwide advance of counter-revolution. Today we can say that Eurocommunism and the present politics of the USec are, roughly, symmetrical phenomena motivated

⁷ Heredia, A.: *On the USFI Resolution Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in Paris in August, 1977.

by the same socio-political reasons; the rise of the European workers' movement and the burden of the bourgeois democratic prejudices of the masses.

They are symmetrical but they are not identical. Against the Eurocommunists, the comrades of the USec formally defend the dictatorship of the proletariat and the need for a workers' revolution against bourgeois democratic institutions, emphatically asserting that they are the guardians of the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky. Thus, they strive to convince the workers and public opinion that the dictatorship of the proletariat as they define it — the most legal, wise, generous, libertarian more legitimate, judicious, generous, libertarian as well as the most democratic towards counter-revolutionary parties than any previous class dictatorship— is the dictatorship advocated by our teachers.

However, this is not the case. That is why we insist on pointing out that the USec's true coincidence is with Eurocommunism. There must be complete clarity on this point. The USec majority and the Eurocommunists are in complete agreement over the multiparty system and the granting of absolute freedom to the bourgeois parties in all stages of the class struggle, contrary to the traditional Marxist conceptions.

The present orientation of the USec majority can therefore be scientifically categorized as Euro-Trotskyist or defined as feverish bourgeois liberalism; that is to say, its orientation is profoundly opportunistic, falling at times in the ultra-leftism.

To sum up, the USec does not respond to the Eurocommunist pressures as a Trotskyist should, but rather accepts the greater part of its premises, stating “We still support the dictatorship of the proletariat and workers' revolution but let there be no confusion, our dictatorship will give immediate ‘unfettered political freedom’ to all citizens, including counter-revolutionaries, by replacing parliament with soviets which will be far more democratic, open to the whole population and not only to the workers”. And Comrade Mandel reinforces this capitulation to Eurocommunism by asserting that he is an “intransigent supporter of universal suffrage before, during and after the workers take power” (*El País*, Madrid, 7 August, 1978).

The hybrid which results from giving a Eurocommunist content and form to the Marxist concept of proletarian dictatorship, forces the USec into attempting to prove a theoretical: that “dictatorship of the proletariat” means granting “unfettered political freedom” to the counter-revolutionaries.

If the document was not written yet, and someone had considered the possibility that this position of the USec —Trotskyist dictatorship and Eurocommunist freedom—, this would have been considered impossible. One would think, for example, that it would demand a misrepresentation-of history in the style of the historians of the CPSU or something similar. Because this really is an impossible task; the USec cannot circumvent the two contradictions it faces with its new program: on the one hand, traditional Trotskyist position, and on the other the reality of the class struggle.

A solution of the first contradiction is attempted with a play on words, placing an equal sign between “the dictatorship of the proletariat” and “unfettered political freedom”. In this context the Eurocommunists have been more consistent than our own comrades by removing the first phrase from their program. The USec, on the contrary, clings to it in order to formally remain within Trotskyism while imbuing it with a strictly Eurocommunist content and thus negating it.

The document avoids confronting reality by floating above it and so establishes a new style in Marxism. For example, there is no reference to 60 years of proletarian dictatorships, in a resolution about the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”; it contains a thesis on political parties without mentioning any of the socialist, communist or Trotskyist parties by name. Neither does it give any examples for any of its theoretical, political or practical assertions. We do not believe that the members of the USec have lost their grasp of reality. On the contrary, we think they have taken flight to a far removed period in order best to defend their position. A clear application of the resolution would have been to announce to the Iranian workers: “When we take power we will do our utmost to stop the trial of the Shah and struggle for his ‘unfettered political freedom’”. Clearly, the USec would have great difficulty in convincing any Iranian revolutionary on this point.

All this gives this document its unusual style, its strangeness. The resolution leaps more than a century, from the time before Lenin took power to the cybernetic telephones of the future, ignoring the concrete problems of the past, the present and the immediate future. The result of all this is a work of

a new literary genre. Critics might well consider it to be a typical expression of late surrealism. Others may consider it the expression of a new current: Marxist sciencefiction and, indeed, as a work of science fiction it proceeds in a most pleasing fashion in its consideration of real scientific concepts and more or less viable possibilities.

From a political standpoint, however, this play on the imagination is totally devoid of interest. Any document on the dictatorship of the proletariat must deal with some fundamental questions, among others: What has been the experience of the successful proletarian dictatorships over the last 60 years? What is our position on the invasion of one dictatorship of the proletariat by another? And many similar problems. The most decisive and important of all is: with what party and what program can we achieve within 5, 10 or 20 years the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat for which we struggle? This gives rise to another series of questions: Will they be blocked, will they involve civil war? Will the reformist parties nationally and internationally fight them to the death? Will the first, to be led by Trotskyists, be able to avoid a terrible civil war with the bureaucratized workers states, imperialism, the bourgeois parties and opportunist workers? Will dictatorships in the advanced and under-developed countries be identical? (The document seems to suggest that they will). And how will the dictatorship be imposed? Through insurrection and civil war?

The above are some of the problems which will face us, and our International should formulate a program to deal with them. However, the USec's majority publishes a resolution that ignores them. A Marxist document should neither avoid these issues nor confuse the reader with evasive or futuristic formulations. Neither should it make concessions in order to avoid clashing with widely held prejudices in order to save prestige or disguise revisionist positions. In doing so, it prevents the formulation of a clear line for political action for the coming years.

The revisionist process under way has inevitable consequences which demand our attention. This turn, resulting from the democratist pressures of the Western masses is beginning to be total. It is even more disastrous than the previous turn, which resulted from the guerrillaist pressures. Whereas that turn grew out of desperation in the attempt to gain its objectives, the present turn abandons those objectives altogether. It is impossible to attack one of the pillars of Marxism—in this case, the concept of the revolutionary dictatorship—without provoking the collapse of the entire edifice.

The paper which supports the resolution of the USec leaves us with no doubt: "What will be the effect of the new phenomena on the activity of the working class? What is the dialectic of the relation between the masculine and feminine worker, the old and the young, the manual with the intellectual, technical or scientific worker? What will be the effect of these phenomena on the relation of the vanguard of the working class with the masses? And how will this affect the organizations that the masses generate? Is the relationship between class, party and leadership the same today as it was at the time of Lenin and Trotsky? Is it legitimate to conclude that the relation of the vanguard parties of 1917 is the same as that of today? Or the relation of the parties with the state? Will the structure of the party remain the same? Will our concept of democratic centralism be the same as that of yore? We think not, we subscribe wholeheartedly to the assertion that 'A' is not equal to 'A'."

This defence and the revisionism of the resolution, mean the abandonment of the whole Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist heritage; giving a free rein to the bourgeoisie; no settling of accounts with the fascists, and finally leading as a consequence to a concept of the organization of the revolutionary party and the stages of class struggle, which, if left uncorrected, will lead the Trotskyist parties to abandon the workers' revolution and its conclusion, civil war.

We consider that with our response starts one of the most important debates that have taken place within the ranks of the Fourth International. The purpose of this work is to impress upon the young newcomers to Marxism, that flattery and concession to their prejudices on the part of the young and old leaders formed in the universities is causing havoc to Marxist heritage. We hope to show that the current majority of the USec is misleading us in the manner of Kautsky, Martov, Urbahns, Souvarine and all other opportunists and centrists in the world rather than following the path of Lenin and Trotsky.

CHAPTER I

A program of “unfettered political freedom” for the Shah or a program for crushing him without Mercy?

Far from mocking the title, we think it sums up the questions an Iranian worker would pose after reading the USec’s document. On the one hand, he will find no answers to any of his questions, and on the other, he will notice that all that he has done is criticized by the USec. At this point, the worker will have probably lost several friends, co-workers and relatives in the streets of Tehran. He is convinced that the Shah left Iran thanks to the mobilizations. Because of this, all his questions will be related to violence: how to get arms, how to guarantee a strike through force, how to confront the police and the army of Bakhtiar, how to convince the soldiers not to fire on the people, etcetera. If he feels sure of something, it is that the terror now felt by the SAVAK agents who go around asking for mercy is fine. He has no doubt of the need about executing a few of them and he approves without hesitation of spontaneous lynching. It does not even occur to him that he is fighting for the “unfettered political freedom” of anybody; and he does not care about the image the masses might be presenting to those who are worried about democracy. He only wants to be sure that the Shah will not return, that the Imperial Guard and the SAVAK are dissolved. This worker who has come to know Trotskyism through the USec’s document will never want to be a Trotskyist because he will justifiably think that if the Shah returns, it will not be possible to apply the “concept of retroactive delinquency” even if the proletariat has the power. On the contrary, what would be expected is that he should be left free to organize a counter-revolutionary party. And anybody who reads well would come to the same conclusions as the Iranian worker. Let us see why.

1. Total and absolute freedom for counter-revolutionaries and their parties

The USec continually reiterates its position of “unfettered political freedom” for counter-revolutionaries: “the waging of a relentless struggle against these ideologies in the field of ideology itself, which can, however, attain its full success only under conditions of open debate and open confrontation, i.e., of freedom for the defenders of reactionary ideologies to defend their ideas, of ideological cultural pluralism. (...) Once the capitalist class is disarmed and expropriated, once their members can have access to the mass media only in relation to their numbers, there is no reason to fear a constant, free, and frank confrontation between their ideas and ours (...) But only proven acts of that kind should be punishable, not general propaganda explicitly or implicitly favourable to a restoration of capitalism”.¹ And, as we have already seen, this entails that “freedom of political organization should be granted all those, including pro-bourgeois elements, who in actual practice respect the constitution of the workers state; (...) i.e., are not engaged in violent actions to overthrow workers’ power and collective property”.

As is quite dear, the USec attempts by every means to avoid describing phenomena by its Marxist terms. It talks of “reactionary ideologies”, “that class”, “general propaganda explicitly or implicitly favourable to a restoration of capitalism”, “pro-bourgeois elements” without clarifying that all this is nothing less than “the bourgeois counter-revolution”, although for the time being it only defends its ideology and makes propaganda, while preparing for armed insurrection. Does the USec perhaps believe that “that class” which is naturally favourable to the “restoration of capitalism”, formed by “pro-bourgeois elements” with “reactionary ideologies” can properly exist without being counter-revolutionary, without being committed to the return of private property by whatever means possible?

This “unfettered political freedom” for counter-revolutionaries will only be restricted when they take up arms or instigate civil war against the dictatorship of the proletariat. They support this with a surprising dictum: “No social class, no state, has ever granted full rights to those actively engaged in

¹ USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 26-& 27.

violence to overthrow them. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot act otherwise in that respect”.² What conclusion can be drawn from these statements? We will answer. The USec comrades are convinced, or at least attempt to convince us, that the different classes which have taken power in the past have indeed given “full rights” to those who never “actively engaged in violence to overthrow them”. In fact the opposite is true: “No social class, no state, has ever granted full rights to those dominated classes or to their parties however peaceful they may have been”. The USec should openly say that it favours the next successful dictatorship of the proletariat going against this absolute historical law of class society, because it would be the first dictatorship to grant “full rights” to its class enemies.

This program of the USec for the period following the seizure of power is a continuation of comrade Novack’s program for the imperialist countries before the seizure of power. The comrade with his accustomed clarity stated his position some time ago: “This requires the implementation of a revolutionary program, perspective and strategy. The pivot of such a program is (...) to protect democratic rights and extend them”.³

2. Civil war fought in obedience to a strict ultraliberal code.

The USec majority will be equally liberal and democratic after the counter-revolutionaries have taken up arms against the dictatorship of the proletariat. Undoubtedly, for this stage the document considers that certain restrictions to the “unfettered political freedom” that the counter-revolutionaries should enjoy will become necessary. But these astonishingly liberal restrictions will be carefully imposed in a judicial way: “It. is therefore necessary to stress that the use of repressive self-defence by the proletariat and its state against attempts to overthrow workers’ power by violence should be strictly circumscribed to proven crimes and acts, strictly separated from the realm of ideological, political, and cultural activities. The Fourth International stands for the defence and extension of the most progressive conquests of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the field of penal codes and justice and fights for their incorporation into the socialist constitutions and penal codes. These include such rights, as:

“a) The necessity of written law and the avoidance of retroactive delinquency. The burden of proof to be on the accuser, the assumption of innocence until proof of guilt.

“b) The full right of all individuals to freely determine the nature of their defence; full immunity for legal defenders of any statements or lines of defence used in such trials.

“c) Rejection of any concept of collective responsibility of social groups, families, etc., for individual crimes.

“f) Extension and generalization of public trial by jury of peers.

“g) Democratic election of all judges, and the right of the mass of the toilers to recall elected judges.”⁴

One must not forget that the USec majority is not referring to the ideal soviet penal code which will exist when the necessity for dictatorship of the proletariat begins to disappear; but rather as it reaches its peak when the revolutionary dictatorship is engaged in a deadly civil war against the counter-revolution. It is precisely at this crucial time that the majority demands these ultra-liberal judicial norms to be strictly enforced.

How does the revisionist trap of the USec manifest itself at this point? The document makes historical analogy not only novel but mistaken as well.

Until now Marxists we have always compared the dictatorship of the proletariat, particularly during times of civil war, with the dictatorships of Cromwell and Robespierre, never with the stages of development of the most progressive bourgeois penal codes, that is, after heads had rolled. The USec majority fails to mention that these penal codes were written long after the bourgeoisie had imposed its dictatorship, and not during the civil war against absolutism and feudalism.

² Ibid, p. 27.

³ Novack, George: *Democracy and Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972, p. 217..

⁴ USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., 1977, p. 28.

Trotsky himself stated long ago: “If Lenin can be juxtaposed to anyone then it is not to Napoleon nor even less to Mussolini but to Cromwell and Robespierre. It can be with some justice said that Lenin is the proletarian twentieth-century Cromwell. Such a definition would at the same time be the highest compliment to the petty-bourgeois seventeenth-century Cromwell”.⁵

“Cromwell was a great revolutionary of his time, who knew how to uphold the interests of the new, bourgeois social system against the old aristocratic one *without holding back at anything*.”⁶

“Any historical analogies demand the greatest caution especially when we are dealing with the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries; yet nonetheless one cannot help being struck by some distinct features that bring the regime and character of Cromwell’s army and the character of the Red Army close together.”⁷ In reference to the future representative organs of the workers’ revolution in England he asserted: “It will the more surely achieve this the better it masters the lessons of Cromwell’s era.”⁸

Trotsky, in summarising the role of legal and constitutional rights under revolutionary dictatorships, stated that the English proletariat: “...will be convinced from this very experience of the English revolution how subsidiary, subordinate and qualified a role is played by law in the mechanics of social struggle and especially in a revolutionary era, that is to say, when the basic interests of the basic classes in society come to the fore.”⁹ Trotsky expressly compared the first years of Lenin’s dictatorship with that of Robespierre: “The measures of terror which were applied during the initial, and, so to speak, ‘Jacobin’, period of the revolution were called for by the iron necessity of self-defence”.¹⁰

3. The Red Terror.

Practically it is no longer necessary to demonstrate that these conceptions imply the abandonment of the Red Terror. The USec document cannot state this openly but what does this softness, this abandonment of the concept of “retroactive delinquency” mean if not this? The Red Terror takes hostages and punishes “social groups and families” which represent the exploiting classes whether or not they have committed any crimes. This includes relatives, as in the case of the Tsar who was brought to justice along with his entire family to preclude the possibility of any sort of monarchic claim. “No one understood so clearly [as Lenin] even before the overturn [of power] that without reprisals against the propertied classes, without measures amounting to the severest form of terror in history, the proletarian power would never be able to survive, hemmed in by enemies on every side, (...) The Red Terror was a necessary weapon of the revolution. Without that it would have perished. More than once before now, revolutions have perished from soft-heartedness, indecisiveness, and the general good nature of the working people”.¹¹ The USec attempts to defend the power of the revolutionary proletarian state by its liberal code as opposed to “applying wherever necessary harsh and ruthless methods of dictatorship, without flinching before any decisive measures in trampling upon bourgeois hypocrisy...”¹² as advocated by Trotsky.

Once again, we should establish whether the leaders of the first successful revolutionary dictatorship, Lenin and Trotsky, acted in the way we prescribe during the civil war, or whether they acted in the manner laid down in the USec document. And, incidentally, we shall see if they were wrong only after 1921, as postulated by Mandel. It can be said in advance that if the penal and constitutional norms of the USec were in fact applied, our conclusion would be that our teachers were incorrigible totalitarians, antidemocratic and repressive bureaucrats who were set on this wrong path long before 1921.

5 Trotsky, Leon: “Where is Britain going?” in *Trotsky’s Writings on Britain Vol. 2*, New Park Publications, London, 1974, p. 110.

6 Ibid, p. 109.

7 Ibid, p. 115.

8 Ibid, p. 112.

9 Ibid, pp. 117-118.

10 Trotsky, Leon: “Romain Rolland Executes an Assignment”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*, Pathfinder Press, 1970, New York, p. 162.

11 Trotsky, Leon: “Our Differences”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, Pathfinder Press, 1975, New York, p. 294.

12 Trotsky, Leon: “The Fourth World Congress” in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Monad Press, New York, 1972, Vol. 2, p. 187.

Let us examine the facts. As carefully documented by Carr,¹³ almost immediately after the October insurrection, Trotsky issued a dire warning: “we hold the Cadets as prisoners and hostages. If our men fall into the hands of the enemy, let him know that for every worker and for every soldier we shall demand five Cadets... They think that we will be passive, but we shall show them that we can be merciless when it is a question of defending the conquests of the revolution”. Soon after he reiterated: “We shall not enter into the kingdom of socialism in white gloves on a polished floor.” With reference to the banning of the Cadet Party, he stated: “At the time of the French Revolution more honest men than the Cadets were guillotined by the Jacobins for opposing the people. We have not executed anyone and do not intend to, but there are moments when the fury of the people is hard to control”. He later wrote along the same lines: “Demands to forgo all repressions at a time of civil war are demands to abandon the civil war... You protest against the mild terror we are directing against our class enemies. But you should know that not later than a month from now the terror will assume very violent forms after the example of the great French revolutionaries. The guillotine will be ready for our enemies and not merely jail”.

The dictatorship of Lenin and Trotsky gave the Cheka the power of punishment according to “the circumstances of the case and the dictates of the revolutionary conscience” and it was not based on written law. Let us not forget that years later Trotsky called the Cheka, “the very centre of power, during the most heroic period of the proletarian dictatorship”.¹⁴

Let us return to Carr’s account. When within a few weeks of the October insurrection forced labour was introduced on a class criterion “bourgeois men and women (were) sent to dig trenches for the defence of the capital against the Germans” with no consideration at all of their specific guilt. They were condemned simply for being members of the bourgeoisie. In 1918, Lenin wrote an article which was not published until later, where he proposed “putting in prison ten rich men, a dozen swindlers and half-dozen workers who are out of their way from work” and “shooting on the spot one out of every ten found guilty of idling.” Furthermore: “Until we apply the terror —shooting on the spot— to speculators, we shall achieve nothing”.

In the proclamation of the Cheka of February, 22nd, 1918, which declared “the socialist fatherland in danger” the local Soviets were ordered to “seek out, arrest and shoot immediately [horror! without written law or defence lawyers!] all enemy agents, counter-revolutionary agitators and speculators”. As a result of this proclamation the Cheka carried out executions “in what numbers cannot be determined, without any regular or public judicial process”. In reference to this, Sverdlov declared in July 1918 that “tens of death sentences have been carried out by us in all towns: In Petrograd, in Moscow and in the provinces”.

In August 1918, there was a kulak rising in Penza and Lenin gave orders “to put into effect an unsparing mass terror against kulaks, priests, and white guards and (...) to confine suspects in a camp outside the city, and recommended the taking of hostages who would “answer with their life for prompt and accurate deliveries of grain”.

A resolution of the Soviet government based on previous speeches delivered by Lenin and Trotsky was issued on 29 July 1918, stating, “the soviet power must guarantee its rear by putting the bourgeoisie under supervision and carrying out mass terror against it”. This means the application of the concept of “retroactive delinquency” and “collective responsibility of social groups”. Dzerzhinsky elaborates upon this Leninist and Trotskyist doctrine as follows: “The Cheka is not a court. The Cheka is the defence of the revolution as the Red Army is; and as in the civil war the Red Army cannot stop to ask whether it may harm particular individuals, but must take into account only one thing, the victory of the revolution over the bourgeoisie, so the Cheka must defend the revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword falls occasionally on the heads of the innocent”.

Following the assassination attempt in which Uritsky was killed and Lenin wounded the government proclaimed the following resolution: “All counter-revolutionaries and those who inspired them will be held responsible for every attempt against workers of the Soviet and upholders of the ideals of the socialist revolution. To the white terror of the enemies of the workers’ and peasants’ government, the workers and

13 Edward Hallett “Ted” Carr (28 June 1892 – 3 November 1982) was an English historian, diplomat, journalist and international relations theorist. All his quotes come from *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, Pelican Publishers, London, 1965.

14 Trotsky, Leon: “At the Fresh Grave of Kote Tsintsadze”, in *Portraits, Political and Personal*, Pathfinder Press, 1977, New York, p. 94.

peasants will reply by a mass red terror against the bourgeoisie and its agents”.

In the second half of 1918, were shot 512 counter-revolutionaries, declared ‘hostages’, in Petrograd. And there is no doubt that the “concept of retroactive crime” was applied, since many of these were “Tsarist ministers and a whole list of high personages”. The Cheka, as one of the members explained, “does not judge, it punishes”. Carr correctly asserted: “The essence of the terror was its class character. It selected its victims on the ground, not of specific offences, but of their membership of the possessing classes”. Carr understood this point very well; unlike the proponents of the USec thesis who, discarding the class criterion will solely condemn “specific crimes” or “proven actions” during the civil war.

We have dwelt on these quotes in order to demonstrate that for Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks there was no “written law”, nor “avoidance of retroactive delinquency”, nor “the use of repressive self-defence (...) circumscribed to proven crimes and acts”, nor was the concept of “collective responsibility of social groups, families, etc.” rejected as out of hand, and that in no way was the accused considered innocent “until proof of guilt”. In other words, the only absolute law was the defence of the revolution against the armed attempts of the counter-revolution.

4. What was the practice of the leaders of the other great revolutions?

Why did Lenin and Trotsky act in this way? Were they the first leaders in history to do so? Evidently not; all great successful revolutions have taken this path.

How were ideals like “civil equality” and the “declaration of human rights”, which so impress the democrats, imposed? For the USec the correct answer seems to be: with a humanitarian penal code. But Robespierre, on the contrary said: “Is it necessary to make a judgement upon the necessities of public safety in times of crisis, since those measures are imposed by the impotence of the law with the criminal codes in their hands?” And he clarified: “If popular government in times of peace is characterized by virtue, in times of revolution it is characterized by both virtue and terror: without virtue terror becomes sinister; without terror virtue is impotent. Terror is nothing more than swift, severe, inflexible justice and therefore develops from virtue”. In regard to the French Revolution Lenin told the communist Frossard in 1920 “the French need repudiate nothing of the Russian Revolution since the methods and procedures of the French Revolution are reborn within it”. And how did our patriots, those who liberated America from the yoke of the crowns of Spain and England, our own “liberators”, the heroes of “independence” and democracy, act?

Bolivar proclaimed that any Spaniard who did not support the Revolution should be shot. “Any Spaniard who does not conspire against tyranny in favour of our just cause in the most active and efficacious way shall be considered an enemy, punished as a traitor, and consequently shall without exception go before the firing squad. On the contrary, a general and absolute pardon will be granted to those who come over to our army with or without their weapons; to all those who give aid to the good citizens struggling to shake off the chains of tyranny. Those army officers and civil magistrates who recognize the government of Venezuela and join us will be guaranteed their posts; i.e. those Spaniards who serve the state will be respected and treated as Americans (...) Spaniards and Canary Islanders, look to your death, even those of you who are indifferent, unless you work actively for the liberation of America. Americans, your lives will be spared even if you are guilty”.¹⁵ A present day disciple of Bolivar’s, if he were consistent with this teaching, would issue a decree stating: “Any member of the bourgeoisie who does not join the proletarian army and support it with all his strength will be shot”. And during the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson stated: “During the struggle many guilty persons, as well as some innocent ones, fell without the chance of going through due process of law. I deplore this more than anyone and I will weep for some of them till my dying day, just as I weep for those who fell in battle. It was necessary to use the peoples’ might, which is almost, not quite, as blind as bombs and bullets”.

Following this correct analogical method, Marxists have always recognized five unshakeable historical laws that govern every revolutionary dictatorship:

¹⁵ Bolivar, Simon: “Decreto de guerra a muerte” [Decree on War to the Death], in *Ideas Políticas y Militares* [Political and Military Ideas], Cumbre, 1969, pp. 22 & 23.

First: the bourgeois revolution against feudalism and absolutism imposed the great revolutionary dictatorships of Cromwell and Robespierre, which gave no freedoms to counter-revolutionary enemies. (let us remember it is no accident that the guillotine is the symbol of the best years of the Great French Revolution of 1789).

Second: As the example of Lenin's and Trotsky's revolutionary dictatorship clearly shows, the proletariat acted and will continue to act in the manner of Cromwell and Robespierre, albeit, of course, its class character will be neither bourgeois nor petty bourgeois, but distinctly proletarian.

Third: Revolution and civil war must be distinguished from that period when the dictatorship is in the process of stabilization. When there is stability there can be democracy, jurisprudence and relatively stable norms. In a revolutionary period, when the establishment and survival of the dictatorship are at stake, as in the midst of a civil war, everything is resolved by force, not by established norms. To be precise, these norms are destroyed by the classes and their parties, locked in mortal combat.

Fourth: At critical junctures, the counter-revolution will attempt to apply the most ferocious repression and all revolutionaries worth their salt must resort to revolutionary terror. Any class in in struggle for survival will take to the most implacable and ruthless dictatorial means in order to ensure its victory or its survival. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is the conscious scientific application of these absolute historical laws of revolution and class struggle, and of the establishment of every revolutionary dictatorship.

Fifth: There is another law that complements the first four: whenever the exploited classes have been "magnanimous", "humane", "considerate", "attached to established rules", "legalist", "democratic", and have not applied the inexorable laws of revolutions and revolutionary dictatorships against the counter-revolutionaries, the latter have always triumphed.

The USec ignores these laws. This is the first time that someone who calls himself a Trotskyist has attempted to submit the revolution and civil war to a penal code. Trotsky repeatedly asserted the opposite.

5. Will the USec follow the logic of its position? Will it fight in favour of "unfettered political freedom" for the Shah, Pinochet and Somoza?

Every position has its iron logic, whose practical consequences are not always anticipated by its authors. James Burnham's position that the USSR was not a workers' state was transformed, over the years, into consistent political support for American imperialism. The same fate awaits the authors of "*Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*", unless they return to the defence of the Marxist position. The political consequences are not yet evident but these theoretical premises will inevitably lead to counter-revolutionary political positions.

Let us suppose that tomorrow will see the triumph of workers' revolution in Iran, Spain, Portugal, Nicaragua or Chile. What will be the response of the USec when the masses take justice into their own hands and take their revenge on the Shah, Somoza, Pinochet, or the torturers of Franco and Salazar?

If they are consistent with their resolution there is no doubt: if the Shah, Pinochet or Somoza's torturers are imprisoned, they will fight in the streets for the freedom to avoid that they may be judged. Why? Because they demand that "... the Fourth International stands for... written law and the avoidance of retroactive delinquency" in the judgement of counter-revolutionaries, if workers' power passes a law, no crime committed before its publication can be accounted as indictable. Since any law which is passed by a workers' dictatorship will always be subsequent to the governments of the Shah, Somoza and Pinochet, there is no way around it, the workers' dictatorship of the USec will be hamstrung by the inviolable norms of the resolution and will be unable to bring these bloody dictators to justice. The USec will be forced to fight for their immediate release rather than their trial. The same will hold for members of extreme right wing terrorist organizations and for professional scabs: they will not be judged because the laws of the USec dictatorship will not be retroactive. This will eliminate the revolutionary and class justice, who gives a free hand to the initiative and rage of the masses as expressed in sovereign assemblies for the judgement of fascists, torturers, murderers, scabs and traitors for their actions, without taking into account pre-existent or written laws.

In its place we will get the petty-bourgeois legal regulations of the USec which seek to impose strict, inviolable norms on the natural hatred of the mobilized masses. The resolution appears to be telling us: “Beware of touching a hair on the head of the Shah’s minions, of the PIDE, of Franco or Pinochet unless you can indict them under already existing written laws. Whatever next! How can uneducated workers possibly expect to take justice into their own hands, unacquainted as they are with the history of penal law and unwilling to accept the need for the defence and extension of the most progressive gains of the bourgeois democratic revolutions in the field of penal codes and justice? This would take us back to the savage and illiterate era of direct democratic justice, by raised hand, of primitive communism”.

This is not an academic discussion. If the USec remains consistent with its position this will bring about the breaking the Fourth International and a physical confrontation in the streets across the barricades between ourselves and the partisans of the USec. If a workers revolution triumphs in Iran or if the Shah falls, the supporters of our document will fight in the streets to bring to justice this sinister monarch and his clique of torturers and collaborators, whether or not there is a law which formally assigns them to such a fate. In other words, Iranian penal law would be superseded by “retroactive delinquency” which would be based on the legitimate hatred of the masses towards the Shah and his lackeys, and on the political necessities of the workers. We will rise up and fight on the demand for the “trial of the Shah and his murderous minions” while the USec demonstrates in the streets of Tehran with the Shah, his sister and his torturers under the slogans: “No recourse to retroactive delinquency” and “no judgement of the Shah and his minions unless there is a pre-existing penal law”.

But this is not all. Having fought for the unconditional release of the Shah and his assassins from the prisons of the dictatorship of the proletariat, if it is to be consistent, the United Secretariat will have to fight in the streets for the rights of these “individuals” and their “group” to “unfettered political freedom” and “complete freedom of action, propaganda and agitation with full access to the mass media in relation to their numbers”. This is the political future of the USec if it is not stopped in time. We hope that this prospect will prove so repugnant to the followers of the USec, that they will reverse course and vote with us for the right of the masses to apply democratic justice to counter-revolutionaries, before and after the revolutionary dictatorship, without written law or an established penal code and without prohibition of the concept of “retroactive delinquency”.

6. An Example that clarifies everything

Any worker who has participated in a more or less militant strike will understand perfectly well these differences in regard to the proletarian dictatorship and civil war, and understand how the position of the USec’s majority’s is humanitarian, democratist and libertarian. In short, an intellectual anarchism of a new type. Imagine, then, that we are on the brink of a strike and the US majority issues a resolution to the effect that “once the strike has begun, everybody in the factory (the Chairman and Board of Directors, managers, foremen, and white-collar and blue-collar workers) will have “unfettered political freedom”; and that whoever opposes the strike with armed force will be judged according to an extremely liberal penal code by a workers tribunal with a public prosecutor and a defence lawyer”.

Suppose that the next morning the strike is declared and some scabs call for a return to work, but they neither go in nor physically attack the strikers. What then? Do we comply with the USec’s resolution or do we ferociously fight the scabs, subordinating everything to the central task of winning the strike? Every class conscious and militant worker knows that at this moment it is essential to proceed by whatever means necessary to smash the bosses’ propagandists. Methods that serve to terrorize possible scabs, weaken the bosses and strengthen the strike are good; methods that do not serve these objectives are bad. Although this may appear crude, we must turn to the comrades of the USec’s majority and ask them what their program is for such a strike. Is it to give total freedom to all those in the factory, from the bourgeois owner to the scabs? Does it extend to allowing the owners political party, if requested by a single worker, to make propaganda in a workers’ mass meeting and defend in a public debate the bosses’ position against the strike? Should we make the union’s mimeograph available to the boss and those workers who are his agents for them to print an anti-strike newsletter? This may sound harebrained but it is the program of the USec. The option is clear cut: either we embark on a strike giving freedom of expression to everybody in the factory—the strikers, the bosses and their stool-pigeons in the workforce—

or we apply an orthodox Leninist-Trotskyist program, the program we uphold, which means rejection and repression without further ado of all strike breakers, no freedom of propaganda in support of the bosses. Our objective is to win the strike; everything is subordinated to that. The same applies to the proletarian revolution, and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. We do not bring it about for the purpose of granting immediate freedom for everybody, but so that the revolution can continue to advance and all who oppose it (i.e., the counter-revolutionaries and their agents) be smashed. Similarly all those who make propaganda on behalf of the bosses in order to break the strike, even though they have not yet started work or physically attacked the strikers, should be smashed. And, compared to the first stages of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, a strike will seem like mere child's play.

It is sad to have to spell out such elementary truths to comrades such as those presently in the USec majority and responsible for this resolution; to comrades who have been able to remain within Trotskyism despite so many years of Stalinist pressure. Just as in the strike there is no democracy for all, but only for those who support the strike, while scabs are roughed up, so with the first phases of the workers' revolutionary dictatorship there will be democracy only for revolutionaries, for those who are committed to fight to the death against imperialist bourgeois restoration. This freedom is absolutely necessary so that the best way to develop the revolution and definitively smash the counter-revolutionaries can be found.

7. The mobilization of the workers against capitalist reaction: an unresolvable contradiction for the "dictatorship" of the USec

One of the founders of Argentine Trotskyism, Quebracho, coined a phrase that was to endure. Against the Stalinist popular frontism which refused to organize defence committees to challenge the fascists, Quebracho used the slogan: "You don't discuss fascism. You destroy it!" In this he did no more than follow Trotsky who had insisted on the necessity of using the physical force of the workers' vanguard supported by the proletariat in order to attack and, if possible, wipe out every fascist group.

It was never claimed that if fascism only used ideological and propagandist methods at any given moment, it would be combated exclusively by these same means. When and how to attack fascism depends on the relationship of forces and solely upon this, as is the case in any other open struggle between classes and between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary parties. Thus, no Trotskyist has ever held any doubt about attacking a fascist meeting, even if it was only called to study Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. If the armed vanguard, supported by the proletariat, took the initiative against the Nazi study group, it would be applauded by all Trotskyists, since they know that the study of *Mein Kampf* leads directly to the murder of leftist workers, possibly our own comrades. These examples show that the propagandist, ideological, political and physical struggle are closely intertwined and that there are no fixed barriers between them, least of determined by for the enemy. We must never wait for them to switch from one form of struggle to another before doing so ourselves. It all depends on what is most expedient. Let's see the example of the study group from another angle. If we possess the necessary forces, our group studying Trotsky's writings on fascism will immediately afterwards go on to physical attacks against the fascist gangs.

We hope that the USec majority has not changed this classical Marxist position for the period previous to the taking of power. That is to say, we believe that they will continue to defend the combination of different forms of struggle when the working class and counter-revolutionary groups clash violently, as in civil war. We hope so because they have changed their conceptions for all other situations.

Let us assume that after the successful insurrection, the working class will want to continue acting in the same manner as before and during the taking of power; i.e., that it will be ready to continue their physical mobilization against the counter-revolutionaries. The USec considers that, if this is the case, we ought to combat the counter-revolution ideologically and through propaganda but never suppressing its "unfettered political freedom" and much less attacking them physically: "...This confrontation is the only means through which the working class can educate itself ideologically and successfully free itself from the influence of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideas. [...] The waging of a relentless struggle against these ideologies in the field of ideology itself".¹⁶

According to the USec instead of launching more powerful mobilizations and using all its force

16 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 26.

to attack counter-revolutionaries, the victorious proletariat ought to serve notice on all enemy groups which have not taken up arms against workers' power. In Iran, for example, it ought to serve notice on the Shah — if he has still not taken up arms against workers' power — informing him that there will be a referendum to find out how many followers he has and then proceed to give them their respective spaces to the mass media. If the dictatorship of the USec triumphs in Iran, we could turn on the TV or the radio at any time to find Shah and his cronies broadcasting on national network to the whole country for a full hour. They are followed by Comrade Mandel or some Iranian supporter of his explaining to workers that they must not attack these people as they did before the taking of power, but they should only combat them at an ideological level. The same will happen with Somoza in Nicaragua. Franco and Salazar will not be given airspace. This, however, will not be as a result of a USec decision but because they are dead. However hard we try, we find it impossible to understand why all this should be the case.

For the majority of the USec, once the proletariat is in power it will act towards the bourgeoisie and imperialist counter-revolutionaries, in the same way that, according to Hollywood, the knights of the Middle Ages treated their peers: they will not physically attack unless they themselves have already been physically attacked, and they will use the weapons of the enemy. This might seem a polemical exaggeration but it still strictly corresponds to what is said in the document of the USec majority. There they insist that if the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary and reactionary parties employ ideological weapons, the response should be with the same weapons. To allow this “duel” to take place the bourgeoisie will be handed absolute rights of organization and propaganda, and only when it takes to the use of firearms will it be answered in the same manner and deprived of its democratic rights. Everything is reduced to the imaginary code of honour of medieval chivalry and not to the iron laws of class struggle.

The USec position derives directly from the Age of Enlightenment and French rationalism, and contradicts the whole Marxist tradition in its overestimation of the influence of ideas in the historical process. We, for our part, maintain that so long as the world economy continues to develop capitalist forms of production resulting in the emergence of sectors of the bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie and privileged workers, there is absolutely no possibility that the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas will disappear even if we spend a thousand years arguing against them. And, on the contrary, we assert that with a strong revolutionary dictatorship which destroys the economic potential for the emergence of privileged economic sectors and which establishes a socialist world economy, these ideas will not have the possibility of advancing one millimetre. This is not to say that we deny the great importance of ideological struggle, but it must be given its proper place: it is very, important, but not the “only means” nor the most efficacious way to wipe out bourgeois ideology. Its function is that of a powerful support for the permanent mobilization of the workers in the destruction of the capitalist system. In other words, “the only means” by which humanity can overcome bourgeois ideology is to establish a new system of production, as opposed to waging an ideological struggle against bourgeois ideas.

In its eagerness to justify the argument that counter-revolution can only be fought in its own field of activity without the revolutionary party taking any initiative in attacking as it suits it best, the USec uses another argument which is complementary but negative in character. This is that each administrative measure against the counter-revolutionary parties, except when they take up arms against workers' power, will in the long run be detrimental to the revolutionary cause. This, although negative, is no more than just another fetish: administrative measures or punishments are always bad. We reject this along with all the other judicial, normative and institutional fetishes of the USec majority. “Repressions can prove fully effective against a class that is disappearing from the scene — this was fully proven by the revolutionary dictatorship of 1917 to 1923”.¹⁷

The USec's conception is both defensive and metaphysical. They conceive separate struggles in watertight compartments, totally unrelated to each other unless the enemy has already crossed the line. If this were the case one would have to dismiss the possibility of a workers' state beginning a revolutionary war against a bourgeois state. This possibility was considered by Lenin and Trotsky at various times and cannot be discounted for the future. But if we are consistent with the reasoning of the USec, a workers' state ought never to begin a revolutionary war and should restrict itself to answering the propaganda of an enemy bourgeois state simply with its own propaganda. We do not think like that. We do not believe that in the long term physical and administrative and physical measures are bad or that penal measures are useless unless applied in accordance with written law, and in the presence of defence lawyers. Neither

¹⁷ Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 288.

do we accept that the use of violence in an ideological struggle is necessarily negative on the grounds that ideological struggle must only be countered with its like. Nor do we believe that it would have been a mistake to declare war on Hitler's Germany in 1933. This is a guilt ridden petty-bourgeois criterion which needs to have the bourgeoisie cast the first stone. We are proud to cast the first stone, it is a duty. To do otherwise is to capitulate before the petty-bourgeois public opinion of the Western countries, which bears no resemblance whatsoever to Marxism.

Marxism holds that class struggle is total war in which every administrative, penal, propagandist, ideological, theoretical, economic and especially political and physical methods and weapon are used to defeat the class enemy and that the most efficient means be chosen regardless of whether they are used by the enemy or not. This is not say that every struggle does not have its specific laws, but rather that it has them within a unity of the whole. Of all types of struggle the most important is that which destroys the counter-revolution politically and physically. Trotsky told us with his characteristic clarity: "... in the struggle against landlords and capitalists revolutionary violence served as the basic method..." This is in clear contrast to the plaintive calls of the USec to fight them ideologically unless they take up arms. On the same page, Trotsky insists: "Exploiters cannot be drawn to the side of socialism. Their resistance had to be broken, no matter at what cost".¹⁸

The USec resolution provides us with an almost complete blueprint for the period after the taking of power even to the point of telling us how to make a telephone call for further information. The "only" aspect that is not covered is the reaction of the USec dictatorship when faced with a physical assault (which we advised them to consider before the taking of power) by the working class on the counter-revolutionary propagandists of the bourgeoisie. Will the norms of the USec prohibit such an attack? Will the USec encourage it or at least let it take its course? Will the workers be able to take the initiative in assaulting the party militants and newspaper editors of the counter-revolution? Will they be punished under the penal code of the USec if they do?

We have no doubts in this respect: the imperialist counter-revolution (even under the shameful name of "reaction" bestowed upon it by the USec majority) must be fought in the manner considered most apt and efficient by the working class without being tied and committed to fixed norms. Hence, across the facade of the triumphal arch of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat we will paraphrase and inscribe in large letters Quebracho's famous phrase: "UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IMPERIALIST COUNTER-REVOLUTION IS NOT DISCUSSED. IT IS DESTROYED".

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18 Trotsky, Leon: "The Degeneration of Theory and the Theory of Degeneration", 29 April 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-33)*, Pathfinder Press, 1972, New York, p. 217.

CHAPTER II

European messianism: the imperialist counter-revolution evaporates

1. Advantages only for Europe

Like a modern Moses, Mandel believes that his “European countries” are the “chosen” for the development of socialism. In place of a Messiah there will be a series of exceptional conditions which will “save” them from an imperialist counter-revolution and its concomitant effects.

Messianism, a typical expression of petty-bourgeois impressionism, recognizes neither nuances nor contradictions. It always oscillates between absolute optimism, as the inevitability of world war at fixed term, and total optimism, which takes no account of obstacles and perceives only supreme advantages. Yet, reality is neither absolutely negative nor absolutely positive. There are always elements which are more or less favourable to our objectives. These are combined in varying degrees to the extent that at any given moment they proffer either a revolutionary or counter-revolutionary potential.

The USec messianism is made obvious by its omissions and its failure to see the inconveniences of the socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat that their document raises. In the case of Mandel, this is made explicit. In an interview granted to Weber in May 1976, Mandel explained why he considers that the peoples of Western Europe will follow a path different from that taken by the rest of humanity in the first part of this century, to reach the revolution.

The first advantage is the remote possibility of an imperialist counter-revolutionary intervention. “We have not witnessed any ‘descent’ on Portugal by the Spanish regular army — let alone the French, German or American regular armies. Nor do I think that a victorious revolution in Spain, Italy or France will have to face anything of that kind in the first three or six months. The world has changed a great deal since 1917”.¹ And further on, he says in reference to the possibilities of an enduring European front populist government similar to that which existed in Chile, “... the process lasted three years in Chile, where the working class was infinitely weaker than in Western Europe, and were there was a much greater danger of direct intervention by US imperialism”.²

It must be said that these statements of Mandel’s are totally irresponsible. In Portugal there was no successful revolution which necessitated a foreign military counter-revolutionary intervention. As events have shown, the Portuguese revolution was strictly under imperialist control. Only those who believed, along with ultra-leftists of every description, in the possibility of workers’ revolution under the government of Vasco Goncalvez would today be considering the necessity for military imperialist intervention. How can Mandel be so sure that a successful revolution in Southern Europe would be free from military attack from the bourgeois armies of the subcontinent during its first three to six months? What will happen after nine months? Why would it be spared the civil war and armed confrontations of 1917? It is completely irresponsible to dismiss these eventualities out of hand.

Let us look at what lessons can be drawn from actual events in Europe. The only two revolutions of a soviet character which had the potential to succeed — Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968— were invaded by the Russian army, with the full acquiescence of imperialism, before they had time to develop. There has been no other a European experience or potentially victorious soviet-type revolution in the last quarter of this century from which we can learn. Clearly, these events give us no reason whatsoever to believe that the European revolution will be any more peaceful than the others, or that it will not be attacked by bureaucratic or imperialist armies.

1 Mandel, Ernest: “Revolutionary Strategy in Europe”, in *Socialist Workers Party Internal Information Bulletin No. 5*, 1977, p. 13.

2 Ibid, p. 34.

Europe's second advantage is that its "degree of self-sufficiency is incomparably higher than in a country like Chile".³ This is completely and utterly false, since the more advanced a country is, the less autarchic it is. Trotsky constantly emphasized this, saying (already in 1928!) that to believe that an advanced country can build socialism within its own borders is to forget "the law of uneven development (...) precisely at the point where it is most needed and most important." Using the example of Britain, he says that the "...excessive development of her [Britain's] productive forces which require almost the whole world to furnish the necessary raw materials and to dispose of her products".⁴

"If, however, we approach these problems of socialist construction only with this criterion [Mandel's, we might add], abstracting from other conditions, such as the natural resources of the country, the correlation between industry and agriculture within it, its place in the world economic system, then we will fall into new, no less gross errors and contradictions. We have just spoken about Great Britain. Being no doubt a highly developed capitalist country, it has precisely because of that no chance for a successful socialist construction within the limits of its own island. Great Britain, if blockaded, would simply be strangled in the course of a few months".⁵

Trotsky's 1928 assessment holds even truer today. Like the case of Japan or the United States, economic autarky of any Western European country is practically non-existent. We need only look at West Germany's US\$ 110 billion in foreign trade or France's US\$ 60 billion plus, to realize that their economies are far more dependent on the world market and economy than are those of Paraguay, Angola or India. One of the advantages of backwardness is that the more under-developed a country, the greater its degree of autarchy. Up to now this has only been disputed by the reformist and nationalist wings of the workers' movement.

The third alleged advantage is the social structure of European Countries. Mandel's analysis is fundamentally economicist. Referring to the composition of the European armed forces in relation to those of Chile, he says: "Here too, I think that we will be able to avoid these mistakes and obtain better results. The recent experience of the soldiers' movement—especially in Portugal, but also in France and Italy—shows that we are already in a better starting position than were the Chileans. In highly industrialized countries—where even the composition of the army reflects the social structure of the country—it is extremely unlikely that a gigantic revolutionary upsurge will not find expression in opposition movements within the army. All these are trump cards that were not available in Chile".⁶

By this he means that in Western Europe, where there is greater industrial development and the proletariat occupies a more important place in society than in the backward countries, this is of great benefit to the working class and weakens the bourgeois armies. This is a simple process deduced from a formal syllogism with no contradictions and is therefore, false: a greater industrial development, hence a greater number of workers; a greater number of workers, hence a greater proletarian force in the armies; a greater proletarian force in the armies, hence less counter-revolutionary potential in these armies.

With this, Mandel attempts to establish that there are less (worker) recruits in Chile than in Europe. He does not mention that 80 percent of this smaller proportion of working class recruits is politically anti-imperialistic, and that at this was reflected in the colossal crisis of the Chilean armed forces, which Mandel seems to ignore. Nor does he see, on the contrary, in Europe there exists a pro-imperialist and reformist labour aristocracy built up as a result of on the exploitation of colonies and semi colonies, which is privileged in relation to the marginalised-sections of the working class and, in particular, the oppressed nationalities. Whether we like it or not, the working class is sharply divided for socio-economic reasons between those who belong to this privileged sector and those who are most exploited. In addition to this, there exists a powerful pro-imperialist middle class in these advanced countries. For these reasons, we cannot believe that the fact that the proletariat constitutes 80 percent of the population necessarily facilitates the revolutionary process. This statistic data does not clarify things sufficiently because the relations are far more complex than Mandel's syllogisms claim. The position those privileged sectors will take depends on the political struggle. For example, the economic crisis could lead important layers either into becoming instruments of imperialist counter-revolution, or into the revolutionary camp. Hence, the

3 Ibid, p. 34.

4 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International after Lenin*, 1936, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1970, pp. 58 & 56-57.

5 Ibid, pp. 57-58.

6 Mandel, Ernest: "Revolutionary Strategy in Europe", op. cit., p. 35

revolutionaries of the advanced countries have the further task of winning these privileged sectors to the revolution, since they will otherwise become the main collaborators of imperialist or bureaucratic counter-revolution either through their reformist parties or through the fascist gangs.

This messianic conception of comrade Mandel is embodied in the USec's resolution in the complete ignorance of imperialism and imperialist counter-revolution. As we shall see, it only mentions imperialism in two historical references. Not a single other mention in the entire document. The same goes for imperialist counter-revolution.

This characterization made by the USec is novel since a few years ago it held exactly the opposite view: that in a few years there would be decisive battles with the imperialist counter-revolution. Let us revisit it: "If a new revolutionary leadership it not built in the time remaining to us [four to five years, starting in 1972], after successive waves of mass struggles (some of which will certainly surpass even May '68 in France), the European proletariat will experience new and terrible defeats of historic scope".⁷ The same document states that there will pass "a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought".⁸

Those battles did not occur, so we ask the USec: aren't you going to explain what happened? Were they postponed for one or two, or ten years? Has that possibility disappeared for a historical stage? Why? But, comrades, most important of all: Why do you not say a word about those battles for which urgent preparations had to be made?

Without further explanation, it seems that this danger of immediate and mortal struggle with imperialist counter-revolution no longer exists, regardless of the fact that we are miles away from having built "a new revolutionary leadership... in the time remaining to us".

It possible that the USec believes that it is writing program to win over those sectors which are full of democratic prejudices. Therefore, it cannot mention imperialist attacks because its super democratic program would come to pieces. However, we will not win them over with a program made up to meet their prejudices, but rather through revolutionary action. A victorious revolutionary dictatorship in Europe will have to challenge a counter-revolutionary united front composed of the imperialists, the bureaucrats from the workers' states and especially the USSR, the privileged sectors of the labour movement and the middle classes who follow the reformist, bourgeois democratic or fascist parties. Our program, must prepare the forces we win for the revolution to combat this united front.

2. From armed struggle at all times and in all places, to a semi pacifism

The USec strategy for power has now taken a consistent turn. Since the danger of imperialist counter-revolution no longer exists, and the European masses — the "chosen"— now prefer peaceful methods, these are the ones the USec takes up. Armed struggle has been completely discarded.

In order to understand the significance of these changes, we must remember their previous, and very recent, positions. For many years, the USec majority preached the creed of armed struggle at all times and places. Their documents were haunted by the vision of an organized and bloody European counter-revolution to be staged within the next six years, for which preparations had to be made. In Latin America, as a self-proclaimed vanguard, they ignored the processes where the masses participated in elections. Those who did not support guerrilla warfare were reformists, as were those in Europe who did not agree with minority violence. Inspired by this orientation, our British and French comrades began to take up cudgels against tiny fascist groups. A well-known French leader even formulated the hypothesis that the French peasantry could lead the struggle against counter-revolution in Castroist-style guerrilla warfare. According to him, of course, it was the only way to confront counter-revolution. We need not go into the details of this well-worn polemic.

But according to the document, it now appears that armed struggle is almost never present. So, certain questions come up. The first one is: what happened to the imperialist counter-revolution according to the USec? That is, how and when did this frightening danger disappear?

⁷ International Majority Tendency: "Theses on Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol. 12, No. 46 (23 December 1974), p. 1824.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1821.

A document which does not say a word about the inevitable armed struggles which will take place in the next few decades is good for nothing, not even to understand the victorious revolutions, those of the present and of the future.

The resolution never mentions these inevitable confrontations. There is a chapter on the period after the taking of power which considers armed confrontation and comes to the conclusion that it must be conducted under a humanitarian penal code. The document never defines the period of civil war although “none of the historic classes can move from subordination to domination overnight, even on the night of the revolution”. There is always an immediately before and an immediately afterwards.

The before, entailed 30 years of civil war in Vietnam, 20 in China and 9 months in Russia. The very moment of the seizure of power is a violent decisive confrontation of uncertain outcome which will be resolved one way or another. “Is it really true that such a historic event can hinge upon an interval of 24 hours? Yes, it can. When things have reached the point of armed insurrection, events are to be measured not by the long yardstick of politics, but by the short yardstick of war. To lose several weeks, several days, and sometimes even a single day, is tantamount under certain conditions to the surrender of the revolution, to capitulation”.⁹

Lenin said that there was an essentially military moment, which compels “the ‘art... (to) organize a *headquarters* [...] move the reliable regiments to the most important points [...] and move against the officer cadets and the Savage Division those detachments which rather die than allow the enemy to approach the strategic points of the city [...] call them to fight the last desperate fight, occupy the telegraph and telephone exchange [...]”.¹⁰ This was Trotsky’s account of Lenin’s requirements of the least bloody revolution in history! Trotsky believed that Europe and America “will encounter [...] a much more serious, obstinate, and prepared resistance from the ruling classes” which “makes it all the more incumbent upon us to view the armed insurrection in particular and civil war in general as an art”.¹¹

The period after the taking of power is simply the continuation of civil war. “The seizure of power does not end a civil war; it only changes its character”.¹² It now becomes the defence of the new workers’ state against the desperate attempts of the counter-revolutionaries to turn the clock back.

The dynamic and duration of these periods cannot be predetermined, but previous experience shows them to be inevitable and increasingly extended. Without the taking up of arms, without civil war there will be no successful workers’ revolutions and revolutionary dictatorships. At most the USec majority believes that there may be armed struggle in only exceptional cases after the consolidation of workers’ power. This explains the derisory size of the chapter dedicated to the self-defence of the workers’ state.

Mandel elaborated on this in the May 1976 interview with Weber. “For that, there must be a further ideological, moral dimension whereby the masses begin to reject the legitimacy of the institutions of the bourgeois state. And that can only come about through profound experiences of struggle and a very sharp —though not necessarily violent or bloody — clash between these institutions and the immediate revolutionary aspirations of the masses”.¹³ This conclusion of Comrade Mandel’s relating to the future of the European capitalist countries is very cautious but also very significant. Until now, revolutionary confrontations have had to be as “violent and bloody” as in Iran and even more so. However, according to Mandel there exists an alternative path for the “chosen” Europeans: one which is peaceful and democratic since it is possible to avoid “violent clashes”.

Positions change, but they continue to be fuelled by the same student and professorial impressionism.

Yesterday the chosen were the Castroist European youth; the method was guerrilla warfare, and the place, Latin America. Today the chosen are the western masses with their bourgeois-democratic prejudices; the method, “unfettered political freedom”; and the place, Europe.

The objective basis for these positions appears to be the state of the class struggle in Europe at this particular time. Most workers still believe that everything will be resolved when the workers parties are

9 Trotsky, Leon: “The Lessons of October”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-1925)*, op. cit., p. 240.

10 Ibid, p. 238.

11 Ibid, p. 248.

12 Trotsky, Leon: “Problems of the Civil War”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-1925)*, op. cit., p. 181.

13 Mandel, Ernest: “Revolutionary Strategy in Europe”, op. cit., p. 14.

elected to government. However, we cannot change our ideas month by month, tailing the masses and the collaborationist parties. The history of this century has shown that all the post-war victories were won only after tremendous civil wars with the intervention of imperialism in one form or another; that civil war is of decisive importance in contemporary reality: This was true in Russia, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. The violence of these civil wars has generally escalated from that of Russia. The Cuban revolution was less violent due to an imperialist blunder which tolerated it and allowed one of its sectors to give it support — only later attempting an invasion and imposing a blockade which still endures. The only exception, that of Eastern Europe is relative, since their revolutions were a more or less direct result of the war between the Red Army and the German imperialist army at a cost of tens of millions of lives.

The USec resolution effectively disarms the masses by excluding the military dimensions of insurrection from their concept of workers' revolution. Over the next decades those workers who follow the USec will have to fight imperialist armies with their ideas.

3. Mandel's unfortunate use of the Chilean example

Mandel has the gall to use the example of Chile in his explanation of why Europe will almost certainly be spared armed confrontation. However, a vestige of reality slips through and Mandel is forced to admit, in one line, that things might possibly not be as peaceful: "...this [a left government taking office] will inevitably be accompanied by an intensification of the class struggle, a flight of capital, an investment strike by the capitalists, sabotage of production, constant plotting against the government by reactionaries and the extreme right supported the state apparatus right wing terrorism, and so on. That is what we saw in Portugal last year, in Spain 1936, in Chile after 1970, and we shall see it tomorrow in Italy, Spain and France".¹⁴ We agree with the perspective of this one isolated phrase of Mandel. The world Trotskyist movement must prepare and develop its theory of proletarian dictatorship around the inevitability of armed counter-revolutionary attacks. In the event of the proletariat taking power this struggle will constitute a serious challenge to the survival of the first successful European dictatorship.

It would seem that, on reading this prognosis, one should ask: if the bourgeoisie responded in that manner to a left wing bourgeois government like Allende's, how will it respond to a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship? The answer is self-evident. What is Mandel's program — and that of the resolution — for this inevitable confrontation? They say that demands must be addressed to reformist governments for "a thoroughgoing purge and elimination of the whole repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie, the disbanding of repressive bodies and an end to full-time judges. In addition, there are all the economic demands of the masses related to nationalization under workers' control, which express the logic of dual power".¹⁵

Here we have synthesized the revisionist, reformist capitulation of the members of the USec as formulated by Comrade Mandel, who appears to be their best spokesman. If the perspectives we face are "constant plotting against the governments by reactionaries and the extreme right supported by the state apparatus", how can the solution be found in demanding of reformist and class collaborationist governments "a thorough-going purge and elimination of the whole repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie... and an end to full-time judges"? Not a single word too few or too many: they will trust in such a government and put pressure on it, not to expose it before the masses but as their main strategy! If this is not the case, why does neither Mandel nor the resolution say a single word on the need for the armed mobilization of the proletariat? Why do they believe that these Social-Democratic or popular-frontist governments will dismantle their repressive apparatus at the asking of the labour movement without the spilling of a single drop of blood? However, whether they like it or not, armed confrontation will not only be the sole effective means of confronting the right wing, but also the only possible grounds on which to call a united Front with Social-Democratic workers and Stalinists, "Let us unite in joint action against the extreme right".

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁵ Ibid p. 33.

“The second basic category of demands addressed to the government concern the riposte to be made to the inevitable bourgeois acts of sabotage and economic disruption. Here the guiding policy should be one of tit-for-tat: the occupation and take-over of factories followed by their co-ordination; working out of a workers’ plan of economic reconversion and revival, the extension and generalization of workers’ control in the direction of self-management; the running of a whole number of areas of social life by those directly concerned (public transport, street markets, crèches, universities, agricultural land, etc.). Numerous layers will move from reformism towards left-centrism and revolutionary Marxism through discussing these questions in the framework of proletarian democracy and through their own practical experience, *protected by the intransigent defense of the freedom of mass action and mobilization*, even when it ‘embarrasses’ the plans of the government or cuts across those of the reformists. This break from reformism will be assisted by the illustration, consolidation and centralization of varied experiences of self-organization; it will not be helped, however, (...) by insults of the ‘social-fascist’ type, or by ignoring the special sensitivity of those who still place their trust in the reformists. The policy of winning the masses by the united front is thus inextricably bound up with the affirmation, extension and generalization of dual power, up to and including the consolidation of workers’ power by insurrection”.¹⁶

So much for the “second basic category”! Both categories attempt to confront the counter-revolution through economic means, by reorganizing the economy in terms of the working class, in order to slowly and peacefully convince the workers of the wonders of proletarian power. Not a single word is said about armed confrontation with the counter-revolution in the streets. It is quite outlandish for Mandel to have used the examples of “Spain 1936 and Chile”, countries in which armed confrontation against counter-revolutionary coups was the key factor of the defeat.

This was the great Chilean experience. The masses applied Mandel’s policy to the letter; in the “first category” they tired of pleading with Allende to repress the extreme right. They simultaneously developed the second: occupying factories and establishing “*cordones industriales*” (industrial belts, a soviet-type organ). The results are there for all to see: Pinochet’s coup was successful. The lesson for Chile, Spain, and Bolivia in 1971 is that during the stage of reformist government the main task is arming the proletariat and forming a united front with reformist workers to challenge the counter-revolutionaries with weapons in hand, and not Mandel’s two-category politics: making demands on the government and occupying factories in order to prove to the opportunist workers that we are more democratic and better administrators of the economy than the bourgeoisie. Instead of this, reformist workers must be taught to physically confront and defeat the bourgeoisie and imperialist counter-revolution.

4. Cuba belies the irresponsible optimism of the USec

The USec is forced to admit the existence of certain stumbling blocks for the Chosen countries. Not an armed confrontation, of course, but rather counter-revolutionary propaganda. However, there is no real danger. “There is no reason to fear”, because it is already defeated. “Once that class is disarmed and expropriated, once their members can have access to the mass media only in relation to their numbers” rather than their wealth, there is no reason to fear a constant, free and frank confrontation between their ideas and ours”. “A relentless struggle against these ideologies in the field of ideology itself”¹⁷ should be enough.

What is a “constant confrontation” between revolution and counter-revolution? A game? If counter-revolutionaries make propaganda it is because they can and have something to gain through it. There is no historical example that proves otherwise. Counter-revolutionaries will always take advantage of the tremendous fear from the difficulties of the workers dictatorship and, when achieved, will proceed inevitably towards civil war. The USec thesis does not contemplate this possibility.

Let us look at Cuba. It is true that there was relatively less violence prior to the taking of power, but in this case what came later was far more serious.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 36-37.

¹⁷ USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p.26.

Cuba is part of the Western world and suffered a permanent economic crisis through the imposition of a colossal economic blockade. This blockade went hand in hand with the exodus of half a million counter-revolutionary “*gusanos*” to the United States.

According to the USec resolution, Fidel Castro as soon as he returned from the Sierra Maestra ought to have made a speech addressed to the 500,00 “*gusanos*” asking them to remain, and guaranteeing their individual freedom. They should have been allowed enormous propaganda by virtue of their great number. The right to organize a political party and headquarters under the control of the militias would have been handed to them. Naturally, torturers would be protected from trial since they could only be indicted on the basis of “retroactive delinquency”. Batista, too, would have had to stay.

Let us assume that Fidel had gone further still and not only granted the “unfettered political freedom” of the USec, but also taken Mandel’s advice on universal suffrage and called a general election. Let us further assume that counter-revolutionaries took no advantage of these conditions to overthrow Fidel violently and recover their expropriated wealth — that they were honestly and peacefully dedicated to developing their electoral campaign at a purely ideological level. Under conditions of the severe economic crisis provoked by the American blockade, support from the imperialists, the backwardness of the peasantry, the fragmentation of the left and the iron determination of the 500,00 “*gusanos*”, the bourgeoisie might well have gained a majority without bloodshed, as desired by the USec. What then? The taking of power by another Batista and the return of the expropriated firms to the capitalists?

Eurocommunists have already committed themselves to return power to counter-revolutionaries if these win an election. We must know what the USec and Mandel would propose under similar circumstances. We demand that the United Secretariat unequivocally answer this question. If they gain power, will they hold free elections and hand it over to whoever wins, even to the counter-revolution? If not, we want to know what will they do when the reactionaries, logically enough, demand that the power they have won in the polls be handed over to them; will the USec confront the counter-revolution, arms in hand, in order to keep the power? What if the working masses take to the streets and smash the polls? Will the USec confront the workers? Unless they hand the power over to the counter-revolution, they will have to undertake the armed preventive repression of the counter-revolutionaries, and leave the electoral struggle aside. This destroys the whole document. But the USec irresponsibly dismisses the possibility of an electoral victory of imperialist counter-revolution.

The USec might reply that theirs is a program for a revolutionary dictatorship and that, therefore, the Cuban example is invalid. This would be, infinitely more criminal. If there had been a revolutionary Marxist dictatorship in Cuba, based on workers’ councils, the blockade would have been imposed both by the USA and the USSR. In that case, the USec’s proletarian dictatorship would not have lasted even six months. Those half million “*gusanos*” would have developed a campaign based on a huge economic crisis which would have assured them of success. Why should the Cuban blockade not also be imposed on a socialist revolution in the European countries? We must emphasize our belief that the first revolutionary proletarian dictatorships led or influenced by Trotskyists will suffer more horrific and powerful civil wars than anything we have seen in this century.

5. The imperialist counter-revolution and the danger of capitalist restoration

According to the resolution, the advantages which the European workers have for the seizure of power, will continue to hold true for future dictatorships, and what is more, they exist today for the workers’ states: “Moreover, the main problem today in the Soviet Union, the Eastern European workers states, and China is not the danger of immediate capitalist restoration under conditions of war or civil war. The main problem facing the working class in these countries is the dictatorial control over the economic, political, and social life by a privileged bureaucratic caste”.¹⁸

If the resolution refers to the “main problem today” and only today, then we can agree completely. The priority for the masses of the bureaucratic workers’ states is a political revolution. This point need not be stressed, since this is the essential Trotskyist position which we have never abandoned. The axis of this quote however, is not to define the present situation, but the timeless danger of the restoration of

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

capitalism and the entire resolution suffers from such claims to eternal validity. For there is something even worse than imperialist counter-revolution: dictatorial control exercised by the bureaucratic caste. We must ask then what will happen tomorrow, or in 10 or 20 years, will the danger of such a restoration exist? The theme is not developed any further in that paragraph although it appears again later: “The workers have no need to fear as a mortal danger propaganda that incites them to give the factories and banks back to private owners. There is little chance that a majority of them will be persuaded by propaganda of that type”.¹⁹ This seems perfectly clear: according to the USec, contemporary and future workers’ dictatorships will not be challenged by any powerful enemies —neither by imperialism nor by the restoration of capitalism. The main dangers will come from traces of the ideology and habits of the bourgeois class, which will be rendered helpless “once (it) is disarmed and expropriated”.

According to the authors of the resolution, bourgeois counter-revolution has become absolutely idiotic and truly honest: it will proclaim its true objectives, requesting that the workers “return the factories to their old owners”. It would seem that, according to the US, the bourgeoisie will abide by the rules of the game; its propaganda will be frank and honest, discarding all subterfuge, thus repaying Comrade Mandel’s courtesy with the same coin. Unfortunately, things have never turned out nor ever will turn out that way. The restorationist bourgeoisie will never request the return of the factories to their old owners. As in the Kronstadt uprising, it will pose as the champion of freedom, of soviets independent from the revolutionary ruling party; the great “defender” of the workers and peasants in the factories and kolkhozes (collective farms). This restorationist bourgeoisie will not be the old bourgeoisie but the great majority of technocrats, bureaucrats, and labour and kolkhoz aristocrats. These sectors of the aspiring bourgeoisie will probably propose that factories should cease to belong to the “totalitarian state” and “pass into the hands of the workers” as worker-owned cooperatives. The same will hold true for collective farms. The restorationist assault will be directed against state ownership of industry and land, state control of foreign trade, and the five-year plan. They will dig up all kinds of democratic slogans with which to eat away at these foundations. We have reiterated these platitudes because it is extremely dangerous to underestimate the ingenuity of the bourgeoisie. However, by far the worst of this USec position is the conviction that the workers’ states will not be challenged by a major enemy: for some unknown reason they discount both imperialism and capitalist restoration.

Nevertheless, the danger of counter-revolution does not depend on restorationist sympathies but on imperialist control of the world market. To think otherwise is to believe in the permanent coexistence of socialism and capitalism. It is imperative to be aware of the grave danger posed by the huge right wing bourgeois tendencies exacerbated by economic development under a proletarian dictatorship. This is an inevitable process of increasing contradiction given the national borders of the bureaucratized workers’ states, imperialist domination of the world market, and, up until now, the relative backwardness of the workers’ states. For these reasons, economic development produces strong capitalistic tendencies, primarily through the distribution of production. In this sphere of distribution, inequalities are inevitable and will be accelerated in direct proportion to the increase of production, which will be insufficient in any case, and will generate a vicious struggle over its appropriation. A colossal development of the bourgeois apparatus accompanies the development of productive forces within a workers’ state surrounded by imperialism and contained within its own national boundaries. Trotsky always maintained that economic development accelerates existing contradictions and generates new ones, such as new, dangerously pro-bourgeois, restorationist tendencies. Only the development of the revolution up until the defeat of imperialism can avoid the emergence of these contradictions in the long term. Moreover, these inevitable contradictions will lead to the bureaucratization of any workers’ state which remains isolated over a long period.

This Trotskyist position could be opposed by the argument that in 60 years there has been no concrete danger of bourgeois counter-revolution in any of the workers’ states. This is not valid. The contradictions exist and are evermore acute. They have not blown up for other reasons. The first is that since 1939 world imperialism has been engaged in internal struggle and has been unable to form a united front against the USSR. The second is that the post war period was spent in recovering from the disasters of war, and the subsequent economic boom made the regaining of the markets of the workers’ states less crucial. The most fundamental reason is that the deformed workers’ states have had an almost autarchic development due to above and the backwardness they inherited. This gave rise to a very rickety commercial

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 29.

relationship between imperialism and the workers' states. Under these conditions capitalist restorationist tendencies could not prosper, since they can only do so as appendages of world imperialism.

However, over the last 10 years there has been a reversal of this process and an increase in the commercial and financial trade between the workers states and imperialism. This is exacerbated by the widening gap between the Chinese and Russian bureaucracies as well as the Eurocommunist phenomenon. The first two compete with each other to make pacts with imperialism and conduct bilateral negotiations with the Americans, Europe and Japan to the best advantage of these countries. Eurocommunism openly supports the European imperialist bourgeoisies against Moscow's "totalitarianism", concurring with Carter's plan and creating ideological conditions which could later justify an internal or external attack on the workers' states.

Trotsky's prediction remains valid although at the present time it is only manifested in the embryonic stage. This process will acquire an ever accelerating dynamic along with the growth of the commercial and financial influence of imperialism over the workers' states, and thus present a real threat of bourgeois counter-revolution. In a word, while the contradictions within the workers' states grow more acute and imperialism continues to dominate the world economy, it (rather than the old ruling classes), remains the main enemy.

Carter's plan is imperialist restorationist politics. His economic, political and military plan is contained within the demagogic campaign for human rights which emerged at the same time as the democratist formulations of the USec; something which could well give rise to an awful confusion. The democratist propaganda of imperialism is based on the democratic movement which is growing within the workers' states in response to the reactionary and totalitarian character of their present governments. We believe that imperialism will advance to a critical point at which it will attempt to direct the highly progressive and inevitable political revolution and democratic mobilization of the workers' states towards a politics of free trade and capitalist restoration. The omission of Carter's plan from the resolution is extremely serious, particularly since the two programs, in reality diametrically opposed, appear to coincide on certain points. We must immediately come to the defence of our own program and attack and denounce that of imperialism. No document should fail to do this.

Trotsky formulated the following law: The danger of restoration will increase as the economy develops, imperialism will attempt to draw the workers' states, into its orbit through trade, investment and the black market. Carter's plan is putting this into effect and will continue to do so until it provokes bitter and maybe armed conflicts within the workers' states.

Trotskyism has the responsibility of clarifying for the masses the vast differences between our democratic plan and that of Carter, of denouncing the new counter-revolutionary strategy of imperialism and warning of the danger of capitalist restoration in the workers' states which is its consequence.

CHAPTER III

Bourgeois democracy or workers democracy

1. Two concepts of workers' democracy and freedoms

The democratic freedoms, which according to the USec will be extended ad infinitum after the triumph of the dictatorship of the proletariat, are in reality purely formal individualist political freedoms; the freedoms of bourgeois democracy in the era of free-trade capitalism. This was a system which necessarily held sway in a society which the bourgeoisie described as composed of individuals, sellers of commodities, who had a variety of rights and some obligations, amongst which were respect for the private property of the means of production. From these were derived freedom of expression in the press, freedom of assembly, the right to issue propaganda and organise politically.

Marxism has always criticized this conception of freedom. It has pointed out that, in fact, it existed only for the bourgeoisie, which alone was able to own presses, paper, buildings to meet, means to advertise, and was thereby able to organize into parties for the political contest. In short, these were the freedoms of the rich in the same way as ancient democracy provided freedom only for the slave owners. This is part of the intuitive knowledge of every worker who does not have the "freedom" of not working an eight hour day, who is "allowed" to rest on Sunday but not on the other days of the week, who cannot send his children to university although no law prohibits it. It is also perceived by any member of the middle class such as the professional who is obliged to become "salaried" in order to eat despite holding a profession which enables him/her to work "freely". It is understood by a student who "chooses" a career and finds all university quotas to be booked up. Finally, it is clearly understood by unemployed workers who want, but cannot find a job.

Hence the Marxist critique of bourgeois ideology on this respect is contained in a single phrase; "the real freedom given to the workers is that of starving to death".

Marxism does not stop here. It has provided the only true theoretical explanation on this matter. While bourgeois ideology maintains that society is comprised of individuals, for Marxists it is in essence made up of classes.

This is not to ignore the existence of individuals but to locate them in their proper place in class society. Individuals are related to society by means of classes; they are mediated by them. Not all individuals have access to the same possibilities. From the fundamental fact that one is bourgeois and another is a proletarian comes their different potential for freedom and development. Thus while bourgeois ideologues discuss the degree of liberty for individuals in a given society, Marxists start out by questioning the degree of freedom obtained within it by the working class.

Therefore, when we talk of workers' freedoms we distinguish two levels: one that of the entire working class within society; the other, that of the workers as individuals within their class. These two levels should not be confused: there is a dialectical relation between them and they are often in contradiction. For example the purchase or expropriation of a press by a trade union constitutes an advance in freedom of expression for the proletariat. Likewise when that organization buys or expropriates buildings in different cities, the right of assembly for the union has spread throughout the country. A further and relatively far more important expansion of democracy is signalled when the unions, following a period of clandestine existence, acquire the status of legal organizations. The liberty of the class within society is increased.

If this same union embodies in its statutes the right of workers to assemble and freely elect delegates within the workplace, together with the right of each worker to speak freely in monthly union meetings,

then the freedom of the workers is increased in terms of individuals within their class. Here, class interests and the interests of individuals are not in contradiction.

Let us suppose that these unions become bureaucratized and deny their members and the different union sectors the democratic right of defending their ideas or of challenging the union's leadership. In this case, what is obtained in terms of the class is lost in terms of the individual. This, although very serious and objectionable, should not lead us to forget that the establishment of legal trade unions was a substantial conquest and therefore to adopt the mistaken position of denying them any importance by seeing them simply in terms of the restriction of workers' freedom of expression.

Furthermore, in some instances we may support the restriction of individual freedoms. In the event that the assembled workers of a factory resolve by majority to go on a strike, no individual worker has the right to go in to work or even to propagandize against the strike. If they attempt this they are stopped, sometimes with the use of force. For us this repression is the ultimate expression of workers' democracy: the working class is exercising its rights against the bourgeoisie and the individual members of its own class who support the bourgeoisie. If the scabs are suppressed and the strike succeeds then this is a triumph for workers' democracy since the most important democratic conquests are those which the mass of the working class tears away from the bourgeoisie.

While classes continue to exist this Marxist conception of democracy and freedom will apply not only to workers' democracy but to society as a whole. Democracy has always been internal, a form of class dictatorship. It was never more than this: dictatorship for some sectors, democracy for the sectors or classes which oppress them. Democracy and "unfettered political freedom" have never existed for all individuals in a class society as is claimed by bourgeois ideology nor could they exist as such under future workers' dictatorships as is claimed by the USec.

Among the freedoms, the true Marxists have always upheld in the first place those rights which relate to economic relations and labour; that is to the nerves and muscles of the workers. Among those, for example, are the "freedom" to guaranteed work, a wage which enables the subsistence of the worker and their family, shorter working hours to limit the brutalizing effects of the very long working day, and to allow time to engage in politics. To the rationalist, ideological and individualistic conceptions of the bourgeoisie, which saw the historical process in terms of individuals, ideas and institutions, Marx counter posed the role of the economic factors, the development of the productive forces, the relations of production and the class struggle as the decisive factors in the historical process. We should do the same in regard to democratic freedoms: the most important are those which relate to the working day and the workers' standard of living.

There are two key questions necessary for assessing the level of workers' democracy in any particular country: What democratic gains has the working class made as a class within their country? What individual or sectoral rights, what internal mechanisms, of operation, exist to utilize these gains and direct the institutions of the class?

It is precisely in the term "internal" that one finds the difference between the bourgeois and working class conceptions of democratic freedoms. The first defends individuals and sectoral freedoms which are in no way subordinated to class control since in bourgeois society this control is indirect and automatically applied through respect for the private ownership of the means of production. With rare exceptions, which prove the rule, only the rich have printing presses, paper, and airspace on radio and TV. The working class does not possess —nor will it be able to possess immediately after the seizure of power— the automatic means of guaranteeing that the freedoms which it concedes will strengthen the dictatorship and weaken the enemy. This means there can only be the strictest class discipline in confronting the bourgeoisie, in fighting against it, and the widest democratic freedom can and must exist within this discipline internal to it.

2. The China of Chiang Kai-shek and the China of Mao; the same proletarian democracy?

These two irreconcilable conceptions of democratic freedoms have, quite logically, given rise to two fundamentally opposed interpretations of the great workers' revolutions. Such is the case with China and with Vietnam. For the USec "it is true that in some semi-colonial countries the weakness of the old

ruling class led to a very favourable relationship of social forces in which the overthrow of capitalism was accomplished without the flowering of workers' democracy (China and Vietnam being two outstanding examples)".¹ As can be seen, the yardstick employed here is that of bourgeois-democratic freedoms. Hence, in terms of "workers' democracy" Mao's regime is the same or even worse than that of Chiang.

What is the difference between this position and that of the liberals or Social Democrats? For the latter both regimes are the same insofar as neither allowed democratic freedoms. For the majority of the USec, the "overthrow of capitalism was accomplished without the flowering of workers' democracy".

Although the liberals and Social Democrats speak of democracy in general while the USec speaks of proletarian democracy, both say the same thing, even if the terms are different. The criterion of the USec is so formal and bourgeois that it infers that since there was and is no freedom of the press or freedom to organize bourgeois and workers' parties, and no trade union democracy for the Chinese workers as individuals, workers' China is no different to the China of Chiang as regards "workers' democracy". The USec goes no further along this line of reasoning. If they were to develop it they would have to say that "since there are more individual democratic freedoms in Venezuela, Colombia and Costa Rica than under the China of Chiang or of Mao there is also greater workers' democracy in these capitalist countries." In fact, this is what they say in another part of the document when, referring to one-party control, they point out that this "would in fact restrict and not extend the democratic rights of the proletariat compared to those enjoyed under bourgeois democracy".²

Trotsky on the other hand, considered that "For the workers, the shorter working day is the keystone to democracy, for that is the only thing that can give them the opportunity to really participate in the social life of the country".³

Trotsky's point of view was the needs of the proletariat and the development of its consciousness; the USec takes the viewpoint of the academic individual freedoms of the western universities from whom they expect a hearing and plenty of applause. Here they embody the worst European libertarian prejudices without even listening to the European workers, who have a much more correct attitude towards China and Vietnam through their class instinct.

In China, the proletariat is organized in trade unions, and the peasantry in communes, which are legal institutions, and assemble tens of millions of workers. This single fact shows an enormous difference compared to the regime of Chiang Kai-shek where the unions and communes were practically non-existent and ferociously persecuted. The same applies to paper, presses, radio, and assembly halls. Previously these were in the hands of the bourgeoisie and imperialism now they are in the hands of the working class and the peasantry, although controlled by the bureaucracy. Thus, the workers revolution in China, although led by the bureaucracy, entailed a colossal expansion of "workers' democracy" in relation not only to Chiang's regime but also to the most advanced bourgeois democracies which are based on the totalitarian and barbarous exploitation of the oppressed nationalities and colonial people.

Nevertheless, the greatest expression of workers' and peasants' democracy is that while in the China of Chiang there was endemic hunger under Mao the workers obtained the miracle of three square meals a day. We can understand that western professors or students, who have savoured reading Rabelais, fail to see what this has to do with democracy.

Anyway, the conquest of these freedoms does not make us ignore that the Chinese and Vietnamese masses need other equally essential rights such as internal democracy in the peasant communes, the unions and the factory committees, and the legalization of revolutionary parties.

The Chinese proletariat also needs to gain the freedom of the press, opinion and assembly. The struggle for these is fundamental to the extension of workers' and peasants democracy which stills runs the danger of sliding back, of losing its conquests, as a consequence of making itself vulnerable to bourgeois imperialist restoration. We know that in order to keep advancing and expanding these new freedoms, a new revolution is required, a political revolution against the bureaucratic masters. But none of these truths must lead us to ignore the fact that the great Chinese and Indochinese revolutions brought about

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 18.

2 Ibid, p. 13.

3 Trotsky, Leon: "On the Declaration of the Indochinese Oppositions", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 32.

an expansion of workers' and peasants' democracy which was never present under the prior bourgeois regimes, whether Chinese or imperialist.

3. A dictatorship without responsibilities and without an iron discipline?

For the USec majority, “political freedoms” ought only to be limited for those who “are not engaged in violent actions to overthrow workers’ power”.⁴ But what do we do with those who show no respect for, and those who through propaganda urge disrespect for the decisions of revolutionary power? The document of the USec majority allows the counter-revolution guarantees and the widest freedoms but it neglects to state that the proletarian dictatorship will impose the strictest class discipline, as in every workers’ struggle, because in the process of permanent revolution, in the heat of the battle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, it is essential to maintain an almost military discipline. In order to do this it will make use of the powers of the state which it has at its disposal. “A worker who has ‘participated even once in a strike knows that no struggle is possible without discipline and a firm leadership”, especially in “our epoch [which] is permeated with the spirit of centralism”⁵ said Trotsky. And we should add that the worker has a far clearer understanding of what constitutes the dictatorship of the proletariat than do the authors of these theses. He knows that in order to win a strike one must have iron discipline; he understands that it is necessary to use all necessary means in fighting the scabs, among whom he numbers those who only propagandize against the strike. Those who want to work are to be denied entry; those who want to issue propaganda are stopped from distributing it. Under the new dictatorship this will be the case and with even more reason. The measures adopted by revolutionary proletarian democracy will have to be obeyed. Duties will be imposed on the entire population, especially on the non-proletarian sectors. If a measure is passed calling all workers to go to work for an urgent revolutionary need, is it not legitimate that those who don’t go or who propagandize against the measure are punished? Isn’t this what Lenin thought when he ordered that one out of every ten vagabonds be shot? For the leader of the only revolutionary dictatorship that has existed it proved necessary to shoot not only those who took up arms against the dictatorship of the proletariat but also those who failed to work. How are we to impose class discipline if we cannot adopt punitive measures?

For the USec majority the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat will operate in a manner directly opposite to that in which the workers’ movement fights under the capitalist system. The authors of the document seem to ignore the fact that it is not only the Marxist revolutionary party and Trotskyist parties in general that are characterized by democratic centralism, by the widest democracy in prior discussion and the strictest discipline once a resolution has been adopted. All workers’ and mass struggles are characterized by this and it will be the case to an even greater degree once the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is established: Discussions will be held to adopt necessary measures, and whoever argues that measures should be disobeyed or not adhered to will be repressed whether or not they take up arms. Penal and administrative measures, including any that may be spontaneously adopted by the militant rank-and-file regardless of prior norms, are not only positive but absolutely essential for the repression of those who engage in a campaign of disobedience or issue propaganda on behalf of the counter-revolution. At no point does the document indicate that the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat entails the most ferocious discipline and that “... the elementary guarantee of success is the counter-posing of revolutionary centralism to the centralism of reaction”.⁶

It was the Anarchists who advocated within the workers’ movement for absolute freedom for all from the start of the proletarian revolution, while “authoritarian” Marxism was always characterized by its insistence on the necessity of the state to impose strict discipline and centralization throughout the revolutionary process and the building of socialism. Before the Russian Revolution Lenin insisted that education would automatically produce social discipline but, as he as he himself admitted, experience showed that this was impossible in the first stages of the proletarian dictatorship.

4 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit.

5 Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 214.

6 Ibid, p. 215.

When the fate of the revolution is at stake, there is no custom or morality which by itself ensure the defeat of the counter-revolution. The necessary centralization and discipline may be bureaucratic or revolutionary, but without them there is no proletarian dictatorship. Precisely, revolutionary democracy is based on revolutionary discipline; it is a democracy for those who support the revolution and help to advance it.

4. Trotsky on the English trade unions

Trotsky discussed this point very clearly in a text practically forgotten by the USec which deals with the Act of Parliament of 1913 which enabled the English trade unions to impose political levies on their members in support of the Labour Party. The law recognized the right of refusal to pay and prohibited the union leadership from expelling or punishing those who made use of this right. In *Where is Britain Going?* Trotsky quotes an article from the *Times* of 6 March 1925, which claimed that 10 percent of unionized workers chose not to pay the levy. The union obtained the right to vote in mass meetings on the obligation to pay the political levy and this provoked great debate in Parliament and in English political life. The trade unions defended their right to impose an obligatory political levy, the House of Lords voted for their prohibition and the House of Commons mediated, authorizing the unions to fix levies but barring them from imposing contributions to the Labour Party upon workers who did not wish to make them.

Trotsky accused harshly the Labour leadership of acquiescing in the Commons' proposal and showed how these positions were a surprising example of how "to appreciate the fundamental tasks of the workers' movement and establish their limits from the formal perspective and in the purely judicial context of democracy", whilst at the same time demanding of the Labour Party and the unions that they impose the most dictatorial and coercive sanctions upon the ten percent of the British proletariat which refused to fund the Labour Party.

Trotsky put forward this position as the best example of how the dictatorship of the proletariat should act. In his argument he stated:

"The expense of voting a member into parliament is just as legitimate, necessary and obligatory as that of a secretarial apparatus. A Liberal or Conservative trade union member may say: I punctually pay my usual member's dues to the trade union but I refuse the extortions for the Labour Party as by my political convictions I vote for the Liberal (or for the Conservative). To this a trade union representative can reply: in the course of the struggle for improving working conditions – and that after all is the aim of our organization – we require the support of the Labour Party, its press, and its MPs; but the party for which you vote (the Liberals or the Conservatives) in such circumstances always cracks down upon us, tries to compromise us, sows dissension in our midst or directly organizes strike-breakers; we have no need of those members who would organize as strike-breakers! Thus what appears from the standpoint of capitalist democracy to be freedom of the individual is shown from the standpoint of proletarian democracy to be freedom of political strike-breaking.

"The ten per cent rebate which the bourgeoisie have gained is by no means an innocuous item. It means that one out of every ten members of a trade union is a political, in other words a class, opponent. Of course, some of these may be won over, but the rest can prove an invaluable weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat at a time of serious struggle. A further struggle against the breaches made in the walls of the unions by the 1913 Act is therefore inevitable.

"Speaking generally, we Marxists hold that every honest, uncorrupted worker may be a member of his trade union, irrespective of political, religious or other convictions. We regard the trade unions on the one hand as militant economic organizations, and on the other hand as a school of political education. While we stand for permitting backward and non-class-conscious workers to join trade unions, we do so not from an abstract principle of freedom of opinion or freedom of conscience but from considerations of revolutionary expediency. And these same considerations tell us that in Britain, where 90 percent of industrially organized workers pay political levies – some consciously, others because they do not wish to violate the spirit of solidarity – and only 10 per cent decide to throw down an open challenge to the Labour Party, a systematic struggle must be carried on against this 10 per cent, to make them feel like renegades, and to secure the *right* of the trade unions to exclude them as strike-breakers. After all if the

citizen, taken in abstract, has the right to vote for any party then workers' organizations have the right not to allow into their midst citizens whose political behaviour is hostile to the interests of the working class. The struggle of the trade unions to debar unorganized workers from the factory has long been known as a manifestation of "terrorism" by the workers – or in more modern terms, Bolshevism. In Britain these methods can and must be carried over into the Labour Party which has grown up as a direct extension of the trade unions."⁷

In describing the differences between the petty-bourgeois sectors of workers in small and backward industries and the truly conscious members of the class which were "in the newer, more modern branches of production", Trotsky stated that in the latter "class solidarity and proletarian discipline reign supreme, and that is what appears as terror to the capitalists and their servants from the Labour renegades"⁸. And here it scarcely needs clarification: the political levy on behalf of the Labour Party is imposed on all workers.

Trotsky accepted a reactionary's denunciation of union dictatorship as being the same as that of the Bolsheviks: "The Liberal Cobden stated on one occasion that he would more willingly live under the rule of the Bey of Algiers than under the rule of a trade union. Cobden was here expressing his Liberal's indignation at the Bolshevik tyranny implanted in the very nature of the trade unions. In speaking for himself Cobden was right."⁹

In *Where is Britain Going?* Trotsky quotes Lafargue extensively, considering him to be one of the Marxist writers, who during Marx's lifetime, best understood the nature of dictatorship of the proletariat after the Paris Commune. One quote of Lafargue, of which Trotsky approved, on the policy of the dictatorship of the proletariat towards the reactionary parties, will be sufficient: "When local revolutionary institutions are established the latter will have to organize by means of delegations or otherwise the central power upon which will be placed the obligation to take overall measures in the interests of the revolution and of impeding the formation of a reactionary party." Trotsky ends his comment saying that "Lafargue stood for class dictatorship as opposed to democracy"¹⁰. And to think that the USec majority claims to be Trotskyist, while asserting that granting the widest freedom for the reactionaries and their parties is a fundamental part of the proletarian dictatorship's program!

5. A bourgeois democratic program

Every Marxist who, like the USec, presents a program of "unfettered political freedom" for all sectors and individuals without strictly subjecting them to the class organs, and discipline would be defending bourgeois democracy. At times it is not a bad thing to defend bourgeois democracy and the expansion of these freedoms, as, for example, when they challenge the capitalist state. This would be the case if the workers were denied the right to unionize. In this case we would say: Individual workers must have the right to unionize if they wish to! But when unions are strong and legal it seems perfectly acceptable for us that they impose unionization as a prerequisite of employment upon the bourgeoisie and the workers. It is at this moment that union dictatorship and democracy begin to oppose the bourgeois freedom of "to unionize or not to unionize". Once strong and legal unions are established we say: Down with the right of every of every individual worker to exercise their own will over unionization! Bourgeois democracy came to an end; union dictatorship and democracy, that is to say the internal democracy of union dictatorship began! Dictatorship, force, and hunger to the nonunionized! Democracy and work for the unionized! What has happened? Bourgeois democracy has come to an end. We support everything that strengthens the union both against the bourgeoisie and within the workers' movement in the country, albeit at the cost of weakening the bourgeois individual freedoms of the workers themselves which allow them to choose whether to join a union or not. The only democracy and freedoms that we accept are those of the unionized.

7 Trotsky, Leon: "Where is Britain Going?" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky on Britain*, New Park Publications, London, 1974, pp. 104-105.

8 Ibid, p. 103.

9 Ibid, p. 102.

10 Ibid, pp. 87-88.

Under the title of “Workers’ Democracy” the USec puts forward a program for the dictatorship of the proletariat composed of bourgeois democratic individual rights: the freedom and absolute right for all workers and the entire population to organize as individuals into tendencies and parties, and express themselves in relation to the number of individual supporters they possess, with the sole condition that they do not “take up arms”.

The authors may object to our critique by saying that they formulate their democratic program within the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat and even within the framework of soviets and therefore they are doing no more than saying the same as us when we speak of democratizing a union, or the Russian and Chinese dictatorships of the proletariat. This is not the case: the USec majority demands the most absolute and total freedom for all individuals, sectors and parties, including the reactionaries. It is on this that we base our accusation that they have a bourgeois democratic program even though this program is intended for soviets. The same position was supported by Urbahns for Russia in 1929, and Trotsky had no doubt that “It is necessary to reject and condemn the program of struggle for ‘the freedom to organize’ and all her ‘freedoms’ in the USSR —because this is the program of bourgeois democracy”.¹¹

If a supposed Marxist holds that every worker who is a member of a trade union has the right to organize a tendency in order to defend the bosses and scabs and that this “workers’ democracy” and “union dictatorship” because its program is located within the union, then he/she is deceiving us. What this supposed Marxist is really defending is the bourgeois program for the unions: every worker in the union ought to do, and can do what they wish; the union cannot suppress their freedom nor force them to act against their will. A union is only worthy of the name if the broad majority of its membership systematically expels all agents of the bosses, all scabs. A union must defend itself against enemy provocateurs, repressing them without conceding them any rights whatsoever. The dictatorship of the proletariat should not act in any way different to that of a class conscious or revolutionary union. This is not to say that enemy agents should always be expelled from workers’ organizations. If those agents have an important following in the rank-and-file we must restrict ourselves to an ideological polemic. However, once we have won over the majority of the workers we will mobilize for the expulsion and suppression of the agents. Revolutionary politics has always been so within mass organizations.

6. Our position: to grant only freedoms that help to support, consolidate and develop the socialist revolution and the revolutionary dictatorship

We all know that the Stalinists in power in the workers’ states hold that opposition parties, and not just the counter-revolutionaries, should be systematically persecuted and forced to act in clandestinity. The USec, like the Eurocommunists, has properly criticised the political practice of the Stalinists. They oppose it, however, with the program of “unfettered political freedom”. It is our position that neither the systematic repression of all opposition by the Stalinist totalitarian bureaucracy nor the democratist “unfettered political freedom” of the USec majority are correct since “... we do not make a fetish of democratic forms. The protection of the dictatorship overrides all other considerations”.¹² This will be directed by one norm: the defeat of the bourgeois and imperialist counter-revolution and the establishment of workers’ power throughout the world. The proletariat by means of a revolutionary mobilization and led by the Marxist party, will use whatever means at its disposal to smash the counter-revolution and deepen the revolution without committing itself to any prescribed norms. At any given moment it ought to be able to decide in the light of the prevailing conditions and necessities, which freedoms it is prepared to concede and which it will withdraw. In other words there will be “limited political freedom” in accordance with the requirements of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. This means that the dictatorship of the proletariat can concede democratic freedoms to the counter-revolutionary or opposition parties and often it will be in its interests to do so, in which case it should do so. On other occasions it may impose a brutal and complete repression upon the counter-revolutionaries. This will also be absolutely essential and should be effected without any qualms. Only the revolutionary masses headed

11 Trotsky, Leon: “Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, p. 303.

12 Trotsky, Leon: “On the Secret Ballot”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, op. cit., p. 59.

by the Trotskyist parry can determine the course of action to be taken in terms of the situation at the time, and there is no written norm or thesis which can prescribe action a priori.

Having expounded this principled position we must point out that not all freedoms are equal, and under the dictatorship of the proletariat there will be an unequal relationship between them. Scientific and artistic freedom, for example, can only benefit the dictatorship of the workers, which in itself will progress in line with the advances made in these fields. Freedom of speech and of the press in accordance with the numbers of supporters is extremely useful to the proletarian dictatorship, and every authentic revolutionary Marxist government ought to implement this as rapidly as it can. These freedoms play a role very similar to that played by money and reliable statistics in the economy during the period of transition but in a much broader field of society as a whole (economic, social, cultural and above all political). The almost absolute freedom of the press and of speech towards which the dictatorship must tend, serves to define the strength of the various currents of opinion and to provide the dictatorship with information about the problems it faces. It is, however, conditional upon the industrial working class and the revolutionary masses holding a total monopoly of political power. This means that freedom of the press, and especially artistic or scientific freedom, does not automatically imply freedom of organization and activity for all the counter-revolutionary parties. This is equally the case with a stable currency in the economy of a workers' state, i.e. the application of the law of value in support of the transitional economy. The authorization of the completely free operation of this law would entail nothing less than authorising the resurgence of the bourgeoisie. We allow the law of value to operate freely but only within certain areas in order better to control its tendencies and develop the socialist direction of the workers economy, at the same time avoiding the revival of the bourgeoisie through an intransigent defence of the economic plan, nationalized industry and the monopoly over external trade. The same applies to other freedoms: they cannot be obligatory or automatic in all areas of social and political life.

It is the bourgeois democrats and the reformists who hold that under the dictatorship of the proletariat all freedoms must be conceded. This is because their program and final aim is not the defence, strengthening and development of the new regime but rather a system of total freedoms for individuals and for different sectors —a direct political expression of the free market, of bourgeois and petty bourgeois individualism, which in the long term, will enable the revival of capitalism and imperialist penetration.

We are not saying here that freedoms should be granted or withdrawn arbitrarily according to the whim of the party leading the dictatorship. On the contrary, the existence or absence of freedoms is determined by rigid, objective and algebraic laws expressed by the relation between the revolution and the counter-revolution. The degree of freedom granted by the revolutionary dictatorship to its enemies, will be directly proportional to the strength and progress of the national and international revolution and inversely proportional to the strength and advances of the counter-revolution.

Throughout his life Trotsky emphasized this relative, "limited" character of freedom under the dictatorship of the proletariat. He formulated it in a way practically identical to the way that we have, except that he expressed it in terms of coercion rather than freedom: "The strength of the compulsion exercised by the masses in a workers' state is directly proportional to the strengths of the exploitive tendencies, or the danger of a restoration of capitalism, and inversely proportional to the strength an the general loyalty to the new regime".¹³

7. Trotsky on freedom of the press

The supporters of the USec's document consider that Trotsky's well known 1938 article "Freedom of the Press and the Working Class" agrees with their position. It is not by chance that they only quote this work, since they cannot find in all of Trotsky's writings any other support for their ideas. Moreover, this article itself precisely confirms all that we have been saying about the inequality and relativity of the freedoms that ought to be granted by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Stalinists and Lombardo Toledano defended the right of the Mexican bourgeois state to control and appropriate the yellow, proimperialist press. In justification of this absurdity they drew a comparison

¹³ Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 107.

between the Mexican government and that of the Soviet Union. Trotsky responded to this with two arguments.

First is a statement made in passing, and it is precisely this quote which attracts the attention of the sympathisers of the USec majority's position: "The real tasks of the workers' state lie not in clamping a police gag on public opinion but rather in freeing-it from the yoke of capital. This can be done only by placing the means of production, including the production of public information, in the hands of society as a whole. Once this fundamental socialist step has been taken, all currents of public opinion that have not taken up arms against the dictatorship of the proletariat must be given the opportunity to express themselves freely. It is the duty of the workers' state to make available to them, in proportion to their numbers, all the technical means they may require, such as presses, paper and transport. One of the main causes of the degeneration of the state apparatus is the Stalinist bureaucracy's monopolization of the press, which threatens to reduce all the gains of the October Revolution to utter ruin".¹⁴

But this quotation must be framed into the line of reasoning of the article in its entirety: under the dictatorship of the proletariat, freedom of the press can be suppressed at specific times, but this cannot be a fixed programmatic norm. The Stalinist error lies in the attempt to identify a workers' state with a bourgeois state. "Even though Mexico is a semicolonial country, it is also a bourgeois state, and in no way a workers' state. However, even from the standpoint of the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat, banning bourgeois newspapers or censoring them does not in the least constitute a 'program', or a 'principle', or an ideal setup. Measures of this kind can only be a temporary, unavoidable evil." "Toledano and his fellow doctrinaires are trying essentially to introduce into a bourgeois democratic system means and methods that might in certain temporary conditions prove unavoidable under a dictatorship of the proletariat".¹⁵

Characteristically, Trotsky speaks of "currents of public opinion" rather than political parties. There is a profound reason for this; he does not want to commit himself to granting freedom of the press to such Russian parties as the Cadets or the Mensheviks; otherwise he would have said so instead of using the expression "currents of public opinion". This ambiguity, like the reference to "legalization of soviet parties" without mentioning the Cadets or the Mensheviks, is consistent with Trotsky's position that the dictatorship of the proletariat may abridge freedom of the press or of constitution of political parties when it proves necessary to do so.

8. Trotsky closes the debate

Trotsky made the final comment on this subject in the year of his assassination. In an interview with the bourgeois paper *The St Louis Post-Dispatch* he was asked, amongst other things, the following: "Does dictatorship of the proletariat necessarily mean the surrender of the civil rights as embodied in the Bill of Rights of the United States, and of course, including freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion?"

What would have been the reply of one of the authors of the resolution? Without a second's delay they would have said: "Our program is crystal clear: From the very moment of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat there will be unfettered political freedom. We shall grant many more freedoms than does the Bill of Rights". Some of the leaders of the SWP have already said so on different occasions.¹⁶ Trotsky, who was a revolutionary and not a university professor, responded thus:

14 Trotsky, Leon: "Freedom of the Press and the Working Class", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1976, p. 418.

15 Ibid, pp. 418 & 419.

16 "We've said that we are going to put the progressive provisions of the Bill of Rights in the constitution of the workers republic and expand it to the fullest. We tell that to the American workers and we mean it. If they think we don't mean it, there will probably never be a victorious proletarian revolution in this country". (Barnes, Jack: "The Portuguese Revolution and Building the Fourth International", Report and summary adopted August 21, 1975, by the National Convention of the SWP. *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, vol. XII, No. 6, October 1975, p. 51.

“It would be great mistake to think the socialist revolution in Europe or America will be accomplished after the pattern of backward Russia. The fundamental tendencies will, of course, be similar. But the forms, methods; the ‘temperature’ of the struggle, all this has, in each case, a national character. By anticipation it is possible to establish the following law: The more countries in which the capitalist system is broken, the weaker will be the resistance offered by the ruling classes in other countries, the less sharp a character the socialist revolution will assume, the less violent forms the proletarian dictatorship will have, the shorter it will be, the sooner the society will be reborn on the basis of a new, more full, more perfect and humane democracy. In any case, no revolution can infringe on the Bill of Rights as much as imperialist war and the fascism which it will engender.”¹⁷

It could not be more clearly put: Firstly, Trotsky refuses to commit himself to an unambiguous position: “...no revolution can infringe on the Bill of Rights as much as imperialist war and the fascism which it will engender”. Secondly, the revolution in the USA will infringe on the Bill of Rights but not “as much as imperialist war”. Thirdly, everything depends on the objective conditions of the “resistance offered by the ruling classes”. Fourthly, the “weaker” the “resistance”, “the less violent the forms the proletarian dictatorship will have”. Fifthly, the socialist revolution and the proletarian dictatorship entail the disappearance of freedoms and democracy. If the resistance of the ruling classes is “weak”, “the sooner the society will be reborn on the basis of a new, more full, more perfect and humane democracy.” Something that is “reborn” must have previously died!

This is the real Trotsky: he does not get embroiled in a discussion around the Bill of Rights; he addresses himself directly to the tasks of the revolution. This is the Trotsky we wish to salvage from falsification.

9. Bourgeois democracy and workers’ democracy in the European revolution

The false identification made by the USec majority of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the fullest possible democracy does not only determine the very particular characteristics of their dictatorship. The main author of the resolution also outlines a conception of the revolutionary process which has nothing to do with Trotskyism but much with the ultra-leftism which is the other face of his revisionism. In the first place it is envisaged that the revolutionary process, at least in Europe, will be a propaganda battle or a “debate” between bourgeois democracy and workers’ democracy. The fate of the revolution depends on who wins this.

“Thousands upon thousands of workers must grasp, on the basis of their own experience, that the practice of proletarian democracy cannot be confined within the limits of bourgeois democracy. That brings us back to the question of the duration of dual power, and here the historical record forces us to regard the Russian experience as exceptional. A period of six or seven months is much too short for a proletariat like that of Western Europe to progressively abandon the legitimacy, of bourgeois democracy in favour of the new, higher legitimacy of proletarian democracy. *A longer period of dual power will probably be needed, which may be partial and discontinuous and which may stretch over several years (...)* The relation between proletarian and bourgeois democracy — in other words, the problem of the state (...) It is through this kind of apprenticeship that the workers will continually run up against the restrictive and repressive authority of the bourgeois-democratic state, even if it is ‘governed’ by workers’ parties, and that they will learn the limits of this bourgeois democracy and the need to replace it.”¹⁸

And, in conclusion, this is how Mandel views the revolutionary future in Europe: “In a revolutionary situation, the workers must learn that the real debate is not between democracy and dictatorship, but between the limited and repressive character of bourgeois democracy and the extension of democratic freedoms by the initiative and authority of the masses. Once that debate is won, the break of the masses with bourgeois institutions no longer seems as difficult and as unrealizable as it did at first.”¹⁹

17 Trotsky, Leon: “The World Situation and Perspectives”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., pp. 153 & 155.

18 Mandel, Ernest: “Revolutionary Strategy in Europe”, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

19 Ibid, p. 22.

We, archeotrotskyists, hold that objective reality will wipe out all the bourgeois democratic aspirations of the masses and while objective reality does not achieve this then no mere demonstration will be capable of doing so. As long as European workers do not undergo a brutal economic crisis, unemployment, annual inflation rates of 100-150 percent, appearance of fascist groups, fascist and Bonapartist coups, no bourgeois democratic illusions will be dispelled. Nobody and nothing will be able to destroy them. It follows that we do not believe in the long term survival of a state of dual power, nor in a debate over several years between bourgeois and proletarian democracy. Quite the contrary. Not long periods of dual power, but short ones because otherwise bourgeois society could not survive; nor will there be an “extension of democratic freedoms”. We still believe that in every revolutionary situation bourgeois democracy will short circuit. In these situations the alternative is the direct counter-revolutionary dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the revolutionary dictatorship, not democracy, of the working class. These two dictatorships will engage in armed confrontation before, during, and immediately after the workers’ revolution.

For this reason we categorize as schematic the position of the USec, according to which a revolutionary situation will initiate a struggle between bourgeois and proletarian democracy to see which can be the most convincing and can gain the support of the masses in the “debate” over which of the two “democracies” is most legitimate. We also believe that we are presented here with a purely normative and institutionalist approach. The revolutionary process is perceived as a propaganda dispute between two types of institutions or democratic mechanisms, without any grasp of the link between the two institutions and without any possibility of accounting for their combination in a revolutionary process.

For instance, if the great danger before the seizure of power is really going to be the imperialist counter-revolution, attacks by armed bands, and the threat of military putsches or semi-fascist coups, then revolutionaries will not be able to make the development of a debate over which of the two democracies is best, their main activity. If the masses influenced by Stalinism and Social Democracy still continue to believe in bourgeois democracy, revolutionists will be occupied mainly in defending it (albeit in a dynamic and revolutionary way). They are not two separate institutions from the point of view of the workers’ mobilization. Very possibly, for an entire period of the revolutionary process, the bourgeois democratic prejudices of the European masses and the danger of imperialist counter-revolution may turn the defence of bourgeois democracy into a great transitional demand.

This does not necessarily have to be the case. It all depends on objective reality. We may very possibly be able to confront imperialist counter-revolution, coups d’état and the fascist gangs in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the dominant organizations of the European working class. But we think that, due to our extreme weakness and the strength of the Stalinists and Social Democrats, this will not be the case in the first European revolutions. It would be ridiculous, from our point of view, to continue this debate over workers’ democracy and bourgeois democracy; what we must do is to propose a united front in defence of whatever the masses want to defend— and by this we mean arming and mobilizing the workers. In that case bourgeois democracy and workers’ democracy can combine perfectly and need not engage in permanent debate. The real debate between reformists and revolutionaries will not be about the abstract virtues of either form of democracy, but, very possibly, about whether to defend the bourgeois democratic beliefs of the wide majority of the working class through mobilization and the arming of the proletariat, instead of adopting the methods of class collaboration. The real debate with the Social Democrats and opportunist bureaucracies will be over methods. This is very important because if we do not follow this course we run the danger of transforming the living process of class struggle into an academic discussion over democratic schemas.

10. Imperialist democracy and colonial democracy

For the USec there is more workers’ democracy in bourgeois democracy than in the existing workers’ states. Hence they tell us, and we repeat it once again, that control by one party “would, in fact, restrict and not extend the democratic rights of the proletariat compared to those enjoyed under bourgeois democracy”.²⁰ t But to which bourgeois democracy is the USec referring? If it is that of

20 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 13.

the 19th century, the workers had no vote and neither did women, nor were trade unions permitted legal existence. If it is referring to those of this century it has forgotten to say that this is an imperialist democracy. This is no accident: bourgeois ideologues have always talked about democracy in general in order to oppose it to dictatorship in general. They have sustained their arguments with the same approach used by the USec; by comparing the internal democratic organization of the imperialist countries with the internal organization of workers' states or of backward countries. Thus, in the debate on Abd-El-Krim, the reformists held that the regime of the Moroccan leader was feudal and barbarian, while the French regime was civilized and democratic; they compared the internal regime of France with the Arab nationalist regime. So said the ideologues of Yankee imperialism in regard to Peron: the United States was democratic, while Peron was a fascist.

This line of reasoning is false and proimperialist to the very core. One cannot and ought not to start from the basis of comparing national regimes, precisely because imperialism is not national but international. The imperialist regime of the USA cannot be defined in terms of its internal characteristics (i.e. those of the USA itself) but in terms of the global organization, of which the USA is merely a privileged part. The regimes of Pinochet, Somoza, and the Shah are part of the American imperialist regime. If we take the American imperialist regime as a whole, with all the Shahs that comprise it, any workers' state, whether it be bureaucratic or totalitarian, evidences a colossal extension and not limitation "of the democratic rights of the proletariat compared to those which it enjoys under bourgeois (imperialist) democracy". The vast majority of the workers and peasants in the imperialist democratic regimes, the hundreds of millions of Iranian, Brazilian, Chilean, and Philippine workers have practically no democratic freedom compared to the Russian or Chinese proletariat.

There it also much to say and debate concerning the democratic freedoms of the metropolitan proletariat itself. One has only to mention the Portuguese and Algerian workers in France, the undocumented Chicanos in the USA, the Turks in Germany, the unemployed, the pensioners or the old without a pension, the low level of unionization and of organization, the minorities etc.

By failing to define bourgeois democracy as imperialist and following the lead of the bourgeois ideologues the USec does not denounce it as having the same content as the democracy of the slave-owners; in this case it is democracy for a few countries which exploit many others — the entire colonial and semicolonial world. This hinders the USec from presenting an effective revolutionary program in its attempt to combat bourgeois democracy.

We state this openly because the document never speaks of beginning the anti-imperialist struggle by unmasking imperialism in their own country, by revealing the colonial nature of each bourgeois democracy. This battle will not be won by trying to establish who is more democratic, as suggested by the USec, but by combating imperialism at the point at which it manifests its totalitarian and repressive nature: that is, fighting to defend the semicolonies and the oppressed nationalities within the imperialist country itself. This is the most effective form of fighting for the eradication of bourgeois democratic prejudices, Social Democracy, the Eurocommunists and the reformist bureaucracies.

It is this practical, mobilizing approach that we defend against the purely polemical activity of Mandel. One of the most effective forms of unmasking imperialist democracy in the eyes of the masses is to confront it with the most advanced demands of bourgeois democracy itself, demands which imperialism cannot possibly concede. The right of national self-determination for the nations it controls and for the oppressed nationalities within its own borders must be systematically defended, along with all the transitional tactical consequences these demands entail.

As to the dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward, colonial or semicolonial countries, it may or may not have soviet characteristics, but it will be victorious only on condition that it takes up the struggle for national liberation and, in the most backward countries, for agrarian revolution. That is, if the demands of the entire people are taken into account. It is not a question of the soviet form of the dictatorship but of the content of the tasks of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. The resolution attempts to show that it will take practically the same form and content in most of the advanced and backward countries alike. The profound differences in content between these two revolutionary dictatorships are not touched upon. The first revolutionary dictatorship to triumph in the advanced countries will have to be based on a permanent anti-imperialist mobilization, in which its own imperialism is unmasked and the right of self-determination of the countries which it oppresses is fought for. On the other hand, the

revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward countries must have as focus the struggle against imperialist oppression. We have to spell out this fundamental guiding principle of Trotskyism which is hidden by the theses under seven seals.

If this approach is not adopted grave errors such as that committed by the SWP of the USA will recur. The SWP, together with *La Gauche*, the paper of the Belgian section, waged a ferocious and systematic campaign against the government of Salvador Allende on the grounds that it was the best available variant of imperialism and making it the major target of its attacks,, instead of centring its attacks against American imperialism, revealing the contradictions that existed between it and Allende and urging the necessity for us to defend Chile against the aggression and planned coup of the CIA. This shameful history, this blot in the record of our International, must never be repeated. However, both the resolution which we criticize and the declarations of the type made by Comrade Mandel are paving the way for new disasters in the preparation of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Attacks should first be launched in the imperialist heartland itself as the best form of fighting bourgeois democratic prejudices.

CHAPTER IV

Who takes power and for what purpose?

1. Norms and institutions versus permanent mobilization

The USec resolution makes a further most serious revision of the theory of permanent revolution in its attempt to channel revolutionary mobilization into institutions and norms. The normative mania of its authors reaches a pitch of legalistic delirium when they demand that, during the civil war, the dictatorship submit to an inviolable, ultra-strict, ultra-liberal penal code with the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionaries.

In relation to the system of government, the USec follows the same line of reasoning. They hold that since the bourgeoisie governs through an institution —parliament or congress— the ruling proletariat must also govern through an opposing institution— the super-democratic soviet. Thus, they conclude that the dictatorship of the proletariat can only exist “within the frame-work of state institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralized workers’ councils (soviets).”¹

To make the substitution of one institution by another the axis of our program stems from an erroneous method based on false analogical reasoning. “The soviet system is not simply a form of government that can be compared abstractly with the parliamentary form.”² Soviets cannot be put on the same level with bourgeois parliament. We all agree that they are the most effective tools for building the workers’ revolution and wielding power, just as parliament is a tool for bourgeois rule. However, soviets alone provide no guarantees. “All these variants must be kept in mind so as to safeguard us from falling into organizational fetishism, and so as not to transform the soviets from what they ought to be — a flexible and living form of struggle— into an organizational principle imposed upon the movement from the outside, disrupting its normal development.”³ For revolutionaries, the only guarantee that the revolution will continue to advance consists in counterposing to bourgeois institutions — and, to a certain degree, to workers’ institutions— the permanent mobilization of the working class and the toiling masses. We will support the soviets to the extent that they sustain and broaden this mobilization; if they hold it back or institutionalize it, we will raise the demand — “down with the soviets”.

The USec remains trapped by bourgeois institutional thinking. It has been the practice of the bourgeoisie and all other privileged sectors of history, to attempt to “sanctify” norms and institutions after their own revolutions in order to restrain revolutionary mobilizations. This took place after the great English Revolution with the king and parliament, two institutions that became “sacred”. Similarly, the Chartists were led along by the empty promise of the vote as the solution to all their problems. The Great French Revolution foundered upon its glorification and subordination to the Bonapartist bourgeois empire or the Republic.

By virtue of the differences from prior revolutions which define it (elimination of national frontiers, classes and institutions) the revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat cannot freeze any institution.

Successful bourgeois revolutions did not have as objectives the elimination of classes or sustained revolutionary development. This led them to the establishment of “sacred” institutions as soon as their movement had succeeded. Every revolution led by truly Marxist revolutionaries will have a completely opposite dynamic to others known so far: it will constantly change, create, destroy, build and combine

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 5.

2 Trotsky, Leon: “Is Parliamentary Democracy Likely to Replace the Soviets?” in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, op. cit., p. 54.

3 Trotsky, Leon: “Lessons of October”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., p. 251.

all sorts of norms and institutions, and wage war on all those which attempt to perpetuate themselves or hold back the mobilization. In this process each norm or institution will have a relative character: only revolutionary mobilization will remain constant and absolute.

According to the theory of permanent revolution, any norm or institution that furthers permanent mobilization is useful and must be reinforced. Conversely, if it hinders mobilization it should be destroyed. On the other hand, none of these norms or institutions has an a priori progressive character for every stage of the struggle; it must be constantly reappraised: today's revolutionary institution may become reactionary tomorrow. It is only the mobilization of the exploited against the exploiters that can be considered the constantly progressive element in the Trotskyist objective of an unceasing revolution.

There can be no exceptions to this rule. National proletarian dictatorships must be superseded first by regional dictatorships, then continental ones and finally the international dictatorship will be achieved. Historically, Trotskyism in power will move towards the elimination of classes, of the revolutionary party and of the state, everything being constantly propelled and changed by permanent mobilization. If this is not so, then Marx and Trotsky were utopian socialists and the theory of Permanent Revolution a mistake.

Does this imply agreement with the anarchist disregard for norms and institutions in the revolutionary process? Not at all; there is a relation between revolutionary mobilization and norms and institutions which complies with laws of content and form, established by the dialectic logic.

This contradictory relation is present in all human activity. Let us look at language for example. Anarchist linguists maintain that written and spoken languages are supreme and that grammatical rules, academies and dictionaries are insignificant. Formalists believe that language should be entirely subject to the norms of grammar and academic discipline. A true Marxist will uphold the importance of the dynamics en or spoken language, this “permanent mobilization of language”, while also recognising the decisive importance of grammar, academies and dictionaries— they organically articulate, conserve and incorporate the advances of a living language. At the same time, Marxists insist on the unique richness of spoken language as a basis for change and institutionalization.

If we extend this analogy to the sphere of social gains, it becomes clear that these would vanish without institutions. For example, the conquest of the eight-hour day through mobilization should be concretized immediately in a law or an agreement with the bosses, lest it be quickly lost. Trade unions are the crystallization of all such economic mobilizations of the workers. If they did not exist under capitalism, all gains won through strikes, factory occupation, etc., would vanish tomorrow; and if there were not a vanguard party with a program synthesizing the historical experiences of the working class and spelling out the objectives of revolutionary struggle, the proletariat would have to go over the same ground at each new stage.

Norms and institutions are the conservative face of mobilization in two ways. One, highly positive, safeguards gains, stores experiences and conquests. The other is negative, because it restricts the spontaneity and mobilization of the workers, which are crucial to any further victories.

2. The state: the institution of all institutions

Anarchists and others like them who deny the need for workers' institutions also reject the need of conquering the state. They fail to understand this dialectic by which we deduce that the bourgeois state governs through institutions and that bourgeois institutions govern through the state. The state is supported by them and uses them, although this does not mean that the working class could seize state power through a coup d'état in bourgeois revolutionary fashion, since a true revolution would be both an end and a beginning. The control of the state apparatus by the working class would mean the collapse of the rotten bourgeois institutions which sustained it and the emergence of new worker's institutions of control.

Anarchists deny the need for all institutions and organizations with which we will seize power: the Red Army, trade unions, soviets and especially the party. Their revolution has the sole objective of destroying all norms and institutions in order to return to society and dissolve within it, so that everyone can do what they want. According to this idealist schema, all norms are reactionary.

Let us assume that after we seize power everyone will be free to do as they choose. What will the expropriated industrialists, bankers, landowners, and business people do with this freedom? How will the privileged petty-bourgeoisie make use of it when they come to share the needs of the people and participate in productive labour? What will be the reaction of relatives and followers of the torturers of the previous regime who were brought to justice by the masses? There can be no doubt: they will use this great freedom to organize and arm themselves (with the unconditional help of world imperialism) for the purpose of restoring the old regime of privileges. Bourgeois institutions will be re-established. There will be a struggle in which both revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries will begin to organize and at least two armies will begin to emerge each with their own internal disciplines although they may eschew uniforms. These armies will be institutions, in defiance of norms which prohibit their existence. Why go any further?

Anarchists will always behave as they did in Spain when power was within their grasp. They will say that everyone should do what they want. Their words, if they find resonance in the masses, will allow the counter-revolution to triumph as it did in Spain, but with a death toll many times that of the million dead there. Could there be any other outcome when an imperialist army is confronted by groups of individuals bound only by their own free will?

In conclusion, isolated individuals cannot challenge institutions; they must be organized. Institutions which fix objectives and individual responsibilities must exist even for a mobilization. As victories, small or large, are achieved, they must be institutionalized especially at the level of the state. Finally, even after the seizure of power workers must count on norms and institutions several thousand times stronger than those prior to the seizure of power, because otherwise international counter-revolution will mobilize until it has been smashed altogether. The bourgeoisie have a lesson to teach us here.

Trotskyism faces the most critical of contradictions: in order to wipe out institutions, these must be formed. The contradiction is resolved by the program for the permanent mobilization which will liquidate its own institutions in the second stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolutionary party will permanently instigate and direct the permanent mobilization of the masses towards the destruction of organizations as they outgrow their use, and finish its work by eliminating the state and dissolving itself within society. The party, the “fundamental weapon of proletarian revolution”, will give way to a hitherto unknown permanent mobilization of the entire population; the party will be replaced by a new, classless society.

It is obviously impossible to draw up an *a priori* list of the kinds of institutions the proletariat will establish under its dictatorship, much less specify their specific tasks. Therefore, while we attack the anarchist conception—which at least mobilizes the masses—we launch an even stronger attack against the normative, institutionalist conception of the USec’s resolution, which would impose fixed norms on the revolutionary process. We oppose the pedantry of pretending that we can develop a program for all times and places, thus displacing the theory, essence and method of permanent revolution.

3. The relation between the party and other institutions

The above can be summarized by saying that permanent mobilization alone is insufficient, and, therefore, must be linked to institutions. The question is: which is the decisive institution? The USec majority holds that it is the soviets; that these will take power along with mysterious soviet parties, apparently all the parties in the country, including the counter-revolutionary ones.

It is clearly stated in subheading (e) of the first thesis of the resolution that: “The necessary conclusion drawn by revolutionary Marxists as a consequence: that the working class can exercise state power only within the framework of stable institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralized workers’ councils (soviets), with the fundamental characteristics outlined by Lenin in *State and Revolution* — the election of all functionaries... etc.”⁴ They give details of all the different methods of election, rotation of officials, how they will be paid, etc.

4 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 5.

All this reads like a lawyer's brief on a complete blueprint of state organization. In it there is no mention of the role of the revolutionary Marxist party in the revolution, the taking of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Hence, there is no indication of its relation with other organizations such as the soviets.

It is no accident that, out of all the Marxist literature, they chose Lenin's *The State and Revolution* as the basis for their schema, rather than the works he and Trotsky wrote after the revolution where their theories were modified by actual events. The USec ignores the richness brought to the Marxist theory of the state and of the revolution by the October Revolution. After the seizure of power the leaders of the revolution realized the paramount importance of the party as that institution for the development and consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And that power must rest with the party, based on the soviets. Lenin began to assert that the decisive factor in the dictatorship of the proletariat was state monopoly by the Communist Party. In 1924, Trotsky came out against united fronts with other soviet parties for the taking of power, emphasizing and approving the monopolistic character of the Communist Party and its relation to the soviets and the other parties.

Soviets which are not under the leadership of this party are not those of a revolutionary dictatorship but something far more unstable; soviets which could in the long term point towards counter-revolution.

Let us remember what Trotsky said of the Kerenskist Soviets: "The instability of the conciliationist soviets lay precisely in this democratic amorphousness of a demi-power coalition of workers, peasants, and soldiers. The soviets had to either disappear entirely or take real power into their hands. But they could take power not in the capacity of a democratic coalition of workers and peasants represented by different parties, but only as the dictatorship of the proletariat directed by a single party and drawing after it the peasant masses, beginning with their semi-proletarian sections."⁵

And in 1930, under the Stalinist dictatorship, he asserted: "What constitutes the basis of the regime in the USSR? Let us recount the essential elements: (a) the Soviet system as the state form; (b) the dictatorship of the proletariat as the class content of this state form; (c) the leading role of the party, in whose hands all the threads of the dictatorship are united; (d) the economic content of the proletarian dictatorship: nationalization of the land, the banks, the factories, the transport system, etc., and the foreign trade monopoly; (e) the military support of the dictatorship: the Red Army.

"All these are closely connected with one another and the elimination of one of them may mean the collapse of the entire system. The weakest link in the chain at present is undoubtedly the party, the cornerstone of the entire system."⁶

Clearly Lenin and Trotsky considered the Communist Party, and not the soviets to be the decisive element of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR. The Soviets are described as state forms while the key to the institutions and relations of production which characterize the dictatorship of the proletariat is the Communist Party.

The two fundamental and permanent elements in any revolutionary process (either under the dictatorship of the proletariat or under bourgeois rule) are as follows: on the one hand the working class, its allies and mobilizations, and on the other the revolutionary Marxist Party. Their permanent existence need not predicate their optimum development; there can be massive mobilizations for example, with a party which is not yet capable of leading them. But, they still remain the only constants. Instead, trade unions, factory committees, workers' commissions, soviets, etc. appear and disappear according to the countries and stages of the class struggle. The key elements, party and mobilization, mediate through different organizations. Trotsky's famous analogy of gears and sprockets, can be applied before and after the seizure of power. He held that there is not a direct relationship between the revolutionary party and the masses. They relate through organizations other than the party: broader and or larger intermediary organizations (such as soviets, factory committees and trade unions). And the soviet form, despite its enormous advantages, despite being the broadest, most dynamic organizational form created by the mass movement in struggle, far superior to trade unions and factory committees, is nothing but a privileged gear, but still a gear. "The councils represent *an organizational form* and only a *form...*", whereas on the other hand the revolutionary party, is the opposite.., "it is not at all a 'form'".⁷

5 Trotsky, Leon: "Lessons of October", in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., p. 210.

6 Trotsky, Leon: "To the Bulgarian Comrades", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, op. cit., p. 44.

7 Trotsky, Leon: "The ILP and the Fourth International", in *tyt* op. cit., p. 147..

In other words the revolution is made by the revolutionary mobilizations of workers and their mass organizations, but power and leadership is held by the revolutionary party. Once in power the party will use the organizational forms most suited to each stage of the class struggle without fetishizing a single one of these, whether they be Soviets, factory committees, non-party workers committees, Red Armies, or trade unions; just as Lenin and Trotsky did in the first years of the October Revolution, in order to facilitate and organize the permanent mobilization of the masses.

4. The role of the party in the revolution and in the workers' dictatorship

We maintain that the USec minimizes the importance of the subjective factor. Trotsky has dealt extensively with this subject; and has taught us that it is something that distinguishes all opportunist currents. "Opportunism which consciously or unconsciously thrives upon the inspiration of the past epoch, always tends to underestimate the role of the subjective factor, that is, the importance of the party and of revolutionary leadership. All this was fully disclosed during the discussions on the lessons of the German October, on the Anglo-Russian Committee, and on the Chinese revolution. In all these cases, as well as in others of lesser importance, the opportunistic tendency evinced itself in the adoption of a course that relied solely upon the 'masses' and therefore completely scorned the question of the 'tops' of the revolutionary leadership. Such an attitude, which is false in general, operates with positively fatal effect in the imperialist epoch."⁸ Trotsky also considered this to be an essential feature of anarchism: "The inconsistency and, in the final analysis, the reactionary nature of all species of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists consists precisely in the fact that they do not understand the decisive significance of the revolutionary party, particularly at the highest stage of the class struggle, in the epoch of the proletarian dictatorship."⁹

On this point the USec falls into opportunism, revisionism, anarchism, ultraleftism, and the only thing it doesn't fall into is Trotskyism. Our "religion" if we have one, must be that of the fundamental role of the parties in the transitional stage, before and after the seizure of power. The USec has now replaced this with the soviets, although "If the party were excluded from the Soviet system, then the whole system would soon collapse."¹⁰

Why doesn't the USec even mention in passing that the revolution will be led by the party? A further document must clarify whether they have abandoned their fervent conviction of the validity of this statement of Trotsky's for all times and places: "A steam boiler, even under rude handling, can do useful work for a long time. A manometer, however, is a delicate instrument which is very quickly ruined under impact. With an unserviceable manometer the best of boilers can be brought to the point of explosion. If the party were only an instrument of orientation, like a manometer or a compass on a ship, even in such a case its derangement would spell great trouble. But .more than that, the party, is the most important part of the governing mechanism, The Soviet boiler hammered out by the October Revolution is capable of doing gigantic work even with poor mechanics. But the very derangement of the manometer signifies the constant danger of explosion of the whole machine."¹¹

There are objective reasons, that is, reasons independent of the will of the Marxists, as to why the working class, as a whole, can neither make the revolution nor exercise power immediately after seizing it. Trotsky is crystal clear on this point: "A revolution is 'made' by a minority. The success of a revolution is possible, however, only where this minority finds more or less support, or at least friendly neutrality, on the part of the majority. The shift in different stages of the revolution, like the transition from revolution to counter-revolution, is directly determined by changing political relations between the minority and the majority, between the vanguard and the class."¹²

8 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 84.

9 Trotsky, Leon: "Problems of the Development of the USSR", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

10 Trotsky, Leon: "To the Bulgarian Comrades", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, op. cit., p. 46.

11 Trotsky, Leon: "Problems of the Development of the USSR", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, op. cit., p. 212.

12 Trotsky, Leon: "Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, op. cit., p. 136.

We can complain as much as we want, but the reality of the contemporary class struggle makes it so. This is the most important distinction between bourgeois and proletarian dictatorships and revolutions.

When the bourgeoisie took power they were already culturally and economically dominant. They did not need political parties because their power was based on parliament, universities and their control over the economy. Moreover, they even managed to win over religious and aristocratic sectors as well as using the mobilization of the plebeian masses to their own advantage while absorbing sectors of those into their own class. All this helped to consolidate their cultural and economic dominance and transfer these to the level of the state and politics.

For centuries the evolving strength of the bourgeois class was paralleled by a corresponding weakening of its enemy, feudalism. This gave it homogeneity, strength and consciousness of its interests. The opposite is true for the working class. The passing of time does not increase its cultural or economic power. The monopolist and imperialist system seeps into the working class through its pores, corrupts it, aristocratizes it and incorporates it, together with its traditional leaderships, into the bourgeois institutions. The poison seeps through education, newspapers, radio and television.

Unlike the bourgeoisie, the working class cannot seize real power before it seizes state power. Capitalism attempts to prevent it from becoming increasingly revolutionary and conscious of itself and its place in society. Imperialism has successfully blocked the development of this consciousness.

Naturally, this is a highly contradictory process in which capitalism is unable to completely achieve its objectives because of the mobilizations of the working class and the work of the party in developing its revolutionary consciousness. If it were not so, there would be no possibility of workers' revolution. The worldwide contradictions of imperialism and capitalism provoke the revolutionary mobilization of workers against their exploiters at certain times in specific countries.

Anyway, the development of a revolutionary situation in a country is still exceptional. When it occurs is as the result of the most relentless objective necessities rather than as an evolutionary process of maturation of the consciousness and organization of the class. Against the Gorterian vision of reality that depicts the situation "as if the starting moment of the revolution actually depended solely upon the degree of the proletariat's enlightenment and not upon a whole series of other factors —both domestic and international, both economic and political, and, in particular the effect of privations upon the most disinherited toiling masses",¹³ we hope the comrades of the USec majority will excuse us for paraphrasing Trotsky: "for the privations of the masses remain (...) the most important mainspring of the proletarian revolution".¹⁴ However, despite these crises, the cultural level and particularly the consciousness of the working class is still inferior to that of the bourgeoisie. This is reflected in the existence of multitudinous reformist parties and the support given by American workers to the Democratic Party. This contradictory process is manifest in the relations between the bourgeois, reformist and revolutionary parties.

This means that the proletariat cannot take power solely through the organizations and institutions that encompass it —which would effectively mean the entire proletariat. The working class is, and will continue to be, divided into antagonistic sectors during the seizure of power and even under the dictatorship of the proletariat. A conscious minority will be engaged in the revolutionary process, others will be neutral, while certain sectors will remain prisoners of the reformist or bourgeois ideology and, therefore, will be in the counter-revolutionary camp.

After it takes power, the working class will advance towards the unity, strength and control which the bourgeoisie had before it seized power. As the moment of the revolution, the seizure of power and the dictatorship draw nearer, the proletariat and its parties will be rent by tremendous contradictions and politico-organizational divisions produced by the enormous burden of bourgeois ideology carried by the masses.

Only a party capable of leading the working class will be able to carry it through these grave difficulties. The intrinsic difficulties of the working class in relation to the bourgeoisie can be overcome by the emergence of a conscious minority, a strong, organized party leadership which will combat those sectors of workers which oppose the revolution, and gain the support or neutrality of the majority. The working class can compensate to a great extent for its disadvantages by developing a conscious, subjective

13 Trotsky, Leon: "On the Policy of the ICAPD", in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 150.

14 Ibid., p. 150.

element that is by the building of a strong, solid Marxist revolutionary party by the vanguard. Because: “The party is the supreme political weapon (which) embodies the possibilities of the revolution and its future”.¹⁵

All the successful proletarian dictatorships and revolutions of this century have been party dictatorships and revolutions; they have never emerged from trade unions, soviets, factory or peasant committees. They have never been won by all toilers and workers, but rather by a highly organized minority which has gained the support or, the more or less active neutrality of the majority.

Trotsky explained this magnificently: “Consciousness, premeditation, and planning played a far smaller part in bourgeois revolutions than they are destined to play, and already do play in proletarian revolutions. In the former instance the motive force of the revolution was also furnished by the masses, but the latter were much less organized and much less conscious than at the present time. The leadership remained in the hands of different sections of the bourgeoisie, and the latter had at its disposal wealth, education, and all the organizational advantages connected with them (the cities, the universities, the press, etc.). The bureaucratic monarchy defended itself in a hand to mouth manner probing in the dark and then acting. The bourgeoisie would bide its time to seize a favourable moment when it could profit from the movement of the lower classes, throw its whole social weight into the scale, and so seize the state power. The proletarian revolution is precisely distinguished by the fact that the proletariat—in the person of its vanguard—acts in it not only as the main offensive force but also as the guiding force. The part played in bourgeois revolutions by the economic power of the bourgeoisie, by its education, by its municipalities and universities, is a part which can be filled in a proletarian revolution only by the party of the proletariat.

“The role of the party has become all the more important in view of the fact that the enemy has also become far more conscious.”¹⁶

5. A neo-reformist model

Indeed if anything characterizes reformism is having a model of a transitional stage identical to that of the bourgeois revolutions. All reformists believe that the working class will move towards the seizure of power in the same way as the bourgeoisie did; as the logical conclusion of its increasing economic strength.

This explains the reformist mania for cooperatives, for state ownership within the capitalist system, for powerful economically privileged trade unions, for universities and workers’ education, for the steady evolution of the proletariat towards the seizure of power. This is “pseudo-Marxist objectivism which presupposes some sort of purely objective and automatic preparation of the revolution, and thereby postpones the revolution to an indefinite future. Such automatism is alien to us”.¹⁷

Comrade Mandel, with his usual talent and intelligence, has built a model similar to that of the reformists, although far more sophisticated, in order to justify the USec’s resolution and give it consistency. He has moved his pieces, like a good chess player would, in a well ordered and strategically subtle attack on revolutionary Marxism. Comrade Mandel’s obsession with long, extremely long, periods of dual power, with the constant practice of the control of production, and with the lengthy struggle for the legitimization of proletarian democracy amongst workers—rather than bourgeois democracy—is the evolutionary and reformist model for our own time, when a quarter of humanity already lives under successful proletarian dictatorships and workers’ revolutions. This play in the name of workers’ revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat (whatever next!) is most ingenious: we must give the proletariat time to unite, in its own soviet organizations, under workers’ control until it becomes stronger than the bourgeoisie. Then without fissures, with the active and enthusiastic conviction of all workers, it will take power through its own organizations which involve universal suffrage, broad soviets free

15 Trotsky, Leon: “Open Letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, p. 144.

16 Trotsky, Leon: “Lessons of October”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., pp. 252-253.

17 Trotsky, Leon: “Report on the Fourth World Congress”, in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 308.

of contradictions or significant internal struggles, the support of all the workers' parties and—who knows— perhaps all the parties in the country.

Thanks to workers' control, the proletariat, the entire proletariat, will be far stronger economically than the bourgeoisie before the seizure of power, and will be able to control production much better. No popular sectors will follow the capitalists thanks to the victory of the legitimacy of workers' democracy over bourgeois democracy. The working class, of course, the great majority of it at any rate, will be opposed to bourgeois organization and in favour of popular soviets. The governments will be mandated by the universal suffrage which Comrade Mandel supports so "intransigently, before, during and after the taking of power by the workers" —according to the above mentioned interview in *El Pais*. Above all, enough time must be allowed for all the toiling masses— not only the workers—to be shown that the organs of popular power, the soviets, are the most democratic form of government.

Things would go very well for Mandel if this were really a game of chess. However, what will actually happen is that the villain of the movie (counter-revolution) will appear and blow the board sky high.

The class struggle and counter-revolution will never give the working class and the toilers—as they never gave the reformists— time enough to convince themselves of the legitimacy of their democratic power. Neither will they gain control of the economy and unite the whole people, without any divisions, in the organs of workers power. Before we arrive at this Garden of Eden the counter-revolutionary minority of that country will engage in mortal combat against the revolutionary minority, trying to neutralize and win the majority by force. Workers' revolution and workers' power will occur only if the revolutionary minority succeeds in the military defeat of the counter-revolution by gaining the support or neutrality of the majority of the workers. In Comrade Mandel's schema there is room neither for the Pinochets, Francos, and Mussolinis nor for the betrayals of Stalin, Ebert, and Allende.

6. Revolutionary dictatorship and permanent mobilization

If there is one thing missing from the theses, it is the main objective of the revolutionary dictatorship: to deepen the permanent revolution and the international socialist revolution. They seem to be satisfied with demanding absolute democracy, even for counter-revolutionaries. It is quite possible that the authors of the document believe that absolute democracy guarantees the international permanent revolution and so there is no need to give it a specific mention. The USec document is characterized by its fetishism of democratic, legalistic forms, of elections and even of the typically bourgeois methods of universal suffrage and referenda. Instead of upholding the traditional Marxist position that holds that the revolutionary process is not defined by votes but only by the relationship of forces and the battles between the combatants, the authors revolve around a single axis: the absolute virtue of democracy.

For us, the fundamental objective of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat continues to be the permanent revolution and mobilization of workers against national and international exploitation. This in any case is the only hope for the survival and development of a revolutionary dictatorship; otherwise, it will have to face the most acute and irreconcilable contradictions produced by its economic development if it remains constrained by its national borders.

The laws of permanent mobilization and revolution of the proletariat and its toiling allies remain constant before and, even more so, after the conquest of power; only the forms change. Before the seizure of power we attempt to drive a permanent mobilization of the working class and its allies against imperialism, capitalism, and all exploiters to overthrow them and take power. We put forward tasks as well as political and economic demands — along with various organizational proposals — to be taken up by the workers as demands around which there can be constant struggle and mobilization. This process of permanent mobilization does not cease with the seizure of power; it intensifies. It takes on a hitherto unknown dimension with the emergence of a far more powerful organizational form; an organizational and institutional lever of incalculable force —that of the national state controlled by the proletariat. However this new form of organization for the international proletariat, a national workers state, is simply a new and far more powerful instrument to be used in the process of international socialist revolution, i.e., in the process of permanent revolution and mobilization. The period after the seizure of power

gives the revolutionary party, for the first time in history, the possibility of achieving an uninterrupted mobilization of workers, impossible under capitalism for obvious reasons. The party must achieve this with the same techniques it used when the exploiters ruled the country: advancing the necessary slogans for the mobilization of all the workers according to the stage of the struggle and the needs of the toiling masses. The question of slogans is very important because there is no such thing as workers' mobilization in the abstract or through purely organizational forms. Organizational forms must be flexible, always changing in accordance to the demands or struggles around which the exploited will mobilize. Before the victory of the Russian Revolution, mobilization was around "all power to the soviets" and "peace and land". Later, during the civil war, the great slogan was the defeat of the White Guard and imperialist intervention, while the crucial mass organization was the Red Army, not the soviets. Later still came the struggle for transportation and against starvation, typhus and lice. After the victory in the civil war came the battle for economic recovery and this new mobilization gave relevance to the trade unions and the workers without party, with relatively less emphasis on the soviets as the preeminent organizational form of the Russian workers and mass movements. The point here is that, after the conquest of power, there were different stages with different axes of mobilization according' to the circumstances — just as there are under capitalism. The mechanics for workers' mobilization, after the seizure of power, by means of slogans which express the urgent needs of the class struggle at any given time, can never be resolved automatically through the simple mechanism of elected soviets. As always, this will depend on the influence and action of the revolutionary party in continually bringing forward mobilizing slogans like it did before the seizure of power.

This is the real driving force, the true content of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Its aim is neither the establishment of absolute democracy nor the creation of soviets. The aim is the continuation and intensification of the mobilization of workers, and there is no better way to ensure this than by having democracy for those who mobilize, for those who join the struggle. This needs to be said because the ultimate explanation of the degeneration of the USSR, or of the bureaucratic character of all the workers' states is that there has not been a continuous mobilization of workers. The Russian proletariat failed because it grew tired, fatigued and ceased to mobilize. In the other bureaucratized workers' states, the mobilizations were controlled by the bureaucratic apparatus. They were sporadic rather than permanent and were constricted by the interests of the bureaucracy after the seizure of power. No organizational form can avoid this paralysis of the mobilization of the working masses. It can only be sustained through the constant application of mobilizing slogans. This means that after the seizure of power it will be imperative for the revolutionary party to raise its transitional slogans needed to ensure that the workers struggle will never cease. This is the real meaning of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

7. The future of soviets and parties

The USec comrades have no doubts that as soon as the proletariat seizes power three closely linked phenomena will instantly occur: "the dictatorship of the proletariat begins to wither away almost from its inception", the soviets will be transformed into multitudinous popular movements involving the entire population, and lastly, "It can be predicted confidently that under genuine workers' democracy parties will receive a much richer and much broader content and will conduct mass ideological struggles of a much broader scope and with much greater mass participation than anything that has occurred up to now under the most advanced forms of bourgeois democracy."¹⁸

It appears that the USec majority envisages global development which will include the weakening of the proletarian state and the spectacular development of popular soviets and political parties. Strange though it may seem, there are certain parallels between this conception and the Stalinist concept criticized by Trotsky. This is no coincidence. It was Stalin who said that the soviet system and socialism developed simultaneously and Trotsky who insisted that if the soviet system developed, socialism could not, and vice versa. His explanation was simple: if socialism is developed, classes begin to disappear; if classes disappear, the state begins to wither away; if the state withers away, the same will happen to the soviet

18 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 10.

regime, which is merely a state form. If soviets are developed and strengthened, inevitably some kind of state, different from that of the bourgeoisie but a state all the same, will also be strengthened.

The same holds true for political parties; if their strength increases, it is because the political and economic battles for power and for the distribution of the surplus product are also on the rise.

The Third International passed a resolution on the question of political parties and soviets, which runs counter to the present position of the USec. This resolution explains how, as the state and the classes disappear, so will political parties and workers' organizations disappear: "The need for a political party of the proletariat will only disappear with the complete dissolution of the classes. On the way to the final victory of communism it is possible that the historical significance of the three fundamental forms of proletarian organization of the present (party, soviets, production associations) will change, and that the uniform type of the workers' organization will gradually crystallize out. The Communist Party will not however completely dissolve into the working class (emphasis in original) until communism has ceased to be an object of struggle and the whole of the working class has become communist."¹⁹

Thus, the "confident" assertion that political "parties will receive a much richer and much broader content" under a dictatorship of the proletariat which "begins to wither away", is absurd from the Marxist point of view. As the state begins to wither away—and, according to the USec, this process will begin as soon as the proletariat seizes power—political parties will also vanish, because their *raison d'être*, control of the state, will cease to be. The USec confuses more or less organized cultural ideological currents with political parties. This is why they write that "parties will conduct mass ideological struggles". However, an ideological struggle waged by a party must be subordinated to the political struggle for the power of the state; otherwise, it is a cultural-ideological, not a politico-ideological struggle.

The disappearance of politics as a consequence of the disappearance of exploitation, misery, hunger, war, etc., will enrich the quality of life and of debate within society. Socialist citizens will participate, on a hitherto unknown scale, in debates on pedagogic, scientific, sporting, artistic and social questions. These questions are, as the comrades of the USec say, "ideological", but not political. People will form groups to better defend their ideas, and since they will be far more lucid than the authors of the resolution they will say: "Thanks to the disappearance of political parties we can meet freely to discuss all this. If we had political parties and a state we would all be restricted by the monsters of class society: politics and administration through violence by man against man".

A similar situation exists in the relation between direct and indirect democracy. According to the USec majority comrades, the enormous proliferation of political parties does not go counter to the development of direct democracy. Nothing is further from the truth. The proliferation of political parties is contrary to direct democracy, even though in a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship these opposite, contradictory poles can develop jointly up to a critical point, at which the development of one or the other is put into question. This holds true because political parties are the highest expression of indirect democracy. The existence of parties implies that they mediate the initiative of the masses; that their discipline restrains, channels and distorts the immediate, self-determined activity of the workers and the mass movement. Direct democracy means the immediate implementation of a common decision without delegation of tasks to any organization and even less to any party. The emergence of the state is the absolute negation of direct democracy since everything must be mediated by the state, and even the ruling class is forced to resort to the state bureaucracy to achieve its ends. The existence of parties is a consequence of the existence of the state—and that is why they must be centralist.

Direct democracy will either gain dominance as the state disappears, or will develop simultaneously with the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of the workers' parties but as an opposite, contradictory pole. Both poles will develop and establish links, but at a certain point they will inevitably become contradictory. In the transitional period from capitalism to socialism, we will see only the beginning of the development of direct democracy as it combines with the growth of indirect democracy expressed in the soviet system, the trade unions and the political parties. Direct democracy will gain control as social classes, imperialism, the state, the parties, and the soviets begin to disappear. Socialist producers and consumers may even undergo conflicting, contradictory experiences without the need for any discipline, even from that of a majority vote. Every social group will be free to do as it wishes thanks

19 Communist International: "Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution", (1920), in *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, New Park Publications, London, 1977, p. 96.

to the existence of enormous wealth. There is only one absolute law: as direct democracy develops, political parties will disappear.

The USec comrades are right on one point: in the first stages of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat there will be a flourishing of soviets and revolutionary democracy. Different mass organizational forms will emerge (including soviet parties representing different sectors of the mobilized working class and masses). The permanent mobilization of workers, to strengthen the revolutionary dictatorship against both the internal and external threat of world imperialism, will undoubtedly take revolutionary democracy to hitherto unknown heights. Hence, the revolution needs strengthening, so the masses are mobilized in order to reinforce the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletarian state and, thereby, revolutionary democracy. The USec comrades fail to understand this dialectic precisely because they do not recognize this particular stage of proletarian dictatorship. The threat of imperialism necessitates the immediate reinforcement of the revolutionary dictatorship by deepening and extending the revolution as soon as the proletariat takes power. This means strengthening the state, i.e., the soviets, revolutionary democracy and all those organizational forms which orient towards the development of the revolution and the strengthening of the revolutionary dictatorship. This is the true perspective which is to follow the emergence of revolutionary dictatorships in the immediate future. However, at present it is simply a futurist poem. The parties of the future will be united by a common aim —defence of the socialist revolution— whatever interests and points of view they represent. Before they disappear, both political parties and the state will flourish more than ever.

However, what concerns us is the relation between soviets and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat with the contemporary political parties — Stalinists, Social Democrats — which are agents of imperialism, with the only consistently revolutionary world party, the Fourth International and its Trotskyist parties.

We have to state clearly that we do not see the possibility of spectacular transformation of the present opportunist workers' parties into revolutionary parties.

Unfortunately, they will remain opportunist and counter-revolutionary and therefore the mortal enemies of Trotskyist parties, soviets and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

CHAPTER V

Soviet fetishism

1. Soviets: an organizational principle?

The persistent overestimation of soviet organizational forms by the USec entails discarding the fundamental role of the revolutionary party and the mobilization of the masses. This phenomenon has been anticipated by Marxism. Both the Russian and German revolutions led our teachers to reflect deeply on this deviation, which they called “organizational fetishism” (in specific reference to soviet fetishism) and to warn about the dangers that stem from it.

Trotsky states in *Lessons of October*, “But the young, European parties, who have more or less accepted soviets as a ‘doctrine’ and ‘principle’, always run the danger of treating soviets as a fetish, as some self-sufficing factor in a revolution. Yet, in spite of the enormous advantages of soviets as the organs of struggle for power, there may well be cases where the insurrection may unfold on the basis of other forms of organization (factory committees, trade unions, etc.), and soviets may spring up only during the insurrection itself, or even after it has achieved victory, as organs of state power.

“Most highly instructive from this standpoint is the struggle which Lenin launched after the July days against the fetishism of the organizational form of soviets. In proportion as the S.R.-Menshevik soviets became, in July, organizations openly driving the soldiers into an offensive and crushing the Bolsheviks, to that extent the revolutionary movement of the proletarian masses was obliged and compelled to seek new paths and channels. Lenin indicated the factory committees as the organizations of the struggle for power.”¹

Mandel states that it is possible for the opportunist parties to enter the soviets, and in this respect his criticism of the ultra-left which opposes this position is correct. We also believe that by the very virtue of being opportunist, these parties will attempt to integrate themselves in soviets once these become mass organizations. Mandel, however, stops in mid-stream. What will the opportunists do in the soviet? Obviously they will be there to try to make them opportunist and counter-revolutionary. There is no other possible explanation. Mandel cannot carry on along this tack since in order to avoid this eventuality, he would have to make his soviets revolutionary, in which case they would no longer comprise the entire population.

In the light of this we reiterate Trotsky’s position that it is “most highly instructive” to “struggle... against the fetishism of the organizational form of soviets,” that we must not elevate the soviets to a “principle” and that “a simple recognition of the soviet system clarifies nothing”, since “the soviet form of organization does not possess miraculous powers”. We are for soviets but only to make them revolutionary soviets. This is what Trotsky was saying as well as Lenin when the latter proposed breaking from the soviets controlled by the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries. He also proposed to attack them relentlessly, in order to take power since they had begun to act as a transmission belt for Kerensky’s counter-revolutionary policies.

Our struggle is to make mass organizations (whatever they may be) revolutionary. We do not indulge in the ultra-leftist politics of ignoring organizations that don’t conform to our ideas, neither do we adopt the opportunist position of always following them whatever their character. We make no fetish out of them but clearly recognize that soviets; like unions, can be led by opportunists today and counter-revolutionaries tomorrow. The predictions made by Trotsky-for the future in Austria are valid for other countries: “...the possibility remains not only that the slogan of soviets might not coincide with the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but that the two might even be counterposed, that is, that the

¹ Trotsky, Leon: “Lessons of October”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., p. 249.

soviets might be transformed into a stronghold opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat”.² Trotsky’s warning is valid also for the period after the conquest of power.

2. What should soviets be like?

Comrades of the USec, would you agree that in order to answer this question we refer to Trotsky? We assume that you will, and we will therefore quote nothing less than *The Transitional Program* of the Fourth International. “How are the different demands and forms of struggle to be harmonized, even if only within the limits of one city? History has already answered this question: through soviets. These will unite the representatives of all the fighting groups”. “...Through these doors pass representatives of all strata, drawn into the general current of the *struggle*”. “...the soviets, acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their struggle against the exploiters...”³

We believe there is nothing original in the fact that soviets are organs of struggle and of those who engage in struggle, and that they can only emerge “when the mass movement enters into an openly revolutionary stage”.⁴

But, who are those involved in the struggle? They are not all of the people. “Because among the whole people, constantly suffering and most cruelly, from the brutalities of the Avramovs, there are some who are physically cowed and terrified; there are so-me who are morally degraded by the ‘resist not evil’ theory, for example, or simply degraded not by theory but by prejudice, habit, routine; and there are indifferent people, whom we call philistines, petty-bourgeois people who are more inclined to hold aloof from in-tense struggle, to pass by or even to hide themselves (for fear of getting mixed up in the fight and getting hurt). That is why the dictatorship is exercised, not by the whole people, but by the revolutionary people...”⁵ We should apologize for producing one quote after another but this is because we believe that Lenin and Trotsky possess some authority on the subject of soviets.

The question that now arises is: who are the revolutionary people? Basically the industrial proletariat, the most advanced sections of it. Hence, in the only revolutionary dictatorship that we can look to, the proletariat possessed the most numerous delegation and voting was not in secret but by raised hand. This method, which is typical of workers’ mass meetings, is coercive because it is used to avoid the participation by counter-revolutionary workers or toilers. It was used to ensure that soviets comprised those engaged in struggle and not the entire people. The leaders of the October Revolution were stricken with the same obsession as we are: they had confidence only in the proletariat. “Revolutionary power lies within the proletariat itself. It is necessary for the proletariat to rise for the conquest of power —then and only then does the Soviet organization reveal its qualities as the irreplaceable instrument in the hands of the proletariat”.⁶

If Lenin and Trotsky placed so much importance on maintaining a majority of workers in the soviets, if they believed that these could only emerge in revolutionary conditions, and that only those engaged in struggle should be admitted to them, we must conclude — although it will seem incredible to the USec — that soviets are necessary because there is a struggle. This means that there are two forces, that of the revolution and...that of the counter-revolution (the latter comprises either direct agents of the bourgeoisie and imperialism or indirect agents such as the bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy).

A comparison can be made here between two confronting armies or two pickets in a strike (that of the scabs and that of the strikers). How is it possible for the enemy to join our side? This is what the USec wants when it says that everyone can join the soviet. How can we, the strikers, admit scabs to our armed

2 Trotsky, Leon: “The Austrian Crisis and Communism”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, op. cit., p. 394.

3 Trotsky, Leon: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 96.

4 Ibid, p. 96.

5 Lenin, Vladimir Ilych.: “A Contribution to the History of the Question of the Dictatorship”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., vol. 31, pp. 353-354.

6 Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Second World Congress”, in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 130.

picket, if we have organized precisely in order to see who will smash whom! Such are the mysteries of revisionism!

Our comrades of the USec don't need soviets to fight against imperialist counter-revolution simply because it doesn't enter into their calculations. The primary task of their new soviets is "socialist construction". If we are dealing with the task of construction it is no bad thing for the counter-revolutionaries to collaborate. But to consider "construction" the fundamental objective and to deny the necessity of developing class struggle on a national and a world scale, is —it goes without saying— a surrender to the theory of socialism in one country.

After having clarified what soviets are (since they led to the triumph of the only revolutionary dictatorship in history and having had over sixty years to study them), let us now see what the USec document has to say about them. It seems simply that it no longer agrees with Leninist ideas. Firstly, with regard to politics, they should not be organs of struggle or of those engaged in struggle. They should not be revolutionary. The soviets of the future are envisaged as organizations of a hitherto unseen democratic nature with total freedom for tendencies, groups and political parties, including those of the counter-revolutionaries. Will every individual have full freedoms by the fact of being a worker? This is the same as saying that a delegate who is an agent of the bosses has the freedom to make propaganda against a-strike, simply because he had been elected by a union meeting.

The second aspect of the Leninist-Trotskyist definition is sociological: for the leaders of the October Revolution, "the revolutionary people" were basically the industrial proletariat. In the eyes of the USec the soviets ought not to be integrated essentially by the industrial proletariat; the entire people ought to be in them. "Finally, in the building of a classless society, the participation of millions of people not only in a more or less passive way through their votes, but also in the actual administration at various levels cannot be reduced to a workerist concept of considering only workers 'at the point of production'. Lenin said that in a worker's state the vast majority of the population would participate directly in the administration of state functions. This means that the soviets on which the dictatorship of the proletariat will be based are not factory councils, but bodies of self-organization of the masses in all areas of economic and social life, including factories, commercial units, hospitals, schools, transport and telecommunications centres, and neighbourhoods."⁷

This is a popular and territorial conception. Lenin said that "The soviet Constitution also brings the State apparatus closer to the masses by the fact that it is not the territorial district but the production unit (factory, plant) which becomes the electoral unit and the basic cell of the State".⁸ Trotsky confirms this when he says that "the Soviet system of election (is based on) class and industrial groups..."⁹

This discussion over soviets and the revolutionary dictatorship is not new to Marxism. The predecessors of the USec are all those petty-bourgeois currents that have always wanted to seize the monopoly of power from the industrial proletariat in order to give it to the people. A Trotskyist cannot speak of "people" since people means everyone, as long as they are toilers. Under this heading come the petty-bourgeois and the reformist or counter-revolutionary workers, and the USec will have them in so that they can participate in the administration of the state!

This is the direct consequence of their organizational fetishism, which attempts to oppose to the bourgeois parliament an abstract and ideal soviet which is... merely a new form of parliament. This has always been the aim of reformism and it has no place at all in a Trotskyist program. "The Soviet system is not an abstract principle opposed by Communists to the principle of parliamentarianism. The Soviet system is a class apparatus which is destined to do away with parliamentarianism and to take its place during the struggle and as a result of the struggle".¹⁰ If within the bourgeois parliament there exists the same degree of representation for those opposed to the system that the parliament upholds and develops, this is because the bourgeoisie has already ensured with the invaluable support of reformism that this organ operates as a brake upon popular and workers' struggle. Whenever there is a danger that it may

7 Trotsky, Leon: "Manifesto of the Second World Congress", in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 130.

8 Trotsky, Leon: *The Trotsky Papers*, edited and annotated by Jan M. Meijer, Mouton & Co., The Hague, 1964, vol. 1, p. 287.

9 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

10 Trotsky, Leon: "Manifesto of the Second World Congress", in *The First Five Years of the Communist international*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.131.

support the struggle of the exploited against their bosses they do not hesitate in suppressing it until they are once again in a position to restore it to its traditional functions. Parliament is in every sense different from the soviet, which without struggle loses the reason for its existence.

The USec revision of the soviets goes further and has fatal consequences. By denying their true nature and attempting to convert them into democratic parliaments the USec opens the soviets to the danger of being eternally reduced to administrative activity. They will be converted into bastions of the bureaucracy, and thus, into institutionalized bulwarks against the permanent mobilization of the masses.

The USec ends up by making a major concession to Kautsky, albeit from an opposite position. Kautsky said that soviets could not be organs of the state if they were organs of struggle (if they are organs of struggle they must continue to struggle even against the state itself and the governing party; otherwise, they lose their character). The USec replies: “they are organs of state, not of struggle”. Both sides agree: “state” and “struggle” are opposed.

We say they are the organs of struggle of the workers state because we are speaking of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. We hold that one of the fundamental tasks of the revolutionary party is to keep them struggling, because they are the organs which allow the party to link up to, and lead, the permanent revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Hence, “one cannot conceive of a better form” than the soviet. If it becomes bureaucratized or becomes the enemy of mobilization we will look for new organizational forms. At best they will cease to exist when classes disappear and the state with them.

Our International is the only party capable of immediately fulfilling the historical objective of the proletariat. It will continue to be so as long as it stops adopting theoretical positions for the destruction of revolutionary soviets.

3. Trotsky and the future of soviets in the USSR

In his last years, Trotsky continued to confirm this definition of the soviets not only for the period before the taking of power but also for the period after. This is to be found mainly in the *Transitional Program* and in the discussion articles around it. His position is made particularly clear when he speaks of what ought to be the future of the soviets in the USSR in order to restore the revolutionary dictatorship of the first years and destroy the bureaucratic degeneration.

Just as before the taking of power, the construction of soviets is subject to the existence of a clearly revolutionary situation, “the Soviet regime” will be able to “revive” in the USSR “only” insofar as there exists “the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses”.¹¹ And what should these soviets be like? How will they be constructed? “It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now *it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets*. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants and Red Army men”,¹² which he earlier stated were engaged in “struggle”.

Trotsky felt obliged to have many discussions on this question with the comrades of the movement. He decided to turn one of these into an article elaborating and emphasizing his position on the struggle for the expulsion of the bureaucracy and labour aristocracy from the soviets. One comrade objected this position in much the same terms as those now held by the USec: “There do not appear to be any valid political reasons to establish an a priori disfranchisement of entire social groupings of present-day Russian society. Disfranchisement should be based on political acts of violence of groups or individuals against the new Soviet power”. As we have said, these lines could have been taken from the resolution that we are now criticizing: that the most absolute democratic freedoms should only be withdrawn from those who engage in proven acts of violence against Soviet power. Trotsky criticized his correspondent for taking “a formal, juridical, purely constitutional attitude on a question which must be approached from the revolutionary-political point of view. It is not at all a question of whom the new Soviets will deprive of power once they are decisively established; we can calmly leave the elaboration of the new

11 Trotsky, Leon: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 106.

12 Ibid, p. 105.

Soviet constitution to the future. The question is *how to get rid of the Soviet bureaucracy...* “Real Soviets of workers and peasants can come forth only in the course of the uprising against the bureaucracy”. “It is not a question of a *constitutional ‘determination’* which is applied on the basis of fixed juridical qualifications, but of the *real self-determination of the struggling camps*. The soviets can arise only in the course of a decisive struggle. They will be created by those layers, of the toilers who are drawn into the movement. The significance of the Soviets consists precisely in the fact that their composition is determined not by formal criteria but by the dynamics of the class struggle”.¹³

He could not have been clearer. Firstly, the Soviets will “withdraw the rights” of social sectors of the Russian population, including sectors of the workers’ movement, and it will be their right to do so. Secondly, in the future, sections of the population will be “deprived of their rights”, although “we can calmly leave the elaboration of the new Soviet constitution to the future”. Thirdly, “it is not a question of a constitutional *determination*” as to who participates in the soviets since not all the workers are included within them, but “those layers of the toilers who are drawn into the movement”. Those sectors and those alone will decide which parties and social sectors to legalize and which to declare illegal. We hold the same position: there is no Marxist principle which forces us to grant absolute legality to all sectors and parties, much less to counter-revolutionaries. Trotsky was for the outlawing of parties that defend the bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy, not for the legalization of all parties and inhabitants. To oppose this is to fall into fetishism of the organizational form of soviets through a formal and juridical conception. This is to view the soviet not as an organ for struggle and of those who struggle, but as an apparatus of state administration for which revolutionary struggle has ceased, and as a cyst in which the bureaucracy, (which people often only talk of fighting), can easily develop.

4. Soviets and the Paris Commune according to Trotsky

The USec majority attributes to its soviets and to its dictatorship of the proletariat— not to the true ones — the super democratic characteristics of the Paris Commune. It is most surprising that the authors who know Trotsky so well, have not referred to his revision of Lenin’s classical analysis of the Paris Commune, if only in order to criticize it. This omission is all the more ominous in view of the fact that the authors hold that the essential characteristics of the dictatorship of the proletariat are to be found in the codes issued by the Paris Commune; and what Lenin subsequently wrote in this respect in *The State and Revolution*, without mentioning that Trotsky modified that interpretation of the Commune. In this revision, Trotsky stressed that the essential characteristics of the Commune were those of dictatorship and struggle, and not of popular democracy. Moreover, he identified its most serious defect as the absence of a disciplined revolutionary party to lead the process.

This modification began in the early 1920s with Trotsky’s 1922 resolution on the French Communist Party for the Executive Committee of the Communist International: “The most glorious page in the history of the French proletariat —the Paris Commune— was nothing else but a bloc of all the organizations and shadings within the French working class, united against the bourgeoisie. If, despite the establishment of the united front, the Commune was quickly crushed, then the explanation for this is above all to be found in the fact that the united front did not have at its left flank a genuine revolutionary, disciplined and resolute organization, capable of quickly gaining leadership in the fire of events”.¹⁴

Trotsky did not see the essential element of the Commune in the vote, or power of recall over delegates, or the average wage, but in the unity of action of the workers parties which took power. He identifies its essential failure to be the absence of “a genuine revolutionary disciplined and resolute organization” to take over the leadership. In this same period Trotsky wrote in on behalf of the ECCI a letter to the Seine Federation of the French CP: “The most important reasons for the defeat of the Commune, namely petty-bourgeois, democratic and federalist principles, the absence of a strong hand

13 Trotsky, Leon: “It Is Necessary to Drive the Bureaucracy and the Aristocracy out of the Soviets”, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

14 Trotsky, Leon: “Resolution of the Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI”, in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 147.

to guide the revolution, to unify, discipline and centralize it”.¹⁵ These quotes might have been of little importance if Trotsky had not reflected over the years upon this-problem, and if he had not produced a complete revision of the classical conception of the Commune.

It was in the 1930s in a debate with the tendency of French Trotskyists who produced La Commune that Trotsky for the first time denied that the Commune was the dictatorship of the proletariat, and defined it as a bourgeois institution. Against the accepted view that the truly revolutionary character of the Commune lay in its democratic organization, the vote, recall of delegates, workers' wages for administrators, against all that had been written, and Kautsky had so strongly supported (although Lenin had already pointed out that universal suffrage existed only for those who stayed in Paris, that is the workers), Trotsky shows that the dictatorship of the proletariat rested in another organization, in the National Guard, the organ of struggle. He stated in opposition to ultra-democratic fetishism that this can never be the fundamental element in the definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the true soviets. The workers' dictatorship was the organization of those who fought and not that of all the workers in Paris. The Commune, the organization of all the workers, was, with its super democratic mechanisms, a bourgeois organization and not the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, the organization of those engaged in the struggle was the “soviet” and the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are entirely in agreement with Trotsky's revisionist and revolutionary conception of the Paris Commune, but we are not out to dupe anybody. We state quite clearly that it is a revision of traditional Leninist analysis.

Although it is rather long, we offer the following quotes by Trotsky which are apparently unknown to the authors of the resolution: “When we say ‘Long Live the Commune!’, we mean the heroic insurrection, not the institution of the commune, that is, the democratic municipality. Even its election was a stupidity (see Marx) and even then, this stupidity was only possible *after* the conquest of power by the Central Committee of the National Guard, which was the ‘action committee’, or the soviet, of the time”.¹⁶

“In the same paragraph, you say, in parenthesis: ‘Paris Commune, soviets...’ In a whole series of letters I have insisted on the fact that it is impermissible, when speaking of the organizational form of the government, to identify the Commune with soviets. The Commune was the democratic municipality. It is therefore necessary to choose between the soviets and the Commune.

“The revolutionists of 1871 wanted to *combine* their ‘soviet’ of yesteryear (the central committee of the National Guard) and the Commune (the democratic municipality).

“They only created more of a mess by this hedge podge. In 1917 in Petrograd, after the conquest of power, we had the soviet and the democratic municipality. Despite the fact that the Bolshevik Party absolutely dominated the Commune, we dissolved it in favour of the soviet. It is La Commune that speaks of government based on local communes. This formulation of a democratic municipal federalism is most agreeable to the Bakuninists or to the Proudhonists. It has nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat and soviets as its instruments”.¹⁷

The soviets of the USec are the petty-bourgeois municipal Communes of the Proudhonists and not the soviets for which Trotskyists fight.

15 Trotsky, Leon: “A Letter of the ECCI to the Seine Federation”, in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.158.

16 Trotsky, Leon: “Critical Remarks on Revolution”, in *The Crisis of the French Section (1935-36)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1977, p.111.

17 Trotsky, Leon: “The Appeal to Revolutionary Organizations and Groups”, in *The Crisis of the French Section (1935- 36)*, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

CHAPTER VI

The role of the revolutionary party and the Fourth International

1. What do political parties represent?

This is the title of one of the most important theses of the USec resolution. All we can say is that it is so far removed from reality that the Fourth International is not mentioned once, nor is there a single word about Social Democracy and Stalinism. The thesis ignores the relationship between these blood and bone parties, and Trotskyism and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

For a Marxist to write a chapter on political parties without mentioning or defining the existing ones, particularly the workers' parties, is the same as making chicken soup with a pair of old socks.

The thesis begins by explaining that parties “came into being with the emergence of forms of government in which relatively large numbers of people (as opposed to small village community or tribal assemblies) participated in the exercise of political power to some extent (e.g., under the urban democracies of antiquity and of the Middle Ages).”¹

It appears that for the USec majority the main reason for the emergence of parties was that there was a change from few people to many people. We emphasize people because if we replace this word with individuals, we unmask a clearly bourgeois-democratic conception of society as being composed of persons or individuals, rather than classes. They conclude their definition thus: “As soon as political decisions go beyond a small number of routine questions that can be taken up and solved by a restricted group of people, any form of democracy implies the need for structured and coherent options on a great number of related questions, in other words a choice between alternative political lines and program. That is what parties represent”.² This is a demographic definition! Parties come into being when there are lots of people! How intellectual! “Structured and coherent options”, i.e., parties, are indispensable when there are many people.

What phenomena occurred in the passage from the primitive tribe to the modern city that made individual proposals impossible? The key lies in the emergence of cities, classes and the state, rather than in a rise in the number of people. Parties appeared when people formed antagonistic classes and sectors which had to struggle, to impose their interests, to gain control over the new institution that had emerged in the historical process: the state.

Political parties are organizations of classes and class sectors struggling for state power. This means that without classes and class sectors, there will be neither state nor political parties, regardless of how many people there are, because there will be no struggles for political power. In brief: no classes, no state; no state, no politics; no politics, no political parties.

Political parties do not give structured options to satisfy an intellectual necessity or because “many people” need a coherent set of principles within a structural framework, such as a theory or a scientific school could give them. They do so in response to the specific political, economic or social problems which relate to general politico-economic interests of class sectors. These common interests are precisely what give political parties their coherence and makes of them a structured whole.

Parties grew out of the great bourgeois democratic revolutions. Their history is distinct from that of the political defence of sectoral class interests, i.e., politics. This came first; true political parties emerged many centuries later out of the great English and French Revolutions. A distinction must be made between the political struggle of a few Roman Senators, or a political civil war between religious

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 10.

2 Ibid., p. 10.

sects in the Middle Ages, and the struggles between modern political parties. The class struggle had to reach its peak with bourgeois society, before it could be expressed in the formation of political parties at a superstructural level.

The USec not only does not apply the Marxist method of defining political parties; it goes so far as to hold that that method is useless in this case.

“If one says that only parties and organizations that have no bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois?) program or ideology, or are not ‘engaged in anti-socialist or anti-Soviet propaganda and/or agitation’ are to be legalized, how is one to determine the dividing line? Will parties with a majority of working class members but with a bourgeois ideology be forbidden? How can such a position be reconciled with free elections for workers councils? What is the dividing line between ‘bourgeois program’ and ‘reformist ideology’? Must reformist parties be forbidden as well? Will social democracy be suppressed?”³ The USec majority wants to know how we locate “the dividing line”. They cannot conceive of establishing precise distinctions between the parties. This is inevitable given their use of demographic and intellectual methods of definition and their renunciation of Marxism. However, Marxism provides us with all the necessary conceptual tools for tracing the dividing line between bourgeois and workers’ parties. With the aid of Lenin and Trotsky, we can also draw the dividing line between two distinct and counterposed types of workers’ parties, to which a new decisive parameter will have to be added at the moment of the dictatorship and the revolution: For or against the revolution?

2. Two types of workers’ parties

Lenin and Trotsky clearly defined two types of workers’ parties as unlike as chalk and cheese. Beside the revolutionary workers’ parties are bureaucratic or reformist workers’ parties which can even become counter-revolutionary at a certain point. These parties represent the politics of the labour aristocracy and bureaucracy, particularly in the metropolitan countries and the workers’ states, where these privileged sectors feed respectively on the crumbs of imperialist exploitation, and state administration. Hence, they are the superstructural expression of an enormous sector of the working class, and the modern middle class which we may also cautiously include in the working class. The parties we refer to are Social Democracy and Stalinism. They continue being reformist and generally counter-revolutionary agents of imperialism directly or indirectly—even when they take power at the head of a workers’ revolution, because their role is to halt its international development. The existence of these parties made the construction of the Third International necessary and on its subsequent bureaucratization—the founding of the Fourth International.

The importance of these definitions cannot be overemphasized, herein is the real reason why there has been no successful revolutionary dictatorship after Lenin and Trotsky. As the character of the workers’ state depends on the party leading the revolution and taking power, the state may be revolutionary or bureaucratic. That is to say, we have seen no other revolutionary dictatorships because no revolution has been led by a Trotskyist party.

Instead of following the examples of Lenin and Trotsky, and defining the existing workers’ parties, the USec asserts that: “one cannot deny that different parties, with different orientations and different ways of approaching the class struggle between capital and labour and the relations between immediate demands and historical goals, can arise and have arisen within the working class and do genuinely represent sectors of the working class (be it purely sectoral interests, ideological pressures of alien class forces, etc.)”.⁴ Thus they fail to define or analyse the existing divisions between contemporary workers’ parties, and thus refuse to classify the Social-Democratic and Stalinist Parties as agents of imperialism in the workers’ movement. This is precisely because they represent the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy. Their thesis on political parties makes no mention whatsoever of the influence of imperialism and layers of the labour aristocracy on the definition of political parties.

In their zeal to avoid making this definition, the USec abuses Trotsky’s attack on Stalin’s assertion that there is one party for every class, and that that of the working class is Stalinism.

³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky states: “In reality classes are heterogeneous; they are torn by inner antagonisms, and arrive at the solution of common problems no otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties. It is possible, with certain qualifications, to concede that ‘a party is part of a class’. But since a class has many ‘parts’ — some look forward and some back — one and the same class may create several parties. For the same reason one party may rest upon parts of different classes. An example of only one party corresponding to one class is not to be found in the whole course of political history provided, of course, you do not take the police appearance for the reality.

“In its social structure, the proletariat is the least heterogeneous class of capitalist society. Nevertheless, the presence of such ‘little strata’ as the workers’ aristocracy and the workers’ bureaucracy is sufficient to give rise to opportunistic parties, which are convened by the course of things into one of the weapons of bourgeois domination. Whether from the standpoint of Stalinist sociology, the difference between the workers’ aristocracy and the proletarian masses is ‘fundamental’ or only ‘something in the nature of’ matters not at all. It is from this difference that the necessity arose in its time for breaking with the Social Democracy and creating the Third International”.⁵

The USec abusive interpretation of this runs as follows: “... the idea of a homogenous working class exclusively represented by a single party is contradicted by all historical experience and by any Marxist, materialist analysis of the concrete growth and development of the contemporary proletariat, both under capitalism and after the overthrow of capitalism. At most, one could defend the thesis that the revolutionary vanguard party alone programmatically defends the long-term historical interests of the proletariat”.⁶

What does the US imagine that the Stalinist and Social Democratic Parties represent if it is not the “long-term historical interests of the proletariat”? Do they represent privileged sectors which are direct or indirect agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers’ movement as Trotsky held? If this is the case, why don’t they say so? What does the Fourth International represent? Is it a political party? Does it belong to the very mysterious class of “revolutionary vanguard parties”? Where are these parties active, and what is their ideology? Are they Marxist? Could they even be Trotskyist?

How does the document define our International? This is not made explicit, but there seems to be an implicit definition to compensate for this. “At most, one could defend the thesis that the revolutionary vanguard party alone programmatically defends the long-term historical interests of the proletariat”. This must be the optimum definition of our International since this is what it is “at most”. The least we can say is that this definition can be traced, by its form and its contents, to the Bukharinist-Stalinist conception so strongly criticized by Trotsky. For example, in relation to the Stalinist program, he said: “The draft confines itself to purely formal definitions of the party (vanguard, theory of Marxism, embodiment of experiences, and so forth) which might not have sounded badly in a program of the left Social Democracy prior to the war. Today it is utterly inadequate”.⁷

Our International is precisely (neither “at most” nor at least) the only International in existence, and only its parties struggle for permanent revolution. That is, for a transitional program towards socialist society, for workers’ revolution to impose a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship to carry out the fight for the development of international revolution. The other existing workers’ parties (the Social Democrats and Stalinists), if they take power be forced by circumstances, will impose a nationalist, bureaucratic, reformist dictatorships on a world scale since their program is now, and ever shall be for socialism in one country. Our International does not only reflect “at most” “the long-term historical interests of the proletariat” but also the immediate needs, especially of those sectors which are the most militant and the most consistent with the struggle against exploitation, generally the most disinherited and backward as well as the most concentrated and modern sectors of the working class. This is made manifest by the fact that it is the only world party which fights for international socialist revolution.

This very general, but indispensable definition of the workers’ parties does not deny the existence of intermediate, centrist formations which fluctuate from revolution to reformism and bureaucracy, and vice-versa. This was the case, for example, with the Communist Party of the USSR which moved from being revolutionary under Lenin and Trotsky, to being reformist and bureaucratic under Stalin.

5 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 267.

6 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 20.

7 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 83.

The same happened with the left wing of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party. It moved from petty-bourgeois reformism to an alliance with the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution and back again to the counter-revolutionary camp. In Germany, we have the example of the centrist faction of the Independent Socialist Party which joined the Communist Party. However, these hybrid phenomena can be defined by their dynamic in relation to the two main existing types of workers' parties. Does their centrism lean towards Trotskyism or rather towards opportunism, nationalism, and reformism? Given this diversity, it is possible for a party which does not define itself as Trotskyist—owing, perhaps, to the weakness of our International—to establish a revolutionary dictatorship. This will be a vital stage in its transformation from a centrist to a Trotskyist party. There may also be soviet and revolutionary parties which—without being themselves Trotskyist—may join the Trotskyist party in the defence of the revolution and the revolutionary dictatorship.

3. One-party system or the soviet multiparty system. Once more, the role of the revolutionary party

Chapter IV broadly clarified the role of the revolutionary party in the struggle for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was done to establish the identity of the critical institution in this process: the Soviet or the Party. The point now needs elaborating in relation to another of the key themes of the USec document: a one-party or multiparty system?

The USec majority fiercely defends the “soviet multiparty system”. In their eyes this “soviet multi-party system” does not predicate legitimacy for parties authorized by revolutionary soviets, but legitimacy for all the political parties in the country including counter-revolutionaries. The majority is quite explicit in this respect: “... genuinely representative, democratically elected workers' councils can exist only if the masses have the right to elect whomever they want without distinction, and without restrictive preconditions as to the ideological or political convictions of the elected delegates”. And further: “... workers' councils can function democratically only if all the elected delegates”, irrespective of their ideological and political convictions, “enjoy the right to form groups, tendencies, and parties, to have access to the mass media...” In case we still have any doubts we are later told that: “workers' democracy” is only possible while there exists “the right of the toiling masses to elect whomever they want to the soviets and freedom of political organization of all those who abide by the soviet constitution (including those who do not ideologically support the soviet system)”.^{8,9}

Here, once more, we find ourselves trapped by an individualist bourgeois-democratic analysis and program disguised as Marxism. The USec is for “unfettered political freedom” for all parties. However, instead of saying so openly, presenting arguments worthy of Lincoln or Bernstein, they hide behind these so called “elected delegates”. This freedom is not held by soviets, nor by a class, but by individuals and delegates completely independently of what the class and soviet democratically resolved by majority. If this were applied in Iran, the Shah's party would be completely legal since at least one counter-revolutionary would be sure of election to each soviet. In Russia, there were mass trade union organizations which democratically decided to fight alongside the white armies against the Red Army.

A soviet is a mass united front for revolutionary action, and can only include those parties which support this united front. There may well be confused delegates and workers who continue to give ideological support to counter-revolutionary parties, but only those parties which support a united revolutionary front can take part in the soviet. This is the trade union principle, too: its constituent parties and affiliates must be united against capitalist economic exploitation. Historically, Trotskyists have broadly been in favour of multiparty soviets, but always recognizing the right of soviets to admit parties according to their own convenience.

8 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

9 Mandel reveals what the USec tries to conceal when he states openly that he is for the freedom of all parties. Consistent to the end as usual, he doesn't bother over whether these “unfettered political freedoms” to form automatically legal political parties, will be held by individuals, as individuals, or soviet delegates. He says. “Trotskyists have consistently demanded the plurality of political parties in the USSR, ever since the founding Congress of the IVth International” (In reply to Shirley Williams, Minister of Education in Callaghan's cabinet, published in *Inprecor*, 16 February 1977, p. 12). The falsity of this assertion will be demonstrated later on.

This is the opposite of what the USec's resolution holds. The multiparty soviet is a relative norm, not an absolute one. In certain cases, a multiparty soviet can become a one-party soviet through a dialectical process. Revolutionary soviets will have the right to determine which parties to recognize, perhaps only one, two, or three at any given time. The criterion must be whether the practice of these parties is revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. On principle, we are only obliged to recognize revolutionary, not counter-revolutionary parties.

This is the true Trotskyist conception. During the Russian revolution Lenin stated quite clearly that: "When we are reproached with having established a dictatorship of one party and, as you have heard, a united socialist front is proposed, we say, 'Yes, it is a dictatorship of one party! This is what we stand for and we shall not shift from that position!'"¹⁰

This demonstrates once more, that for Trotskyists there can be no fixed norms. We are completely opposed to the Stalinist concept that the only legitimate party, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, is the party in power. We are also opposed to the Euro-Trotskyist position which stands for a multiparty system in all cases, without exception. We hold that this decision is dependent upon the process of the class struggle, and the needs of the revolution, in addition to the type of relations established between the parties in the first years of the revolutionary dictatorship. We cannot pre-determine which norms will regulate the relations between the opportunist, bureaucratic workers' parties, and the revolutionary workers' parties of the workers movement. These relations will be imposed by force, not by constitutional mechanisms, upon the two main sectors of the workers' movement, and their political superstructures. If there is a permanent mobilization of workers, then the revolutionary parties will be predominant, and even new ones will arise. If there is passivity and acquiescence, then the bureaucratic sectors, the labour aristocracy will be in control. From this general law will emerge the different possible relations between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the workers' parties.

The one-party/multiparty debate is not the most crucial. No norms can substitute the living process of permanent mobilization and the role played by the revolutionary party within it. These two factors are absent in the USec's theses. The resolution puts the cart before the horse. Whether soviets will be one-party or multiparty systems will depend entirely on the degree of workers' mobilization and the existence or non-existence of a revolutionary party capable of giving that mobilization a permanent character. It cannot be otherwise.

If the situation is not critical and the counter-revolution is relatively weak, if the aristocratic and bureaucratic parties reluctantly accept the proletariat's revolutionary course, they may be granted full, or at least partial, legality. Else, if the counter-revolution remains strong, they might well be partly or totally banned. Suppose now that an opportunist party takes over workers' power. In that case, if it feels secure in the saddle and the situation is relatively stable, they may grant some measure of legality to the revolutionary party. Although, most likely is that the upsurge of the masses will force the opportunists in power to grant, some democratic concessions. We do not discard this possibility for certain definite stages of the revolutionary process, although the bureaucracy's tendency— be it in a union, a party or a workers' state— is towards complete bureaucratic control, and, therefore, the one-party system.

Everything will change as the world socialist revolution develops. It is quite possible that the weakening of the opportunist parties will generate great revolutionary parties and factions which will give unconditional support to the revolution, although they represent different political or workers' sectors. Naturally, these parties must be completely legal.

4. A revision of the Trotskyist program for the USSR

In its failure to understand the dialectic or the character of the relations between mass movements, the revolutionary parties and the opportunists within the soviets, the USec modifies the entire program of the Fourth International for the USSR, and the other deformed workers' states. The Trotskyist program for these states is not that of total and absolute freedom for all parties. The *Transitional Program* categorically

10 Lenin, Vladimir Ilych: "Speech at the First All Russian Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture", in *Collected Works*, op. cit., vol. 29, is. 535.

states: “Democratization of the soviets is *impossible without legalization* of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as Soviet parties”.¹¹

Trotsky did not assume the automatic legalization of any party simply because a few soviet delegates decided to build one, but only through the democratic centralist mechanism of a soviet majority vote taken by workers and peasants. Moreover; “As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now *it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets*. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants and Red Army men”.¹² It will be those engaged in struggle who will decide for themselves which parties are legal, and not a prescribed norm.

We would not be surprised if the authors of the theses formally defended their positions, by saying that the crux of their program for the revolutionary dictatorship is identical to Trotsky’s: “the democratization of soviets is impossible without absolute freedom for any delegate to organize a political party”.

It is here that the USec sets up its trap. They appear to be saying the same thing as Trotsky, while in reality they are saying the opposite. What is the trap? It is the bourgeois-democratic individualist content they have given to the phrase “legalization of soviet parties”. They have done this in two ways. One is by substituting individual rights for class rights. For the USec majority, the legality of any “soviet party” is determined by the individual right of any soviet delegate to build a party or a tendency. For Trotsky, this legality is subject to the decision of the masses in struggle, by a majority vote; in other words, to the right of the class to make a majority decision through its revolutionary soviets.

The other is related to the dynamic of the revolution rather than to a broadening of bourgeois democracy. Trotsky’s position on the USSR and all future workers’ revolutions can only be understood by recognising that political parties will also undergo radical changes in the revolutionary upturn. When Trotsky talks of “soviet parties” he is referring to new, hypothetical parties which will emerge in the heat of the struggle, and not all the existing parties as the USec claims. This is why he does not mention them by name. He never demands “legality for the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries and Cadets”, or “permission for exiled leaders to return, and take up their party positions”. He never demanded freedom of organization and propaganda for the Cadet party, nor radio time in relation to their numbers, nor their right to have delegates in the soviet. Can this be an oversight from a person who was so meticulous in defining his positions, from a polemicist who left no detail untouched? If Trotsky had agreed with the present USec position, he would have given explicit directions for its implementation. Trotsky said nothing on this precisely because he opposed this position. By “soviet parties” he meant those which are for the revolution against the bureaucracy, and, therefore, he mentions neither the Mensheviks—who would, in time, probably align with the bureaucracy—nor the openly counter-revolutionary Cadets.

For Trotsky, “returning democratic freedom to the soviets” was inseparable from returning their “class content”. For that reason, the fight for soviet democracy does not begin with the legalization of Mensheviks and Cadets. It begins by expelling from the soviets nothing less than working class sectors, “the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy” just as “we refused the bourgeoisie and the kulaks” entry to the soviets. Trotsky was thus developing a conditional, hypothetical demand which will come alive in the process of mass struggle, and define which currents or tendencies of old or new parties are revolutionary—like the left Socialist Revolutionaries. In the USSR this process was aborted by the retreat of the revolution and the civil war. If this had not been the case, we are convinced that there would have been a proliferation of revolutionary and pro-revolutionary parties and tendencies.

This poses another more general problem. We believe that these political revolutions will broadly follow the same formal stages as the Russian Revolution. There may well be two great revolutions or two great successive/almost continuous stages in political revolution. The first will be general, popular struggle which will revolve around challenging bureaucratic totalitarianism. Soviets will emerge from this struggle as united fronts of all sectors who wish to destroy the totalitarian bureaucracy. These sectors will very likely include those who have been deluded by the church, and even by imperialist propaganda in favour of democratic freedom. However, all of them will contribute to the general struggle against

11 Trotsky, Leon: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 105.

12 Ibid, p. 105.

the bureaucracy. This stage of general popular struggle will be followed by another in which it will be necessary to gain power for the new soviets and fight the danger of capitalist restoration. In other words, the fall or the weakening of the Bonapartist bureaucracy of the deformed workers' states will sharpen the contradictions between the revolutionary wing of the workers' and mass movements and the restorationist wing of the bureaucracy. It may be able to sweep behind it groups of workers by the use of democratic slogans. There will then be a need for a new October Revolution.

5. The future of the revolutionary party and the struggle against its bureaucratization

For the USec comrades, the multiparty system is synonymous with democracy, while the one-party system, with bureaucracy. This infantile reasoning is a further expression of the USec majority's capitulation to liberal bourgeois thought. In the final analysis, it is a direct result of the institutionalist, idealist manner with which it counterposes its soviets to bourgeois parliament, without in any way taking the class struggle into account. This is a simplistic mechanistic schema: one party equals bureaucratic control, many parties equal absolute democracy. The opposite could actually be true. At a certain stage of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, there could exist revolutionary control by a single party which would permit a greater development of direct and revolutionary democracy than would be possible in a multiparty regime. The bureaucratic or revolutionary character of a workers' dictatorship is not determined by the number of parties in the soviet, but by whether or not there is a permanent mobilization of the masses, and by its party leadership. The task of avoiding the bureaucratization of the revolutionary party therefore is of vital importance.

The struggle against the entrenchment of cadres in official party posts, and later in those of the institutions of the new workers' state, must be absolutely implacable if we are to carry out the main party objective of permanent workers' mobilization. This can be achieved only if the revolutionary party is increasingly proletarian, a true mass party with an industrial working class majority and leadership.

True, intellectuals, functionaries, and privileged workers have an important part to play in building the party, especially in the early stages. However, if the party is not proletarianised, if the great majority of its members are not active workers, if its leadership is not in the hands of the most qualified elements of the class, it will hardly be able to pose successfully as the leader of the revolutionary process which will lead the workers to the conquest of power. It will be even more difficult for the party to lead the dictatorship of the proletariat in a revolutionary way. All those who have not come from the ranks of the working class and shown themselves as leaders in the class struggle, must give up their positions of leadership to industrial workers. It will be incumbent upon these workers —because of their superior organization and concentration, their wealth of experience in the class struggle— to effect the great bulk of the economic transformations in the new state and to lead the struggle against imperialist counter-revolution. However, even this will not by itself be sufficient.

After seizing power, the revolutionary party must take upon itself the task of filling the key government posts with scores of its leading cadres — those most trusted and capable —as the Bolsheviks did in the Russian Revolution. There is a grave danger in this; perhaps the gravest after the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat has been established. The size of this challenge for Trotskyist parties in the leadership of future revolutions can be measured against the bureaucratization of the greatest party in history, that of Lenin and Trotsky. Nevertheless, the danger of the “Stalinization” of the revolutionary party cannot be forestalled by avoiding the offices required by the new state, just as Lenin and Trotsky did not avoid them, because this would amount to the betrayal of the revolution. The party will have to lead the process both from within the state apparatus itself, as well as in the production centres process through organizations which the working masses have adopted to exercise their power. This will only be successful as long as its cadres keep their roots in the working class. For this reason, they must always combine their government posts with direct productive labour for which they will draw their pay, making every attempt to avoid remuneration for their state functions. The proportion of labour allocated to institutional or productive work will be determined by concrete circumstances, but this will be historically facilitated by the reduction in the working day which will release these cadres for other activities. This combination of tasks will keep the party firmly within the working masses, alert to its real needs, sustained by its experiences, and in the leadership of its permanent mobilization.

Thus, the revolutionary party will be preparing its own demise, “concomitant with the disappearance of class antagonisms, politics, bureaucratic forms, and, most important, the lessening of coercive measures in social relations.” Its militants will become progressively integrated to the production process where they will exercise the direct power pertaining to all socialist workers. This is until they are completely immersed in communist society where they will be distinguished from other men and women only by their freely developed qualities.

6. The role of the Fourth International

The resolution fails to analyse and define the critical role of the IV International in the achievement of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, and the development of soviets. It also fails to take into account the relation between opportunist parties and these phenomena. It is not a question of sectarian dismissal of the possibility that the opportunist parties may turn to the soviets, to divert them away from their dynamic opposition to bourgeois state control. However, the outstanding historical lesson of the last sixty years is that, in general, the opportunist parties will refuse to develop soviet forms, or any other broad forms of the mass movement. They have also learnt through the experience of the soviet Russian and German movements of the first post war period, that these organizational forms facilitate the revolutionary process.

This has enormous implications for the Fourth International. Our world party is alone in its fundamental programmatic objective of developing these organizations for the acceleration of socialist revolution. Clearly, there is no possibility of soviet development and the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus anywhere in the world unless there is a parallel, mutually beneficial development of a mass Trotskyist party: “While the councils can arise only on the condition that there is a revolutionary ferment among the many-millioned masses, the International is always necessary...”¹³

Hence, there must be a link, a very close dialectical relation between soviets as revolutionary soviets, and the Trotskyist party. Only the development of strong Trotskyist mass parties can guarantee the emergence and the prolific development of soviets essential for workers’ revolution.

However, there are other two, equally important aspects of this fundamental role of the Fourth International. One is the struggle against the fetishization of soviets by ultraleft currents. The other, decisive factor is the ceaseless battle against the opportunist parties over the development and leadership of soviets, and all other organizations of the mass movement.

This means that the Fourth International, while continuing to fight for soviets, recognizes that the historical process which has strengthened the great mass opportunist parties, hinders the immediate perspectives for the emergence of “typical” great soviet organizations. Even if these perspectives are concretized it is unlikely that they will swiftly develop a proletarian revolutionary dynamic. It is more likely, as the USec correctly indicates that under the influence of the opportunist parties, they will languish and disappear.

As a result, the Fourth International must fight against ultra-leftist currents, and find within the class struggle itself workers’ organizations which are far more embryonic, primary, and traditional than soviets: those which can function as organisms of the revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat and the toilers in the struggle for power. In this respect, we consider that trade unions, factory committees, pickets and workers’ defence squads have an important part to play, particularly as a united front against imperialist counter-revolution before the conquest of power. We believe that the Fourth International should search for organizations of this kind, such as the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (Bolivian Workers Federation) in 1952, the Bolivian Peoples’ Assembly in 1971, the Peronist trade unions in 1956-57, and possibly the present *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers’ Commissions) in Spain, which could have, but didn’t, develop in this direction. It would be criminal if the Fourth International, due to the soviet fetishism of the USec, disregarded the traditions of each country and the disastrous influence of the mass opportunist parties, and attempted to counter-pose unreal soviets to the existing organizations of mass struggle. It is more than likely that in many countries soviet organs will only develop after the seizure of power by

13 Trotsky, Leon: “The ILP and the Fourth International”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*, op. cit., p. 147.

the revolutionary party. As we have shown, these soviets will be subject to the ebbs and flows of the revolutionary process after the seizure of power.

All these points lead up to the most important conclusion of this document: the organizational forms adopted by the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat are extremely important, but not decisive. The crucial point is that there will be no revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat anywhere in the world unless it is led by a Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like organization. In other words, over the next decades revolutionary dictatorships of the proletariat will not be synonymous to soviet organizations, but to the revolutionary dictatorship of Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like parties.

CHAPTER VII

Trotsky's supposed self-criticism

1. Mandel Interprets Trotsky

To justify his own revisionist positions, Mandel holds that Trotsky's positions in his later years were self-critical.

“For example, Trotsky wrote in 1921 that soviet democracy is not a fetish, and that the party can exercise power not only in the name of the working class, but even in exceptional circumstances against the will of the majority of the class. We should be incomparably more cautious before adopting formulations of that kind, because we know from experience that in such a situation it is a bureaucracy rather than a revolutionary minority that will come to exercise power against the majority of workers—a fact that Lenin and Trotsky were themselves to recognize a year later. As far as theory is concerned, the year 1921 was the nadir of the Bolsheviks' history and Lenin and Trotsky made a whole number of errors.

“All you have to do is read Trotsky's later writings to understand that he became aware of these errors. At the end of his life, he said that he did not want to discuss whether the banning of factions in the Party was inevitable, but that what was clear was that it assisted the establishment of the Stalinist régime and the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR. What is that if not a *de facto* self-criticism? Moreover, when Trotsky said in the *Transitional Programme* of 1938 that he was in favour of freedom for all soviet parties, he had undoubtedly drawn the conclusion that the lack of such a constitutional right opens the door to the use of the argument ‘You are a potential party’ against any faction, and of ‘You are a potential faction’ against any current or tendency. In that direction, it is not only socialist democracy that is stifled, but also inner-party democracy. In the period 1936–8, Trotsky had become fully aware of the inner logic of such positions, and was implicitly undertaking a serious self-criticism. In our own thinking on the question, we should not let ourselves be restricted by an uncritical defence of the decisions taken under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. Moreover, I think that the formula ‘freedom for soviet parties’ contains a far more serious self-criticism on Trotsky's part.”^{1, 2}

As we can see, Mandel considers that Trotsky made an almost complete self-criticism at three stages in his life. In 1922, along with Lenin, on the role of the party and the fetishism of soviet democracy; “at the end of his life”, he made a “*de facto* self-criticism” on the banning of factions within the Bolshevik Party; and in the Transitional Program he was “in favour of freedom for all soviet parties”, and this implies “a far more serious self-criticism”.

Mandel adds a conclusion of his own to the supposed self-criticisms; the 1921-1923 Bolshevik policy of banning “the Menshevik party, the Anarchist organizations” and multiple slates in the soviet elections was a mistake. Discretely and with great finesse, Mandel is telling us that Lenin's policies on these fundamental problems of the Soviet state, and those of Trotsky after Lenin's' death and up to 1934, were completely mistaken. With the same discretion he is asserting that during those 15 years the Mensheviks and ultralefts were right, and Lenin and Trotsky wrong. It is imperative to discover the truth about this complete revision of the history of Trotskyism.

1 Mandel, Ernest: “Revolutionary Strategy in Europe”, op. cit., p.29.

2 The last sentence appears neither in the translation published in the Spanish Trotskyist magazine *Comunismo*, nor in the English translation published in the Internal Information Bulletin of the Socialist Workers Party. Perhaps the editors of both publications decided to eliminate it out of shame!

2. Were the Mensheviks right?

It is a shame that Comrade Mandel does not start off from 1919, when the left Mensheviks led by Martov presented their program for Soviet Russia. This is identical to the present program of the USec, which according to Mandel ought to have been that of the Bolsheviks, and that which Trotsky was presumably formulating with his self-criticism. In the 1919 All-Russia Congress of Soviets, Martov “attacked the violations against the Soviet Constitution... and followed this by reading a declaration which asked for the restoration of the Constitution... freedom of the press, of association and assembly... immunity of persons... abolition of execution without trial, of administrative arrests and official terror”.

In his violent reply, Lenin accused Martov of holding a bourgeois position, and made an unconditional defence of the Red Terror and the Cheka. “... if you remove its envelope of general democratic phrases and parliamentary expressions (...) and get down to the real root of the matter then Martov’s entire declaration says ‘Back to bourgeois democracy’ and nothing more”. Lenin added: “We say to ourselves, ‘Yes, the terror and the Cheka are absolutely indispensable’”. And he continued: “You do not abide by the Constitution, but we do when we recognize freedom and equality only for those who help the proletariat defeat the bourgeoisie”.³

At its core, this debate between Martov and Lenin is methodological: it sprang up in Kautsky’s famous debate with Lenin and Trotsky. Kautsky was the first to want to impose fixed inviolable norms on the revolutionary process at any price, before the conquest of power: respect for universal suffrage and the Constituent Assembly. In this sense, Martov was a consistent Kautskyist, with the difference that he sought to impose absolute democratic norms upon workers’ dictatorship, instead of the bourgeois-democratic norms which his teacher Kautsky wished to impose on the mass movement under capitalism. However, they both use the same normative method. This was also the methodology of the ultra-leftists, including Rosa Luxemburg who inserted into the *Program of the German Communist Party* a clause against Red Terror. This has been a continuing debate between the revolutionary wing, which constantly defends the objective necessities of the revolution, along with all the methods which answer those needs as long as they remain useful; and the petty-bourgeois normative wing with its legalistic, organizational or political schemas so characteristic of centrists and ultra-leftists. Petty-bourgeois intellectuals attempt to extricate themselves from the realities of the most implacable class struggle by appealing to the middle way, to the imposition of norms with which it can be categorized and regulated. Vain intellectual attempt to categorize what cannot be categorized! Unfortunately, the present members of the United Secretariat, authors of this resolution, will go down in history as representatives of the highest peaks of petty-bourgeois normative thought.

3. The fateful year 1921

Let us look again at this foolhardy statement of Mandel’s and of the ultralefts of the world: “As far as theory is concerned, 1921 was the nadir of the Bolshevik history and Lenin and Trotsky made a whole number of errors”. Suffice it to say that in 1921 the Third Congress of the Communist International developed the analysis, program and theory for winning the opportunist masses over to the Communist Party and the proletarian revolution. This same Congress developed the policy of the Workers United Front, one of the most important discoveries of revolutionary Marxism.

The elaboration of this tactic was made possible by recognition of the enormous difficulties raised for the development of the revolution, by the existence of mass opportunist parties in capitalist countries, and the reflection of this phenomenon on an isolated USSR. The same contradiction leads to a persistent call for a united front in capitalist countries, and the banning and repression of these parties in the USSR. A formalist might perceive only the contradiction between tactics in the capitalist countries and tactics in the USSR, in relation to these opportunist parties. This leads to the false conclusion that the contradiction lies in the analysis and theory of these parties, whereas, in fact, contradiction is posed by reality itself.

In the capitalist countries, these mass opportunist parties had become the subjective blocks to the revolution: Only to the extent that the masses make their experience with those opportunist leaderships

³ Lenin, Vladimir Ilych: “Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., vol. 30, pp. 233-241.

could the Communist parties grow, set the revolution on its way to victory, and thus end the economic isolation of the USSR. However, the economic offensive that capitalism deploys from 1920 reduced the masses of their own countries to the most brutal levels of misery. The only way in which the opportunist leaderships could maintain their control over the workers under these conditions and not become isolated from them, was by confronting their governments and placing themselves at the head of mobilizations against the capitalist offensive, misery, and crisis. There was then a clear scope to try or propose the united front against the capitalists and their governments. This is why the communist tactic of calling on the reformist masses to unite with them in struggle against a common enemy was not only possible but also the only way of halting the bourgeois offensive and allowing the masses to experience their opportunist leadership. However, this offensive of the capitalists against their own working class, in Russia, was expressed as an imperialist siege and a capitalist offensive which made the misery more acute. This necessitated the implementation of the NEP, and intensified social conflict. The only possible united front for communists in the USSR had to be the defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat against the assaults of world and national capitalism. However, the same opportunist and reformist parties which were forced into conflict against bourgeois governments in the capitalist metropolis were, in the USSR, in a united front with the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary dictatorship. In other words, there was no scope for the use of the united front tactic in the USSR, because the enemy of opportunist and reformist leaderships was not capitalism or imperialism, but the workers' government and its party, i.e., the party of Lenin and Trotsky whom they blamed for the economic and social deprivation suffered by the masses they led.

Whereas in the capitalist countries it was possible to at least call them to fight together, in Russia the reformists were in armed confrontation against the Bolsheviks in Kronstadt: "...the Kronstadt uprising was nothing but an armed reaction of the petty bourgeoisie against the hardships of social revolution and the severity of the proletarian dictatorship".⁴ The Social Revolutionaries and the Anarchists participated in this uprising (the Mensheviks were too weak to give material support but supported it in their paper). Under these conditions the only possible path was the banning and repression of these opportunists.

As far as theory is concerned, 1921 was a great year precisely because the Bolshevik leadership took into account these different manifestations of the opportunist parties, and revealed their part in the same phenomenon: the imperialist and capitalist offensive. Moreover, rather than making a formalist analysis—that of defining a universal tactic, a single political approach for these parties under all conditions—our teachers recognized that different tactics were called for in relation to these parties and the capitalist offensive in the capitalist countries on the one hand, and in the USSR on the other.

4. Trotsky's position in the early stages of the struggle against Stalinism

In 1924, Trotsky wrote *Lessons of October* in which he exhaustively analysed the role of the party in socialist revolution, the taking of power and revolutionary dictatorship: "Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer. That is the principal lesson of the past decade. It is true that the English trade unions may become a mighty lever of the proletarian revolution; they may for instance, even take the place of workers' soviets under certain conditions and for a certain period of time. They can fill such a role, however, not apart from a Communist Party, and certainly not against the party, but only on the condition that Communist influence becomes the decisive influence in the trade unions. We have paid far too dearly for this conclusion—with regard to the role and importance of a party in a proletarian revolution—to renounce it so lightly or even to minimize its significance."⁵

These conclusions of Trotsky's gave rise to such a debate that two months later, in November of that same year, he was forced to publish an extensive essay entitled *Our differences*, which reaffirmed these positions. It cannot be objected to on the grounds that he was not referring only to the seizure of

4 Trotsky, Leon: "Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, op. cit., p. 141.

5 Trotsky, Leon: "Lessons of October", in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., p. 252.

power: “I am told that the party is needed not only to seize power but to maintain it, to build socialism, to manoeuvre in international affairs. Am I really unaware of that?”⁶

“I doubly emphasized in my preface [to *Lessons of October*] the fact that the bourgeoisie in seizing power enjoys a whole series of advantages as a class, while the proletariat can only make up for the lack of these advantages by having a revolutionary party.”⁷

Similarly, “...the most favourable revolutionary conditions may not produce victory for the proletariat if it is not led by a genuinely revolutionary party capable of securing victory”.⁸ “... the proletariat cannot take advantage of even the most favourable revolutionary situation *if in the preceding, preparatory period the vanguard of the proletariat has not taken shape in a genuinely revolutionary, i.e., Bolshevik, party*. This is the central lesson of October. All others are subordinate to it”.⁹ Further on, after stressing again and again the fundamental role of the Communist Party, he says “This is the central idea of Leninism”.¹⁰

5. Trotsky continues defending his positions

With the left Opposition in existence, and the reactionary Stalinist offensive well under way, Trotsky continued defending the same position. In the 1928 theses of *The Permanent Revolution* he insisted, already as a matter of principle and as a fundamental thesis: “4. No matter what the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution”.¹¹

Soviets are not even mentioned, far less the proliferation of parties! The thesis is clear cut: the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the Communist Party, and “only” to the extent that this continues to be the case, can the revolutionary worker-peasant alliance be guaranteed. There can be no exceptions, because this must be so whatever the characteristics of particular revolutions in particular countries.

In the same year, after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, he stated: “...in a country with an overwhelming peasant majority and surrounded by capitalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot allow freedom of parties. In itself, this postulate is absolutely correct”.¹²

He then affirms that this demands a “correct (inner party) regime” and policy. And even though he clearly rejects the Stalinist abuse of the one-party system, he continues to rule out freedom for all parties. Trotsky’s writings on this and other theses were circulated by hand in manuscript form due to Stalinist censorship. This was done at the risk of “punish[ment] with deportation to the forgotten corners of Siberia and even, most recently, with strict solitary confinement in the prison of Tobolsk”,¹³ as he tells us in the Foreword to the 1929 French edition of *The Third International after Lenin*.

In September 1929, five months after his exile, in his debate with the famous German ultra-leftist Urbahns, he still stood by the same arguments. Urbahns held that “it (was) necessary for the Russian working class to reconquer ‘all liberties’” in its struggle against the Stalinist regime. Trotsky criticized Urbahns for naming only one of these liberties, that of “organization”, adding “But in that case, it is already Urbahns himself who ‘does not go far enough’. To put forward the freedom to organize as an isolated demand is a caricature of politics. Freedom to organize is inconceivable without freedom

6 Trotsky, Leon: “Our Differences”, in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, op. cit., p. 272.

7 Ibid, p. 269.

8 Ibid, p. 269.

9 Ibid, p. 273.

10 Ibid, p. 274.

11 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1969, p. 277.

12 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 153.

13 Ibid, p. XXXI.

of assembly, freedom of the press, and all the other ‘freedoms’ to which the decision of the February conference (Reichausschusses) of the Leninbund refers vaguely and without commentary. And these freedoms are unthinkable outside the regime of democracy, that is, outside of capitalism. One must learn to think one’s thoughts out to the end”.¹⁴

Approximately a year later, the problem was debated again. The Indochinese Trotskyist comrades had presented a program which called for the struggle to achieve “...the ‘conquest of democratic freedoms by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat’”. This is exactly what the USec majority says today. Trotsky replied vehemently: “This is, to say the least, an imprecise formulation. The concept of democratic freedoms is understood by vulgar democrats to mean freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly, free elections, etc. The dictatorship of the proletariat, instead of these abstract freedoms, places in the hands of the proletariat the material means and instruments for its own emancipation (in particular the printing presses, meeting halls, etc.).”¹⁵ Take note of the dates of these publications: 1929 and 1930.

Trotsky derided the democratic formulation of the Souvarine program for the USSR as that of a charlatan, laughing about it and naming it as democratic Communism. If he were alive today, he would talk of democratic Trotskyism.

6. Trotsky’s supposed self-criticism

What remains of Comrade Mandel’s commentary? Is it true that Trotsky’s program for political revolution in the USSR is self-critical in its demand for “freedom for soviet parties”?

We claim that the reverse is true. We believe that this slogan runs counter to everything said by Mandel and the USec’s resolution. There is no such self-criticism here.

Above all, Mandel does not seem to realize that Trotsky raised this demand only when he considered that there was a need for a political revolution in the USSR. Never before. This is no coincidence; the demand was part of a new political line: the need for violent political revolution against the ruling bureaucracy. The new policy required new demands, one of them being “freedom for soviet parties”.

We do not know why Mandel isolates this from the new analysis and the new policy for revolution in the USSR as a degenerated workers’ state and tries to make it valid for all time, including the early period of the Russian Revolution. If this had been Trotsky’s intention, we must again ask why he never demanded legality for the Mensheviks, the return of all exiles, freedom of propaganda and organization for the Cadet Party, and the allocation of radio time to every party in relation to their numbers. Why did he never do this? Because he forgot? Memory is political, and this principle is truer than ever for a genius of Trotsky’s stature.

Nevertheless, Mandel insists on isolating this demand from its social and political context, and transfers it into the past. Not content with this, he asserts that Trotsky’s raising of the demand at this time, constitutes a self-criticism for not defending it between 1921 and 1923. We must return to the question: If this was a self-criticism for not legalizing the Mensheviks, what held him back from demanding freedom for the parties of the past, such as the Cadets or Mensheviks, in 1936 or in 1938, when he wrote into the *Transitional Program* the demand for “freedom for soviet parties”?

Moreover, why when he raised this demand in the Transitional Program he poses as a condition the expulsion from the soviets of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy? We can give four simple reasons. Firstly, because until he conceived the need for a political revolution, he was always in favour of the one-party system for the USSR. Secondly, because he was never, not even in 1938, in favour of freedom of the Mensheviks and cadets; otherwise he would have said so. Thirdly, because the slogan “freedom for soviet parties” means, as we have already indicated, freedom for revolutionary parties, for the new parties and tendencies that emerge in the revolutionary struggle against the bureaucracy and aristocracy; it does not mean freedom for counter-revolutionaries. Fourthly, this demand was raised in a completely different context, when the USSR had become a degenerated workers’ state and the Communist Party had become the party of the bureaucracy.

14 Trotsky, Leon: “Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, op. cit., pp. 290 & 292.

15 Trotsky, Leon: “On the Declaration by the Indochinese Oppositionists”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, op. cit., p. 31.

Between 1936 and 1938, Trotsky more than once explicitly defended his old position of banning parties in the USSR. In a polemic against the ultralefts who criticized him for this ban, he explained: “As far as the *prohibition* of the other Soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any ‘theory’ of Bolshevism but was a measure of defence of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies. For the Bolsheviks it was clear from the beginning that this measure, later completed by the prohibition of factions inside the governing party itself, signalled a tremendous danger. However, the root of the danger lay not in the doctrine or in the tactics but in the material weakness of the dictatorship, in the difficulties of its internal and international situation. If the revolution had triumphed, even if only in Germany, the need to prohibit the other Soviet parties would immediately have fallen away. It is absolutely indisputable that the domination of a single party served as the juridical point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian system. But the reason for this development lies neither in Bolshevism nor in the prohibition of other parties as a temporary war measure, but in the number of defeats of the proletariat in Europe and Asia.”¹⁶

This could not be clearer. The banning of other parties was a “measure of defence” taken because Russia was a “backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies”. The “root of the danger lay not in the tactic”, the totalitarian Stalinist system did not originate “in the prohibition of other parties”.

7. Trotsky's theoretical position

Trotsky made his most exhaustive theoretical analysis of this theme precisely in 1937, the year of his self-criticism according to Mandel.

Reaffirming the fundamental role of revolutionary parties in the revolutionary process, the seizure of power, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, he says: “The proletariat can take power only through its vanguard. In itself the necessity for state power arises from an insufficient cultural level of the masses and their heterogeneity. In the revolutionary vanguard, organized in a party, is crystallized the aspiration of the masses to obtain their freedom. Without the class's confidence in the vanguard, without the class's support of the vanguard, there can be no talk of the conquest of power. In this sense, the proletarian revolution and dictatorship are the work of the whole class, but only under the leadership of the vanguard. The soviets are only the organized form of the tie between the vanguard and the class. A revolutionary content can be given to this form only by the party. This is proved by the positive experience of the October Revolution and by the negative experience of other countries (Germany, Austria, finally Spain). No one has either shown in practice or tried to explain articulately on paper how the proletariat can seize power without the political leadership of a party that knows what it wants. The political subordination of the soviets by this party to its leaders, has, in itself, abolished the soviet system no more than the domination of the Conservative majority has abolished the British parliamentary system.”¹⁷

In other words, the conquest of power by the working class can only be considered possible under the leadership of a revolutionary party. The reformist or revolutionary character of the proletarian dictatorship will depend on the character of the party that heads the process, not on the soviets. This is the lesson of the Russian victory as well as of the Austrian, German and Spanish processes.

Two months later, he gave the following interpretation of the revolutionary dictatorship: “The revolutionary dictatorship of proletarian party is for me not a thing that one can freely accept or reject: It is an objective necessity imposed upon us by the social realities — the class struggle, the heterogeneity of the revolutionary class, the necessity for a selected revolutionary vanguard in order to assure the victory. The dictatorship of a party belongs to the barbarian prehistory as does the state itself, but we cannot jump over this chapter, which can open (not at one stroke) genuine human history.”

“The revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution. This is the teaching of all modern history. Abstractly speaking, it would be very well if the party dictatorship could be replaced by the “dictatorship” of the whole toiling people without any party, but this presupposes such a high level of political development among the masses that it can

16 Trotsky, Leon: “Stalinism and Bolshevism”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1936-37)*, p. 426.

17 Ibid, p. 426.

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never be achieved under capitalist conditions. The reason for the revolution comes from the circumstance that capitalism does not permit the material and the moral development of the masses.”¹⁸

The revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party —not the multiparty soviet system, nor the soviets— is an objective necessity imposed by social reality: the existence of different sectors of workers and toilers, and the low political and cultural level of the majority of these sectors. This is why, the dictatorship of “the entire working population” is impossible.

18 Trotsky, Leon: “Dictatorship and Revolution”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1936-37)*, pp. 513 & 514.

CHAPTER VIII

What is the dictatorship of the proletariat?

1. A normative and antediluvian definition.

There can be absolutely no doubt about the definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the authors of the document: "...the working class by itself can exercise state power directly only within the framework of state institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralised workers councils (soviets), with the fundamental characteristics outlined by Lenin in *The State and Revolution* — the election of all functionaries, judges, commanders of the workers or workers and peasants militias, and all delegates representing the toilers in state institutions; rotation of elected officials; restriction of their income to that of skilled workers; the right to recall them at all times; simultaneous exercise of legislative and executive power by soviet-type institutions; drastic reduction of the number of permanent functionaries and greater and greater transfer of administrative functions to bodies run by the mass of the concerned toilers themselves".¹

And in conclusion; "thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing other than a workers' democracy".²

This categorical definition is taken from itself writings of Lenin, immediately before and after the triumph of the Russian Revolution in October 1917 and the first resolutions of the Third International. Lenin and Trotsky's first hopes were that the process of international socialist revolution would be balanced, harmonious and constant in its growth; that it would go through stages similar to those of the Russian Revolution, so that socialist revolution would triumph within ten years throughout all Europe. The emergence and development of the new Russian form of state institution — democratically elected soviets—was seen as the axis of the European model. The soviets would enable both the destruction and replacement of the bureaucratic state apparatus (superstructure) of the bourgeois and imperialist dictatorship, and the realization of socialist revolution within the economic structure. However, events did not take this course. Lenin and Trotsky (especially the latter) changed their definition. Nevertheless, the authors of these theses prefer to jump from *The State and Revolution* (written during August and September 1917) to the cybernetic telephones of the future, never stopping to study the reality of the last sixty years, nor considering the implications this has for the modification of the theory and definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

2. Are the USSR and China proletarian dictatorships?

The document speaks at various points of bureaucratized workers' states. If we adhere strictly to the clear and categorical definition that has just been quoted, we reach the outlandish conclusion that none of these countries are dictatorships of the proletariat. It doesn't take much to see that the existing forms of government in the USSR, China, Cuba, etc. do not comply with a single requirement made for the dictatorship of the proletariat by the USec majority. This unexpected conclusion takes on further implications when we recall that, according to the USec, neither Maoist China nor Vietnam broadened proletarian democracy after the revolution.

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 6.

2 Ibid, p. 5.

This “gap” (the ignoring of the only existing dictatorship of the proletariat) is enough to put all the theses outside of reality and Marxism. Any worker or young student who reads them is sure to ask this basic question: does the dictatorship of the proletariat exist in those countries or not? According to this definition, it does not. If the reader has the slightest knowledge of Trotsky’s traditional analysis, he/she will face an unsolvable dilemma presented by the document. It claims that today no dictatorship of the proletariat exists, whilst the traditional analysis of Trotsky and Trotskyism (for instance, numerous works of some of the authors of the theses), maintains that there are numerous dictatorships of the proletariat, although they are bureaucratized, degenerated and deformed.

Which is correct?

Imagine that the USec majority has written a document on contemporary trade unions using the same method. They could have started with a thesis entitled “What are the unions?” They would say: “They are those organizations of workers who defend their wages and standard of living, in which all the leaders and delegates are elected by the rank-and-file, are obliged to rotate posts, are paid the same as a skilled worker, and are subject to immediate recall by the workers who voted them in”. They would conclude: “Hence, the unions are nothing other than union democracy.” This definition has several advantages. For example, it outlines very clearly what the Trotskyists would like the unions to be, and it would surely please unionized workers. Nevertheless, its disadvantage is of far greater importance: it doesn’t apply to 99 percent of existing trade unions, and cannot provide anybody with a political perspective for fighting within them. All in all, it is good for nothing.

As Marxists and revolutionary politicians, we have no choice but to say that unions are the organizations for the economic defence of the workers, even though today the vast majority are currently controlled by corrupt and counter-revolutionary bureaucracies against which we fight for union democracy. There are similarities here with the definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Although we fight with all our will to revolutionize the existing bureaucratic dictatorships, we cannot substitute our wishes for reality. This means that we must start by defining the existing dictatorships rather than those we would like to see in existence; we can afford even less to repeat mechanically what was said by Lenin and Trotsky before 1917.

3. The only correct definition: state superstructure of a transitional economy or of the workers’ states

The nature of the first proletarian dictatorship, the Russian workers’ state, was substantially altered by the defeat of the European revolution, the isolation of the Russian Revolution, and the necessity of reconstructing the economy destroyed by civil and imperialist war. The views of Lenin and Trotsky that either the soviets would advance to conquer the European countries, or the imperialist counter-revolution would defeat them and destroy the first workers’ state, were not borne out. The European revolution did not succeed but the isolated workers’ states survived and began to establish a bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie. The technocratic bureaucracy established a state apparatus which was very similar to that of the exploiters, although it still rested upon the new economic basis constructed by the Russian Revolution.

The supposed revolutionary harmony between the structure and the superstructure; between the political revolution of the democratic and revolutionary soviets and the social revolution in the relations of production —fell to bits and became an acute and permanent contradiction within the first workers’ state. The political revolution of the soviets was discontinued; the revolution in Germany and the rest of Europe did not continue up until the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the disappearance of the state. Nor was the social revolution in the sphere of productive relations able to open the way to the socialist reorganization of the economy. The democratic and revolutionary soviets which controlled the state were replaced by a totalitarian, omnipotent, reformist, nationalist, and privileged bureaucracy. It directed an economy which was in transition not to communism, but to socialism as we shall see below. It is here that the analogy between the unions and the social imperialist workers’ parties is pertinent: both are workers’ organizations under the leadership of a parasitical and counter-revolutionary bureaucracy.

Trotsky had the opportunity to make explicit modifications to the definitions he and Lenin had held until shortly after the victory of October 1917. Faced with the need to find a theoretical explanation of

what had happened, he identified two fundamental and relatively autonomous spheres which had failed to combine harmoniously: the political superstructure, and the economic structure to which Trotsky attributed decisive importance.

This theoretical explanation was a return to the source of Marxist thought and theory, historical materialism. It defines the political superstructure primarily in terms of the economic structure of society, that is, the social class base of the state (“Politics are the concentration of economics”), even though the superstructure exists in a dialectical relationship to the structure and can possess great autonomy. Trotsky reversed, or rather, completed the inversion he and Lenin had begun to make during the latter’s lifetime, as regards the relationship between superstructure and structure in the definition of the proletarian dictatorship. On the basis of concrete experience, he abandoned the primitive superstructural definition of the state based upon revolutionary and democratic soviets. He took up the social, as opposed to the political, realm as the fundamental parameter with which to define the dictatorship as the state superstructure of transitional, non-capitalist relations of production. In other words, the superstructure of the workers’ states.

Trotsky said: “The terminological difficulty here arises from the fact that the term dictatorship is used sometimes in a restricted, political sense and, at other times, in a more profound, sociological sense. We speak of the “dictatorship of Mussolini” and, at the same time, declare that fascism is only the instrument of finance capital. Which is correct? Both are correct, but on different planes. It is incontestable that the entire executive power is concentrated in Mussolini’s hands. But it is no less true that the entire actual content of the state activity is dictated by the interests of finance capital. The *social* domination of a class (its dictatorship) may find extremely diverse *political* forms. This is attested by the entire history of the bourgeoisie, from the Middle Ages to the present day.

“The experience of the Soviet Union is already adequate for the extension of this very same sociological law—with all the necessary changes—to the dictatorship of the proletariat as well. In the interim between the conquest of power and the dissolution of the workers’ state within the socialist society, the forms and methods of proletarian rule may change sharply, depending upon the course of the class struggle, internally and, externally.”³

4. The two proletarian dictatorships: reformist-bureaucratic and revolutionary

Dialectics are but a relative negation of the laws of formal logic. It uses those laws, gives them movement, overcomes them and reveals their contradictions and limitations. This is what Trotsky did with one of the laws of formal logic, that of definition by common quality and specific difference. The theoretical operation involved in his modification of Lenin’s classic thesis was a brilliant dialectical application of this Aristotelian law. Trotsky sought the similarities between Lenin’s dictatorship and that of Stalin, i.e. their common qualities. He found that they had only one point in common: both were based upon the expropriation of the capitalists, upon a transitional economy. In everything else, they were radically different. In showing this, Trotsky arrived at the only Marxist definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat; state power in those countries where capitalism has been expropriated, that is, the workers’ states.

However, Trotsky also showed that this common ground, with regard to the relations of production, did not eliminate the specific differences between the two dictatorships. He continued by demonstrating how the great differences in their operation (ideological, programmatic, in national and international politics) were the superstructural expression of the differences between the distinct sectors of the proletariat which each represented.

Lenin’s dictatorship was the expression of the most exploited sectors of the workers, of their international revolutionary vanguard, and of the permanent mobilization of the masses. The dictatorship of Stalin was that of the privileged sectors, of the workers’ bureaucracy and aristocracy, of the passivity of the masses. From this emerges the definition of both states or countries: workers’ or revolutionary

3 Trotsky, Leon: “The Workers’ State, Thermidor and Bonapartism”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, p. 172.

workers' under Lenin; degenerated workers' under Stalin. Workers' state by virtue of its economic structure; degenerated because of its state superstructure.

Trotsky's definition of the USSR, with its qualitative differentiation between the states of Lenin and Stalin, can be transferred symmetrically to the dictatorship of the proletariat as the class content of the workers' state. Hence, under Lenin, there was a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat as in Marx's definition. Under Stalin, there was another type that was degenerate, reformist or, as we prefer to call it, bureaucratic.

If Trotsky had let this new definition rest there, it would not have been dialectical. He devoted his final years to revealing the effects of the Stalinist counter-revolutionary political superstructure upon the economic structure, as well as its increasingly acute contradictions, its probable dynamic and the dangers which it contained. Trotsky was the only one to explain that the Stalinist government systematically weakened the proletarian dictatorship, undermined its economy and the support of the labour movement.

Trotsky's positions and the method by which he arrived at them are the *raison d'être* of Trotskyism. Every attempt such as that of the US majority to define the dictatorship of the proletariat based on the superstructure rather than the structure, has —despite the support of quotes from Lenin and Trotsky in the early years of the revolution— extremely dangerous consequences for revolutionary politics. It will lead to capitulation to ultraleftism or opportunism, to imperialist public opinion, and to the Social Democratic Parties.

To deny the importance of specific superstructural differences, however; leads to capitulate to Stalinism. Thus, while the generic structural definition is essential for the unconditional defence of the bureaucratized workers' states, against all imperialist attacks or internal bourgeois counter-revolutionary movements, the specific apprehension of the bourgeois and bureaucratic nature of the superstructure is essential in order to develop the political revolution.

5. The new bureaucratized workers' states

Almost all of the victorious revolutions of this post-war period (Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, China, Korea, Vietnam) established workers states similar to that of the Stalinised USSR, not the Leninist one: reactionary one-party monopoly of power; decisive influence of the bureaucracy and the technocracy; totalitarianism; complete lack of freedom; relentless repression against oppositionists and against the most exploited sectors of the proletariat and the peasantry. Only our world movement has been able to give a satisfactory answer to this novel theoretical problem.

In *The Transitional Program* Trotsky said in regard to the slogan of “workers' and farmers' government”:

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

“The slogan, ‘workers' and farmers' government' is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that ‘democratic' sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path.

“Of all parties and 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. [...]

“Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers’ organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the ‘workers’ and farmers’ government’ in the above mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁴

This type of regime, which according to Trotsky was “highly improbable”, is the only one we have seen in the last 35 years. All victorious workers’ revolutions have come about through a “workers’ and farmers’ government”. To put it another way, petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic Stalinist parties like those of Mao, Tito, Enver Hoxha and Ho Chi-Minh, or democratic nationalist parties—such as that of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara—broke politically with the bourgeoisie and imperialism, took power, and were able to expropriate the exploiters.

Starting in 1949, Pablo, Hansen and Moreno made a profound study of Trotsky’s “highly improbable” hypothesis of the workers’ and farmers’ government that grows over into a proletarian dictatorship, combined it with the definition of the Stalinist USSR as a “degenerated workers’ state” and extended it to the new phenomenon, formulating the category of “deformed workers’ state”. To our movement belongs the imperishable merit of having adopted the new category without great internal commotions.

The country or state became a workers state; and its state superstructure, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Fourth International defined the new states or countries as workers’ deformed since their bureaucratic nature was not the result of the bureaucracy’s political expropriation of the proletariat, as occurred in the degeneration of the October Revolution. It was rather because the bureaucracy and the privileged workers had been dominant from the very moment of victory. The analogy was nevertheless clear: a workers’ and peasants’ government which gave origin, without interruption, to a bureaucratized workers’ state like that of the USSR.

6. The workers’ and farmers’ governments

Let us return once again to the workers’ and farmers’ government. This designation embraces several phenomena and concepts. It is a tactic and slogan that helps to educate the reformist workers, because it calls on their parties to break from the bourgeoisie and take power (and when they do not, we can unmask them in the eyes of the masses that follow them). It also defines a type of government: that of the petty-bourgeois parties that break from the bourgeoisie and take power. We call it a workers’ and farmers’ government and not a proletarian dictatorship because the bourgeoisie continues to dominate society both economically and socially—that is, the productive and property relations continue to be bourgeois. It characterizes a stage of the class struggle: a brief and highly contradictory stage which begins when the reformist parties break from the bourgeoisie and take power, and ends when the government expropriates the bourgeoisie and becomes a proletarian dictatorship. In this period we have an anti-capitalist, worker-farmer government on a capitalist economic base. It is exactly the opposite of a deformed workers’ state, which has a government apparatus similar to that of the bourgeoisie, but is based on a workers’ transitional economy and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

This short period between the political break with the bourgeoisie by the reformist parties, and its economic expropriation, also occurred in the Russian Revolution.

4 Trotsky, Leon: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth international”, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 93-94, 94 & 95.

“The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers’ control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers’ soviets ruled side by side with workers’ soviets and often elbowed them aside. Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier — agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat”.⁵

What name should be given to this period of the Russian Revolution? Should we call it a formal or governmental proletarian dictatorship to distinguish it from the “real dictatorship” which, according to Trotsky, began after the expropriation of the bourgeoisie? Here we encounter a serious theoretical problem. If the bourgeois counter-revolution had triumphed in this period, it would have had to act at the superstructural, political level, not at the level of production and property relations, since the factories were still owned by the bourgeoisie.

Seen from this point of view, the following fact leaps to the eye: all workers’ states, from Lenin’s to Mao’s, have passed through a similar stage. All victorious workers’ or socialist revolutions have passed through two different stages. In the first, political, stage, power was seized and a break was effected with the bourgeoisie and imperialism, but the economic and social basis of the bourgeois regime was maintained. In the second stage, the bourgeoisie was expropriated and its regime destroyed. Can we call this stage a workers’ and farmers’ government? We think we can; otherwise, we have to find another name since the stage exists and embraces a definite historical phenomenon.

It is equally true that in this stage through which both Lenin and Mao passed, we will find the same specific differences that we found when we defined the proletarian dictatorship: Lenin’s was revolutionary and internationalist; Mao’s, reformist and nationalist. How can we formulate a definition as precise as possible? Doing the same as we did with the definition of dictatorship of the proletariat, but replacing “dictatorship” with “government”: the former is a revolutionary workers’, or workers’ and farmers’, government; the latter is opportunist and bureaucratic.

Against this it can be claimed that the differences between the Leninist and the Maoist periods corresponded not only to the nature of the party that headed the workers’ and peasants’ government—Lenin’s party was revolutionary Marxist, while Mao’s was nationalist and reformist— but also to the institutional or organizational form adopted by each; in the former case, revolutionary democratic soviets; in the latter, bureaucratic control of the mass movement.

If this is indeed an historical certainty it is by no means the only theoretical possibility. The category “workers’ and farmers’ government” was coined as a way to approach the government of the petty-bourgeois parties — the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks — on the basis of the soviets. If the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had taken power and broken with the bourgeoisie as the Bolsheviks demanded them to, they would have done this in order to give “all power to the soviets”. Lenin and Trotsky would have called this soviet government a “workers’ and farmers’ government.”

The point is that, to define all these categories, we have to refer to the two extreme poles of social reality: the economic structure on the one hand; governments and political parties—the most superstructural of all institutions— on the other.

7. The defence of the existing proletarian dictatorships

It is strange to see how some of the principal leaders of our International have retreated from the position the inevitability of a world war to one which abandons the defence of the workers’ states. The USec majority’s theses advocate the defence of a workers’ state, of a dictatorship, against an internal counter-revolution without considering the possibility of an imperialist war. This is particularly odd since it was Comrade Mandel, as well as Pierre Frank, who, from the year 1951, developed the thesis that divided the world Trotskyist movement. This was the thesis of the inevitability (in six months for

5 Trotsky, Leon: “The Class Nature of the Soviet State”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, p. 106.

Comrade Mandel, in several years' time for Frank and Pablo) of a war between imperialism, and the USSR and the workers' states. At that time, they were echoing the view that it was inevitable that the cold war would become hot. We have always fought against the view that wars or guerrilla warfare are inevitable in the coming months or years.

Today, however, we are presented with a conception that is completely opposite to this. We are told about the self-defence of the states of the future, but there is not one mention of the possibility of war by the imperialist countries against the present degenerated workers' states, in the coming decades. There is no word at all in the document on the number one obligation of the world proletariat—to show consistent class patriotism towards these proletarian dictatorships; no attempt to educate the world proletariat about what it should defend. Never does the document identify the existing bureaucratized workers' states as the greatest achievement of the proletariat in this century, nor does it raise the banner for their intransigent defence. Quite the reverse, it voices all the bourgeois democratic prejudices of western workers against these proletarian dictatorships. The fact that the politics of the bureaucracies are repugnant to western workers is no justification whatsoever, for ignoring the need for class patriotism. Neither, for that matter, is the argument that those bourgeois-democratic prejudices of the European and American workers have positive aspects which are objectively opposed to bureaucratic totalitarianism. These prejudices allow the masses to be manipulated by the union bureaucracies, and the Social Democratic parties in favour of imperialism, and against the existing dictatorships of the proletariat.

It is a situation very similar to that in which the workers who refuse to join the union, support the bourgeois campaign that the unions are at the service of the bureaucrats and not the workers. It is through this argument, based on the enormous privileges of the union bureaucracy, that the workers who oppose the union become the agents of capitalism within the workers' movement. The traditional Marxist reply to those workers has long been: we are the fervent defenders of mass unionization; we strive for all workers to join the unions and denounce the bourgeois campaign to undermine the unions, which is helped by the corruption of their leaders. On the basis of this passionate defence, we are the most implacable critics of the bureaucracy.

We must practice consistent class patriotism with respect to the unions as with all other organizations or conquests of the working class. If the slogan of every bourgeois is, "right or wrong, I am unconditionally with my bourgeois country", that of every class conscious worker—not to mention a revolutionary Marxist—is, "right or wrong, I am with my union, my workers' state". This proletarian class patriotism—for the defence to the death of all existing international workers' organizations—is concretized in the intransigent defence of the existing proletarian dictatorships against the imperialist campaign of discredit and disparagement, and when the moment comes, against its military offensive.

If there is one aspect that is consistent in the USec resolution, it is the absence of class patriotism, the defence of the existing proletarian dictatorships against the insidious campaign of Social Democracy and world imperialism. Nowhere does it show that these proletarian dictatorships are a million times superior to the bourgeois democracy existing in the imperialist countries. The entire resolution is intended to show that this is not the case, that there is less democracy in the deformed workers' states than in the capitalist countries. If in Mao's China there is the same degree of "democratic freedoms" as in Chiang Kai-shek's, then there is much less workers' democracy there than in Venezuela or the USA. Although it doesn't say so explicitly, the USec document prepares the Western workers for the defence of imperialist democracy against the totalitarianism of the bureaucratized workers' states.

This shouldn't be so. One of the most important tasks of Trotskyism is precisely that of educating the world working class to recognize that the existing proletarian dictatorships are much more democratic for the workers than any imperialist democracy could be. Another one is preparing it for the inevitable counter-revolutionary wars of the capitalist and imperialist countries against the workers' states, and for the defence of the latter.

8. What ought to be our position over possible wars between workers' states?

These theses are so stratospheric, so distanced from the inevitable military struggles of the future, that they don't even deal with one of the most outstanding events of the last decades, concerning the

existing proletarian dictatorships: the invasion of one proletarian dictatorship by another, those of Hungary and Czechoslovakia by the USSR. This is a new problem which, to judge by the silence of the resolution, will never happen again.

It is our belief that, sadly, we have embarked upon a period in which it is very possible that wars between proletarian dictatorships —workers’ states— will break out, and be repeated over the next decades. This is a clear perspective.

These possible wars between workers’ states, or the occupation of one by another, add a new dimension to the emergence of the next revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Up to now, we have witnessed two invasions of workers’ states by the USSR. Both were produced by the Russian bureaucratic caste’s fear that these states might become revolutionary as a result of the beginning of a political revolution and the appearance of councils or soviets in embryonic form. It is permissible to think that these workers’ bureaucracies will fall into a state of chronic desperation as soon as revolutionary proletarian dictatorships emerge, heralding their destruction as a privileged caste.

On the other hand, we cannot set aside wars brought about by nationalist economic interests such as that between Vietnam and Cambodia. Without embarking upon a discussion as to whether or not these are proletarian dictatorships, we must recognize the new possibility of wars between workers’ states in which neither side is sustained by a revolutionary dictatorship. The campaign undertaken by China a few years ago against “Russian Social-imperialism” was an ideological preparation for a possible war between these two bureaucratized workers’ superstates.

The possibility of wars between two bureaucratized workers’ states, or between a bureaucratized and a revolutionary workers’ state, poses a serious theoretical problem which we must start to discuss if we are to find a Marxist course of action for these events. We don’t pretend to exhaust the subject here, but this problem has far greater importance than the influence of the cybernetic telephones in the future proletarian dictatorship.

One variation of this possibility is the inevitable armed uprising of the national minorities oppressed by these bureaucratic dictatorships, an uprising which we will support unconditionally.

If war breaks out between one of the two gigantic workers’ states and a small one, we believe that the small proletarian nation will be struggling for its self-determination and that the war will be provoked by the hegemonic nationalist ambitions of the greater nation. In this case, we must fight against the great-Russian or Chinese chauvinism and for the right of national self-determination of the small” workers’ state.

On the other hand, let us suppose that a war breaks out between two bureaucratized states of relatively comparable strength —for example, Vietnam and Cambodia, assuming that they are workers’ states. Our general political position will be for fraternity between all workers’ states, for a peaceful and democratic resolution of the dispute. This position must be accompanied by a permanent campaign for the democratic federation of all existing workers’ republics. This is a decisive matter which, henceforth, must be the most important demand of our International. It is this campaign, and not the cybernetic telephones, that lays down the most important programmatic necessity of the moment for the world proletariat and the workers’ states. It will lead to the overcoming of the present backwardness in the development of the productive forces in the workers’ states, and strike a most decisive blow at imperialism. It will also help to prevent the imperialist manoeuvres which try to take advantage of the differences between the workers’ states, and lead to solid unity in the face of the enemy. It will equally help to avoid the economic exploitation of the less developed workers’ states by the most developed ones through commercial exchange. The slogan of “Federation of the existing workers’ states” is far more important now than when Trotsky raised the demand of “Federation of European Socialist Republics”. Both are propagandistic, but also essential. It also points to political revolution because the present bureaucratic governments will never accept a demand that hits at the heart of their privileges: the existing workers’ states with their present borders.

This is, however, an essentially propagandist line, and we cannot keep to it in the concrete event of war or military conflict. We must first study carefully to see if one state has hegemonic ambitions over another, and then adopt a political defence of the workers’ state under attack as well as a political attack against the state that was the aggressor. In the case of war between a bureaucratized workers’ state and a

revolutionary workers' state, Trotskyists support the latter unconditionally regardless of whether or not it the aggressor.

CHAPTER IX

Building socialism in one country or international socialist revolution?

1. Consistent Stalinism

The essence of the USec document is simple: before the conquest of power the basic task is to make the revolution; however, once the proletariat controls the government, the essential task becomes the building of socialism. The revolution is over. Two further theses arise from this: first, after the seizure of power the revolutionary class struggle will diminish; second, as a result of this, “the dictatorship of the proletariat begins to wither away almost from its inception”.

There are dozens of quotations which support this position. For example: the resolution states that any restriction of democracy “can only hinder the emergence of a consensus around the most effective and correct solutions of these burning problems from the point of view of building socialism...”¹ The “process of building a classless society...”² These phrases are used on exactly 15 occasions, and in countless others the subject is referred to in other words.

In contrast to the plethora of assertions on this theme, there is a resounding silence on many others: there is no mention of the fact that a true socialist revolution can only take place after the seizure of power. Evidently, the USec believe that with the dictatorship of the proletariat the social revolution finishes to enter in their stage of gradual disappearance. It is also no coincidence that the resolution never mentions imperialist counter-revolution. From reading the document, clearly the perspective is that once the proletariat has taken power in a country, each national bourgeoisie will be isolated, in retreat, disarmed, expropriated and in definitive decline. No new bourgeois tendencies linked to imperialist counter-revolution will emerge. The bourgeoisie will live in “nostalgic remembrance of the bourgeois past”.

The USec falsifies Stalinism with a critique of some originality which is worth looking at: “e) a further underlying assumption is that of an intensification of the class struggle in the period of building socialism...”³ What are you doing, comrades? Confusing everything and even attributing a revolutionary position to Stalinism? Trotsky always criticized Stalinism precisely because it held that the revolution came to an end, and the class struggle diminished with the seizure of power. He stated that Stalinism had “a far more concrete system of ideas, namely: the revolution is wholly completed; social contradictions will steadily soften; the kulak will gradually grow into socialism; the development as a whole, regardless of events in the external world, will preserve a peaceful and planned character.”⁴ Trotsky’s critique could well be applied to the USec.

In fact, the present USec position is that of the Stalinists, although they use it as a premise to arrive at different conclusions. They both say that the class struggle will disappear immediately, but the Stalinists believe that the state must be strongly reinforced in order to combat the puny remains of bourgeois ideology. However, the USec arrive at a rather more logical conclusion from this false premise: if there are fewer contradictions, there can be ever more freedom, and so “the dictatorship of the proletariat begins to wither away almost from its inception”.

1 USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p. 14.

2 Ibid, p. 14.

3 Ibid, p. 19.

4 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., op. cit., p. 296.

2. The masters of Marxism and the transition to communism

It is well known that Marxist's, from Marx onwards, have considered that there would be one stage of transition from capitalism to communism, after a socialist revolution in which the proletariat has taken power. This stage is characterized by the gradual disappearance of the state, and has been defined as "socialism" by some authors.

They recognized, therefore, two historical stages after capitalism: the transitional stage, or the building of socialism, and communism. These were outlined very briefly and hypothetically, and remained unchanged from the birth of Marxism until the first years of the Russian Revolution.

According to Marx, communism meant a society which — from the socio-economic point of view — would take from "everyone according to their capacity", and give to "each according to their needs". Politically it would be characterized by the disappearance of the state. The economic formula established that in communist society none would be forced to give more than they wanted, that individuals could freely develop their potential, and receive everything they needed from society. The disappearance of the state would be the result of the disappearance of classes.

However, between capitalism and the future "classless" society, there would be a transitional society "emerging" out of capitalist society itself. It would therefore, in Marx's famous phrase, bear "signs or birth marks of its parentage". As a result, each person would receive from society "a voucher stating that he had contributed so much work (after deduction for the common fund) and with this voucher or ticket he would buy from the public stores the amount of goods which corresponded to the work he had done". In short, in the socialist stage, to each according to his work, minus a deduction for the common fund. Clearly, this is a continuation of bourgeois distribution of production, since it is done on the basis of work performed, rather than the needs of the worker. However, there is no exploitation or oppression in this of any kind, since the deduction for the "common fund" is for the increase of social production and for what we can call social wages. Politically, this stage could be characterized by the existence of both the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, this would be a new type of state; condemned to destruction, since the building of socialism would progressively suppress social classes, and consequently, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a class dictatorship. In this schema, socialist revolution would end with the seizure of power. This is the present USec's position: first the revolution and the seizure of power; immediately afterwards the building of socialism. Clearly they are more Marxist than Marx himself.

However, Marx and Engels started from the premise that socialist revolution would succeed in the most advanced capitalist countries, with the most developed productive forces and where the working class would comprise the majority of the population (England, France, Germany). The class enemy was the national bourgeoisie. Never did Marx believe that socialist revolution would emerge in backward agricultural countries. Therefore, according to our teachers, the transitional stage would be much more advanced than the capitalist, because it would combine, from the beginning, the highest capitalist levels of development of the productive forces with a new and superior system of ownership and production. As a result, the task for the ruling proletariat would be the "building of socialism", which would progressively incorporate all inhabitants into socialist production, without major obstacles.

Lenin and Trotsky before 1917, and all the orthodox Marxists at the start of the October Revolution defended Marx's classic schema with two modifications. The first was that the main enemy was no longer the national bourgeoisie but imperialism, the highest expression of capitalism. The other (a brilliant modification!) was the possibility that the European and world revolution would explode at the weakest link in the imperialist chain, in a backward country like Russia. Nevertheless, for Lenin and Trotsky, Marx's conception was still valid.

They held this position because they believed that the extension of socialist revolution into the other European countries, particularly the most advanced, was imminent. Within a few years, there would be revolution in Germany, France, and all of Europe. The working class would seize power, socialism would be built in Europe and all over the world, and workers' dictatorships would begin to weaken. The emergence of the revolution in Russia was only a conjunctural, tactical problem, because it would be immediately followed by the most developed industrial countries.

In the period immediately before and after the October Revolution, Lenin believed that "the collapse of European imperialism" could occur "anytime, even today or tomorrow". "The proletarian

state will begin to destroy itself immediately after its victory”. The suppression of exploiters could be carried out with “a very simple machine, almost without any machine or special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed masses”. “The destruction of the old bureaucratic machine with a single blow, and the immediate construction of another”, was not at that time a “utopia”. It would only be necessary to “overthrow the capitalists”, in order to “organize the national economy like the postal service” and clear the way for the immediate construction of socialism. In conclusion, the state, classes and national boundaries would start to disappear almost from the beginning, and there would be an unfettered extension of freedom for all citizens and socialist producers —for almost every inhabitant. In sum, for Lenin, the construction of socialism and the defeat of world imperialism would happen simultaneously, in the same historical period of two or three decades. He believed that within 10, or at most 20 years, we would be building socialism in the transition towards communism.

It should be emphasized here that Lenin and Trotsky had a program for the extension of the revolution into Germany, the advanced European countries, and the whole world. Their actions had made it feasible to think in terms of world revolution, the building of socialism, and the phasing out of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their mistake was one of calculation rather than theory: the belief that world revolution would triumph shortly.

3. But events followed a different course

The October Revolution was of momentous significance for humanity, but it did not herald the victory of international European socialist revolution as Marxists had predicted. The Russian proletariat was isolated, and socialist revolution continued to triumph in backward countries after the World War II. Twenty years after October, Trotsky stated: “...the USSR does not correspond to the norms of a workers’ state as set forth in our program (...).⁵ Our program has counted upon a progressive development of the workers’ state and by that token upon its gradual withering away. But history... does not always act ‘according to a program’...” Furthermore, “That period, which to Lenin and his colleagues looked like a short ‘breathing spell’, has stretched out to a whole historical epoch”.⁶

Hence, instead of a federation of highly industrialized workers’ states which have defeated imperialism, we are confronted with isolated workers’ states facing a far more powerful enemy than national capitalism: imperialism. The result is that although these countries are in advance of capitalism in their relations of ownership and production (the bourgeoisie have been expropriated), they are far behind imperialism in their development of the productive forces. This acute contradiction, this combination unforeseen by the Marxists, has had far more serious consequences than the mere fact of carrying “signs or birthmarks”.

The underdevelopment of the forces of production combined with the survival of national boundaries, forced the dictatorship of the proletariat to fortify itself and employ bourgeois institutions and personnel as a defence against imperialism and its national agents. Instead of “withering away almost from its inception”, it had to be reinforced at all costs.

For this reason, the contemporary proletarian dictatorships are entrenched behind their frontiers with armies, police forces and state bureaucracies which are reminiscent of the worst capitalist regimes. Government control — by the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy — has led the dictatorships to degenerate into totalitarian regimes, with a reinforcement of bureaucratic control, oppression of the workers and peasant rank and file, instead of a strengthening of the state by the mobilization and revolutionary organization of the workers. At the same time, however, the existence of the phenomenon of the “capitalist state without capitalism” in all of these countries clearly indicates that there must be a strong objective reason for the need to strengthen the dictatorships of these isolated workers’ states. However, this need can be answered in two different ways: one is bureaucratic and the other, revolutionary. The first way is the constant strengthening of the police, and the privileged sectors of the working class. The second, is the mobilization of the most exploited and concentrated sectors of the proletariat. This second way leads to the development of world revolution, and the final confrontation with, and defeat of

5 Trotsky, Leon: “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, op. cit., p. 64.

6 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 59.

imperialism: while the first reinforces the isolation of the workers' states inside their own boundaries, and co-existence with imperialism. Co-existence with imperialism is an historic impossibility because it leads to an inevitable confrontation. To put it another way: in the final analysis, the momentary strengthening weakens the workers' state and the proletarian dictatorship.

4. Socialism in one country or permanent revolution?

As we have seen, the USec thesis and that of Stalinism have certain theoretical premises in common: the building of socialism in one country, the weakening of revolution and the class struggle, and the halt of socialist revolution once the proletariat has taken power. Trotsky formulated the theory of Permanent Revolution to oppose this conception. His first thesis, prior to the Russian Revolution, revolved around the combination of democratic and socialist tasks, and the dictatorship of the proletariat as the spearhead of the democratic revolution in the backward countries. The second thesis was written in response to the Stalinist theory of building socialism in one country, and it formulates a program for all countries, backward or not, for after the seizure of power. Its theme is the dynamic of the transformation of a victorious national socialist revolution into international revolution. With this new theory, Trotsky definitively modified the conceptions held by Marxists until then, as regards the relationship between socialist revolution., conquest of power, socialist construction, and weakening of the dictatorship. The new theory established a new, nonlinear sequence: national socialist revolution and the conquest of power leading to international socialist revolution with the principal objective of defeating imperialism, rather than building socialism; and this necessitates the strengthening, of the proletarian dictatorship.

Marxism teaches that revolutionary periods begin when the development of technology, that is, of the productive forces, collide with the relations of production and ownership. Under imperialism, according to Trotsky, the productive forces also collide with the existence of national states. This is obvious, since they depend on the entire planet for their development. National bourgeois states are, therefore, as great an obstacle as private bourgeois ownership. They constitute a hindrance to the development of the productive forces on the same global, historical scale as for their time did feudal property. World socialist revolution is an objective need to adapt all Earth to the development of productive forces, because it is the only one that will destroy not only private property, but also national boundaries. Under monopoly imperialism this development is at the service of the conservation of the national states (the highest expression of bourgeois ownership), which is another way of saying that it is at the service of backwardness. For this reason, it is the decisive counter-revolutionary factor.

The backward capitalist countries were directly exploited by imperialism, through capitalist investment. However, they remained backward after the revolution had succeeded: imperialist productive forces continued to be superior, enabling them to continue an indirect exploitation through their control of the world market and economy. This is why Trotsky claimed that the proletariat of the USSR is a ruling class in the USSR but it is also exploited by imperialism. Leaving aside the obvious differences, the Russian Revolution and those that followed it are in a position similar to that in which Provence and Marseilles would have found themselves, supposing the French Revolution had triumphed there while the rest of France, particularly Paris and Lyon, with their superior development of the productive forces remained feudal. If this had occurred, the monarchy should have been in no danger of defeat by an isolated Provence. Capitalism always needs, at least, to control the national market for the accelerated development of the productive forces.

These are the circumstances of the present workers' states, but on a world scale. They can only be seen as tactical advances of world revolution. Only the existence of serious problems and specific circumstances has made it impossible for imperialism to destroy them. The new bureaucratic workers governments are isolated; their main concern being the defence of their national boundaries, and the development of their backward economies. However, sooner or later, the comparative paucity of their productive forces — in relation to world capitalism — will force them to trade with imperialism, which means that they will be exploited indirectly via trade transactions and loans.

Reality has shown that world revolution has had an “abnormal” development to date, based on great backwardness rather than on advanced capitalist development. At the same time, it has demonstrated on

a world scale that the development of the productive forces cannot be contained by national boundaries. This contradiction is manifest in the fact that revolutions have broken out in the weakest sectors of capitalism. As long as imperialism survives, any underdeveloped country which makes the revolution within its national boundaries, will continue to be exploited in the same way, because "...the fundamental criterion is the level of the productive forces."⁷

Both Lenin and Trotsky concluded from this analysis that imperialism was not defeated by the conquest of power and that, therefore, the class struggle and the revolution must be accelerated on a scale which could lead to its definitive defeat. "Having overthrown the bourgeoisie and conquered political power, the proletariat" must crush "the increasingly stubborn resistance of the exploiters". "The class of exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, has not disappeared and cannot disappear all at once under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The exploiters have been smashed, but not destroyed. They still have an international base in the form of international capital, of which they are a branch. (...) Because they have been defeated, the energy of their resistance has increased a hundred and a thousand fold, The 'art' of state, military and economic administration gives them a superiority, and a very great superiority, so that their importance is incomparably greater than their numerical proportion of the population. The class struggle waged by the overthrown exploiters against the victorious vanguard of the exploited, i.e., the proletariat, has become incomparably more bitter. And it cannot be otherwise in the case of a revolution, unless this concept is replaced (as it is by all the heroes of the Second International) by reformist illusions".⁸

Trotsky underlines this in *The Permanent Revolution*: "The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs, even though, as the experience of the Soviet Union shows, one of long duration. In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with the successes achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, a national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain".⁹

This is magnificently summarized in the ninth thesis of *The Permanent Revolution*: "The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such, regardless of whether it is a backward country that is involved, which only yesterday accomplished its democratic revolution, or an old capitalist country which already has behind it a long epoch of democracy and parliamentarism".¹⁰

5. The dictatorship of the proletariat: Does it weaken or gain strength?

The undeniable need to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat during a certain period, leaves one of the basic theoretical principles of Marxism invalid. When the USec seems to be at its most orthodox, when for example, it ignores modifications wrought by historical experience, it is furthest from Marxism.

In contrast, Lenin, who had defended the classic schema for years, was the first to correct it as the USSR became isolated. Only a year after the Bolsheviks had taken power he said: "we cannot all at once make the leap to socialism... I have no illusions about the fact that we have only begun the transitional period to socialism; that we have not yet arrived at socialism". "The anti-authoritarians ask for the authoritarian political state to be destroyed straight away... Have these people ever seen a revolution? A

7 Ibid, p. 60.

8 Lenin, Vladimir Ilych: "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the proletariat", in *Collected Works*, op. cit., vol. 30, p. 116.

9 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 133.

10 Ibid, pp 278-279.

revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritarian thing one can imagine”.¹¹ Trotsky described clearly and was categorical on this point: “But the transition period from capitalism to socialism demands an extreme strengthening of the functions of the state (dictatorship of the proletariat). This historic dialectic of the state has been sufficiently illuminated by the theory of Marxism (...) the idea of the inevitable strengthening of state power in the transitional epoch between capitalism and socialism [is an] idea which, following Marx, Lenin advanced for the explanation of the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship...”¹² Clearly Trotsky’s position on this crucial question is directly opposed to that of the USec.

Under the rule of Lenin and Trotsky, this implied the restriction of freedom, the monopoly of power by the Communist Party, the establishment of the Red Army, the Cheka, etc. Later, when the revolution continued to succeed in backward countries under opportunist bureaucratic leaderships, this strengthening of the dictatorship led it to degenerate into a totalitarian regime, which claimed Trotskyism as the first victim of its notorious crimes. However, although a bureaucratic leadership has aggravated and degenerated this process, it does not follow that a revolutionary leadership could have avoided it altogether. This will continue to be true for future proletarian states until imperialism is defeated. There exists a law which can be suspended, but not annulled: during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of mortal confrontation with imperialism, the strengthening of the workers’ dictatorship and the proletarian state within its national boundaries is inevitable. Stalin and Trotsky coincided on this point, but only Trotsky analysed the existing relationships between imperialism and world capitalism with the national proletarian dictatorships to give a scientific explanation of this necessity. This is not the only difference. There is no common ground in their actual programs and perspectives for strengthening the dictatorship.

The same occurs when a guild in a capitalist country wins a great victory through an intensive mobilization. The victory allows the guild to build and strengthen a powerful union. Thus it faces a choice between three alternative conflicting courses of action. The first is the line of the USec which calls for the immediate weakening of the union (the dictatorship of the proletariat), regardless of whether the other workers in the country are being terribly exploited by the capitalists, and without taking into account the inevitable attacks of the management on the gains won by this guild and union. The second is that of the bureaucracy which puts all its effort into strengthening its own union and nothing else. Its endeavours will be directed towards better clinics, buildings and holiday hotels. This path leads to an authoritarian regime inside the union, since by leaving the battlefield, the union becomes bureaucratized. This is the Stalinist solution, which, if taken to the level of a country, results in the bureaucratic strengthening of the workers’ dictatorship by the imposition of a totalitarian police state which forces workers to “build socialism in one country”.

As we have repeatedly shown, this is detrimental to the interests of the workers and, in the long run, weakens the proletarian dictatorship, deepening its internal and external contradictions.

Finally, we have the Trotskyist line, which without leaving aside those improvements which the bureaucracy wants for the union, concentrates on developing the class struggle all over the country, attempting to mobilize all unions and all workers. This is the only way to strengthen the union without bureaucratizing the leadership and the union itself. This is correlated to Trotsky’s program for strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat: developing and intensifying revolutionary mobilization through international socialist revolution. For Trotsky, this strengthening will result from the constant extension of the mobilization of workers in the home country and all over the world, and the growth of multitudinous revolutionary organizations of the mass movement which challenge imperialism and the bourgeoisie.

However, this is not just a theoretical question, but also the correct solution imposed on us by reality. What happens if world revolution does not advance, or if it advances objectively through victories which become stunted and entrenched behind their national boundaries attempting to “build socialism in one country”? This is the lesson of the last 60 years: imperialism continues to dominate on a world scale, continues to exploit indirectly the proletariat in these workers states, and the consolidation of the workers’ dictatorship confers a bureaucratic, totalitarian character upon it, with its attempt to constrain

11 Lenin, Vladimir Ilych, quoted by Carr, Edward Hallett, in *The Bolshevik Revolution (1917-1923)*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 131.

12 Trotsky, Leon: “The Degeneration of Theory and the Theory of Degeneration” in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-33)*, pp. 215 & 220.

terrible contradictions. These contradictions become increasingly acute, undermining and weakening the workers' dictatorship dominated by the bureaucracy.

Another possibility would be for the victory of this guild not to be followed by further victories, or alternatively for every victory to be dedicated to the strengthening of its union without a thought for the national class struggle. Despite the gains made by each union, the bourgeoisie would continue to rule over the country as a whole, the unions would still be exploited — although to a slightly lesser extent than the rest — their bureaucracies becoming stronger and stronger, defending their posts, and permanently negotiating with management. In the same way that the main enemy of the workers — in these unions as well as in the rest of the country — is the bourgeoisie as a whole, rather than their individual management, so for the workers of the workers' states and the whole world, the enemy is no longer their national bourgeoisie but imperialism.

6. Trotsky's analysis of the USSR

Trotsky completed his analysis of the USSR taking the existence of imperialism and the development of the productive forces as his point of reference.

“The proletariat of the USSR is the ruling class in a backward country where there is still a lack of the most vital necessities of life. The proletariat of the USSR rules in a land consisting of only one-twelfth part of humanity; imperialism rules over the remaining eleven-twelfths. The rule of the proletariat, already maimed by the backwardness and poverty of the country, is doubly and triply deformed under the pressure of world imperialism. The organ of the rule of the proletariat — the state — becomes an organ for pressure from imperialism (diplomacy, army, foreign trade, ideas, and customs).¹³

Furthermore: “...a rise in the productive forces, that is, real socialist development, will begin in our country only after the victory of the proletariat in the advanced countries of Europe...” Trotsky made use of Bukharin's assertion to synthesize an important aspect of Marxist theory, enriched by the lessons of the Russian Revolution. He added that “the very same statement was used [by the Stalinists] as a basis of all acts of indictment against ‘Trotskyism’, including the indictment at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI.”¹⁴

This economic inferiority is the fundamental cause for the emergence of the bureaucracy which characterizes all the existing workers states. “In its first period, the Soviet regime was undoubtedly far more equalitarian and less bureaucratic than now. But that was an equality of general poverty”. “The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there are enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there are little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman, to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of Soviet bureaucracy. It ‘knows’ who is to get something and who has to wait.”¹⁵

On first sight, it might seem that the improvement of the material and cultural conditions inside its borders should lead to the gradual disappearance of this bureaucracy. Quite the contrary: “...the growth of the productive forces has been so far accompanied by an extreme development of all forms of inequality, privilege and advantage...” The growth of the productive forces “...is still far from guaranteeing all necessities to everybody”, and creates the best conditions for “giv[ing] significant privileges to a minority, and convert[ing] inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority.”¹⁶

Bureaucracy arises “as the bourgeois organ of a workers' state”, a product of the needs of our society, besieged by imperialism. However, when it “has far outgrown its socially necessary function, it becomes an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism”. “The poverty and cultural backwardness of the masses has again become incarnate in the malignant

13 Trotsky, Leon: “Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?”, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, op. cit. pp. 69-70.

14 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 38.

15 Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 112.

16 *Ibid*, pp. 112 & 113.

figure of the ruler with a great club in his hand”. Within the narrow boundaries of the national state, the bureaucracy, “from being a servant of society, has again become its lord”.¹⁷

However, if Stalin with his program of socialism in one country, had not defeated the opposition led by Trotsky with his policy of developing the permanent revolution, the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat would have still been fully justified until the defeat of imperialism, and the extinction of national boundaries, allowed the development of the forces of production on a world scale. “The present Soviet society cannot get along without a state, nor even —within limits— without a bureaucracy. But the cause of this is by no means the pitiful remnants of the past, but the mighty forces and tendencies of the present. The justification for the existence of a Soviet state as an apparatus of compulsion lies in the fact that the present transitional structure is still full of social contradictions, which in the sphere of *consumption* —most close and sensitively felt by all— are extremely tense, and forever threaten to break over into the sphere of production. The triumph of socialism cannot be called either final or irrevocable”.¹⁸

7. The problem of imperialism

The comrades who wrote these theses completely ignore the realities of the last 60 years. They tell us that Marx and Engels were unable to “analyse the phenomenon of imperialism”, and that Lenin did not see “the delay of the proletarian revolution in the advanced imperialist countries”, and “the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers’ state”. What they do not tell us is what holds them back from making this analysis. Although they affirm that Marxism “is critical thought par excellence”, they continue to cling to the perspectives held by our masters at the turn of the century.

Hence, their document does nothing more than repeat professorially the predictions upheld by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and the other orthodox Marxists until 1917. However, they do so by omitting the fundamental conception underlying those forecasts.

There is a theoretical basis for his political error: the authors give no importance to the existence of imperialism. Herein lies the reason for the 15 specific references to “building socialism” against the two appearances of the word imperialism, the complete absence of references to imperialist counter-revolution; and the passing mention of the danger of military imperialist intervention is calculated to most effectively minimize its importance. This becomes far more serious if we look at why imperialism is mentioned each time. The first is to say that “the phenomenon of imperialism (...) was not analysed by Marx and Engels”. The second holds that Stalinism “systematically misused slanderous accusations of ‘collusion with imperialism’”.

We hold that the emergence of imperialism, with its exploitation of backward countries on a global scale, is responsible for all the “abnormalities” which were not foreseen by Marxism, by Lenin and Trotsky. It is precisely this new phenomenon which has caused — directly or indirectly— those “abnormalities” emphasized by the USec: “the delay of proletarian revolution in the advanced imperialist countries” and “the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers’ state” as well as many others which are just as significant but which the USec does not mention. These are: The degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals, and the bureaucratic character and isolation of the new workers’ states. However, the two most spectacular results have been the appearance of a labour bureaucracy and aristocracy on one hand, and the victory of workers’ revolutions in the backward countries, on the other.

By way of its exploitation of the backward countries, imperialism — the highest expression of capitalism — has aristocratized important sectors of the working class and maintained a strong middle class in the metropolis. In other words, workers and the working class across the world have been divided into two distinct, and often antagonistic sectors: one privileged; and the other, exploited more heavily. Capitalism, by virtue of its fabulous riches and its economic dominance under imperialism, retires from the historical scenario just as it entered: winning over a sector of its class enemy. Capitalism is repeating its success with the clergy and the feudal lords in its rise to power, with the working class itself. This split in the workers’ ranks is the social cause of all the other phenomena.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 113.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 111-112.

This split in the working class has its reflection in the backward countries where imperialist penetration has destroyed the archaic modes of production, and generated a development of capitalism which it simultaneously hinders and distorts. Over the last 30 to 35 years this has given rise to almost unbearably sharp objective contradictions for nearly all those workers who fought for, and won — admittedly under bureaucratic leaderships — a socialist revolution in various backward countries. Imperialism is forced to increasingly exploit workers in other parts of the world, in order to grant privileges to those of the metropolis. However, the revolution it held off at the front door is now squatting in its back yard.

Since these revolutions are only a part of the socialist revolution against imperialism on a world scale, it is also true that they are generated by imperialism itself, producing the destruction of archaic modes of production, accelerating the capitalist productive process in backward countries, while simultaneously holding back the accelerated and constant development of capitalism as a whole. Imperialism exports not only its capital and its goods to dependent countries, but also its capitalist crisis which becomes the chronic crises of backward countries.

This is what produced the great colonial revolutions of this post war which became socialist. However, the advantages of backward countries become disadvantages as soon as the proletarian dictatorships take control. The most acute contradiction lies in the nation state. The independence and unification of the nation state of a backward country is a great historical process, a democratic, anti-imperialist victory. It allows the country swiftly to catch up with the great capitalist countries which achieved the same objective one, two or three centuries ago. However, no sooner has the workers' revolution achieved this aim, then it becomes a hindrance, since even with the proletariat in power, the nation state is still a bourgeois institution. In the last century, it was progressive, it is progressive at a certain point of the struggle against imperialism; but in the last analysis it is retrogressive in relation to the need for world development of the productive forces. Thus, this bourgeois democratic gain becomes a straitjacket imposed on the proletariat of this country by the world capitalist system. The labour aristocracy is the great champion of this straitjacket because it tends to increase its privileges by controlling the nation state. Its other great champion is imperialism, which understands that even a backward workers' nation state allows imperialism to orchestrate, and control world politics and economy.

Let us take the example of the degeneration of the USSR where both phenomena are clearly combined. What happened to the Russian Revolution? The principal cause of its degeneration was the retrogression of world revolution which put the monopoly of power into the hands of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy. This has meant that the gap between the workers' rank and file and its aristocracy, within the USSR's national boundaries, has widened in relation to capitalist countries; because in Russia these privileged sectors service themselves via their control of the state. Hence, Trotsky's position of locating power only at the workers' rank and file of the Soviet Union, and demanding the expulsion of an important sector of the working class from the revolutionary soviets —the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy. The brutal and antagonistic distinction between these two sectors of the proletariat justifies a call for a violent, political revolution of the most miserable sector of the working class against the privileged sector of its own class. The USec does not seem to understand this aspect of political revolution. It is not a social revolution of one class against another —workers against the bourgeoisie— but of one sector of the working class against another.

The existence of imperialism has changed the whole dynamic of world revolution; no longer does the defeat of a national bourgeoisie or capitalist regime, however important it is, implies its defeat on a world scale. It continues to survive and dominate and the historical task of inflicting it its final defeat is still posed as the only way to uproot the principal source of world class exploitation.

8. Our analysis: The two stages of the dictatorship of the proletariat

Sixty years after the Russian Revolution, it has become clear that what was previously seen as a single stage in the dictatorship of the proletariat —building socialism, the disappearance of social classes and the dictatorship itself— has now become two distinct stages or historical tasks, The first stage, which we have been experiencing for 60 years, is political, the intransigent struggle, against imperialism which necessitates the strengthening of the workers' state and of class dictatorship, which can be either

bureaucratic or revolutionary. In the second stage, after the defeat of imperialism, the fundamental task will be economic and cultural, the building of socialism in which — as our masters predicted — the state will become extinct, the dictatorship of the proletariat will weaken and be replaced by the most complete and unimaginable flowering of freedoms.

The workers' states live with an acute contradiction in this first stage. Imperialism continues to dominate world politics and economics, just as it continues an indirect exploitation of the working class in these countries owing to the existence of national boundaries and its above mentioned superiority. As a result, the working class suffers a direct oppression, which is the price it pays for the defence of the workers' state and the appearance of a bureaucracy which reserves for itself the surplus product. If the regime is bureaucratic, this oppression can be coercive in the interests of maintaining and increasing the privileges and parasitical lives of functionaries. However, if the regime were democratic and revolutionary, there could also be a voluntary, democratic sacrifice of the surplus product by the proletariat to pay the costs of confronting imperialism, developing national and international socialist revolution and its functionaries. In this stage, the survival of bourgeois norms of distribution would be linked to an oppression based on functional, political reasons, and not on class exploitation.

According to Marx, the socialist stage is characterized by giving to each according to their "work", minus what goes into the "common fund". However, what is actually happening in this first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat is that each is given according to the "wage" considered appropriate to the level of oppression or sacrifice of the job. That is to say, that it is necessary to wrest from labour a surplus product that does not return to the working class and does not go to the "common fund"; and thereby constitutes oppression or a sacrifice. "By this token the rule of the proletariat assumes an abridged, curbed, distorted character. One can with full justification say that the proletariat, *ruling* in one backward and isolated country, still remains an oppressed class".¹⁹ This can only change with the final defeat of imperialism.

From the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, we have lived through a period of war against imperialism waged by the proletariat of the advanced countries, the colonial masses and the workers' states. The building of a transitional economy, important as it is, is subordinate to this struggle. This is, therefore, the transitional stage of socialism in transit to "the transition to communism". The nationalist, reformist, and bureaucratic politics of the workers' states, and the mass parties all over the world have allowed imperialism to turn its defeats into mere setbacks, and even counteract and maintain its global dominance.

On the international level, there exists a potential period of civil war and dual power between the workers' states and the world proletarian masses, and imperialism. This civil war and dual power is latent in every country, manifestly so during revolutionary periods, but has existed on a world scale since 1917. "A socialist revolution is not only possible but inevitable in every country. What I affirm is that it is impossible to construct a socialistic society in the environment of a capitalistic world".²⁰ "World imperialism cannot live side by side with a victorious advancing social revolution."²¹

The second historical stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat, after the defeat of imperialism, will be the beginning of the construction of socialist society, the beginning of the disappearance of the state, of transition to communism. "Socialism means progressive equality as well as the progressive abolition of the state". This will indeed have the features described by Marx and Lenin before the October Revolution. In this period, although each will receive according to their labour; although bourgeois norms of distribution will survive and there will be many remnants of capitalism, the oppression of humanity and its principal source, the exploitation of humanity by imperialism, will have ceased to exist. This will be a period of increasing wealth for society, and the development of the productive forces will at last begin from a level above that of capitalism. This superior development will avoid the existence of sharp contradictions and give it a reformist rather than revolutionary character; because the counterposing of different positions will no longer be violent.

The building of socialism or the transition to communism must be based on the permanent mobilization of the entire population. The disappearance of exploitation, classes, and even the state,

19 Trotsky, Leon: "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, op. cit., p. 71.

20 Trotsky, Leon: "On the Eve of World War Two", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit. p.22.

21 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 13.

will coincide with the emergence of socialist producers and consumers located in the same economic framework.

In summary, we can say that the two stages subsequent to capitalism (transitional and communist), which have been recognized since Marx, have now become three: 1. the transition from capitalism to socialism; 2. the socialist or of transition to communism stage; and 3. Communism.

9. Three programs for the stage of transition from capitalism to socialism

At the start of the revolution, Lenin believed that the repression of counter-revolutionaries would be in direct proportion to the liberation and democratic self-determination of the working population. His program started from this premise. This was a logical conclusion in line with Marx's teachings, since Lenin believed that it would be possible to start building socialism within a few years. However, due to the subsistence of imperialism and the isolation of the USSR, even under Lenin and Trotsky, these aspects had an unequal and contradictory development. Revolutionary, coercive dictatorial measures for the defence of the workers' dictatorship proved to be far more urgent, than the liberation and democratic self-determination of the workers and the population towards the building of socialism. A hiatus, an ever widening breach was produced between the immediate task of imposing and defending the dictatorship and extending world revolution against imperialism, and the ultimate aim of building socialism — the extension of direct democracy, democratic freedoms, and the extinction of the state.

From the very start of the revolution, the program for direct democracy and the immediate dissolution of the workers' state, became a long term objective, a task which was undertaken in combination with other more urgent demands of the dictatorship. As long as capitalism is dominant on a world scale, there exists the permanent danger of imperialist counter-revolution. The lesson of the Russian Revolution is clearly that the immediate tasks of any dictatorship of the proletariat — whether bureaucratic or revolutionary and democratic — cannot be other than the repression of its enemies as the only defence against imperialist counter-revolution, and the only means of imposing the dictatorship and developing world socialist revolution. Only the success of these immediate objectives and the historic defeat of capitalism can clear the way for the programmatic tasks of dissolving the state, and gaining complete democracy and freedom for all inhabitants. Then we can begin to build socialism.

Over the last 60 years there have emerged three different orientations and programs for this transitional state from capitalism to socialism.

Stalinism or national-communism generalized and gave historical characteristics to immediate necessities (the suppression of factions in the Communist Party, the monopoly of power, the one-party system and repression), elevating them to the status of absolute, general rules for the whole stage. In this way, it tries to justify the bureaucratic repression of the mass movement, and the oppression of the working class in the interests of a privileged caste inside the workers' state, which also exists under world imperialism.

This "program" of the workers' states is the bureaucratic justification for the refusal to grant increasing scientific, artistic and cultural freedoms of all kinds — of the press, public opinion —, and in the last case, political freedom in order to control, diminish and bring into decline the oppression suffered by the working class. This is a bureaucratic program for permanent peaceful coexistence with imperialism, protection of national boundaries and impeding the development of world revolution in order to avoid disturbing its own privileged position. In the end, this is a program for accepting the status quo of imperialist exploitation on a world scale, and bureaucratic privilege on a national scale, of pro-imperialist opportunism against international socialist revolution.

The USec majority, for their part, with their typical academic and formal bias, confuse this period of transition to socialism, of mortal combat against imperialism, with the stage of building socialism. What in this period cannot be anything other than an objective, a trend, a medium term rule, the USec transforms it into its program without regard to the concrete and immediate needs of applying repression, coercion and strengthening the dictatorship. This confusion generates a maximalist program for the construction of socialism, the imminent dissolution of the state, and the granting of the most absolute freedoms for the whole population, including counter-revolutionaries. And as it always happens with all

maximum, libertarian, super-democratic programs in times of mortal combat between class enemies: it serves the interests of the exploiters.

As true Trotskyists, we maintain that the only program which can challenge that of the reformist bureaucrats in this transitional stage from capitalism to socialism is... a transitional program, and not the maximalist program of the USec. In compliance with Trotsky's method, we hold that such a program must incorporate a combination of all possible socialist elements into the immediate task of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat. A revolutionary Trotskyist dictatorship would always incline towards granting more and more freedoms. Even in times of the greatest need for the use of force and coercive measures it would grant ample freedom to scientists, artists, and revolutionaries.

The Trotskyist program is realistic, and seeks to arrive as swiftly as possible to the beginning of the true building of socialism. This is why it has to raise a transitional program which combines, sometimes in a contradictory way, a multiplicity of tasks. As soon as the working class takes power it must combine and harmonize two conflicting tasks: continuing the revolutionary struggle against world imperialism, and starting to develop the elements of a new social and economic system superior to that of capitalism. In turn, these tasks demand a highly contradictory combination of institutions and tasks, both bourgeois and transitional. In a backward country, outright bourgeois democratic as well as socialist measures must be combined and implemented. In all countries, backward or not, for as long as national boundaries continue to exist and imperialism to dominate, bourgeois economic laws and political institutions must be combined with transitional laws and institutions.

For example in the economic field, this requires the combination of a bourgeois distribution of consumer goods with the payment of a wage (partly based on workers' oppression), nationalized industry and foreign trade and state planning. This means that the law of value will apply for the fixing of mercantile prices and the maintenance of a stable currency. A surplus product—which does not go to the “common fund”—will be deducted from each worker, in order to stabilize wages in line with planning, and non-capitalist relations of production. The socio-political field will require the most tremendous skill in the task of strengthening the dictatorship of the industrial proletariat, and developing national and international socialist revolution. This will possibly have to be combined with making concessions to bourgeois technicians and even to imperialism, and above all coming to some agreement with the peasantry and the urban middle class.

At the superstructural level of institutions, it will be necessary to combine characteristically bourgeois apparatus and sectors such as state bureaucracy, the army and the police, as specialized apparatus with the encouragement and vitality of the masses and the working class. The latter's intervention in the state must be developed in their free time, or by rotating the state administration until the specialized bureaucracy and apparatus are totally eliminated. The development of a popular workers' militia, and the arming of workers will similarly develop alongside the regular revolutionary army. In other words, it will be necessary to combine transitional organs of the bourgeois apparatus with specific, dominant organs of the industrial proletariat and its allies (soviets), aiming, as a trend, towards the destruction of the bourgeois bureaucratic organs, and the state itself.

The same problem exists in the relation between direct and indirect democracy. In its first stage, the dictatorship of the proletariat must maintain a highly contradictory combination of these two types of democracy, but under no circumstances can it eliminate indirect democracy. The clearest example of this will be the survival of political parties, the ultimate expression of indirect democracy.

The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat must have a program—as Lenin and Trotsky did—of the strictest revolutionary democratic workers' controls over both the bourgeois tasks and apparatus, as well as the repressive measures to “strengthen the functions of the proletarian state”. That is, it must combine different methods and tasks in its development. Throughout this entire first stage, the combination of these activities, trends, laws and apparatus will be determined by revolutionary necessities, by the degree of backwardness in the development of the productive forces, by the weight of the working class, by the progress in the transitional economy, and chiefly by the relations between imperialist counter-revolution and the world socialist revolution. The transitional program will become far more important in the early years of the dictatorship of the proletariat than it was under capitalist rule. The USec resolution abandons it in favour of a maximum program.

THE REVOLUTIONARY DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

The definition of the character of a workers' dictatorship— bureaucratic or revolutionary and democratic— as always requires the identification of the dominant element in the dynamic of these combinations. Does it lean towards the extension of freedoms, towards socialism, direct democracy, suppression of the state and victory of the world socialist revolution? Is it moving towards imperialist-capitalist exploitation? Is it seeking an unstable bureaucratic equilibrium between both trends which will inevitably break one way or the other?

CHAPTER X

Trotskyism and vulgar Trotskyism: a summary of our differences

1. Vulgar Trotskyism (some comments on theory and method)

The method of the USec document is a negation of Marxism. Its reasoning is based on vulgarities strung linearly together by syllogisms and the principle of identity; based on common sense rather than dialectics.

It points out no contradictions in relation to dictatorship. None of its characteristics or tendencies is relativized; everything is absolute, identical to itself; there are no exceptions or variables. The same program is formulated for all countries, at all times, with “unfettered political freedom” (and according to Mandel, “universal suffrage”) right from the beginning, and with the assumption that an extremely liberal, super democratic penal code should be used in all civil wars.

From the time of Heraclitus, if not before, we have known that everything is relative, “limited” and mediated, with the exception of change and contradiction. For the USec however, everything is absolute, apart from the existence of movement and contradiction. That is why there can be “unfettered political freedom”, conditioned by nothing and nobody. Neither the class struggle nor the imperious necessities of civil war can assail the penal code of the USec. “Let the dictatorship sink, let the civil war be lost, but save our penal code and our program of ‘unfettered political freedom!’” This is what the resolution seems to scream out.

This predominance of absolutes, this absence of dialectics obscures contradictions which exist in reality; it cannot save the USec from the logic of the serious —not exactly dialectical— contradictions into which their document has fallen. Rather, it has led the document to fall into them. This is particularly and dangerously clear when the document deals with the problems —certainly worthy of respect— of how to avoid bureaucratic abuses and degeneration; what guarantee is there that a person or tendency is justifiably accused of being bourgeois or counter-revolutionary? Hasn't Stalinism warned of the danger of counter-revolution, in order to justify its repressive dictatorship of the labour movement and workers? How can we combat Stalinist politics? Two important aspects must be mentioned here. The most obvious is that the sequence which runs through the rest of the resolution is broken precisely at this point and only at this point. The only subject on which the USec cannot pronounce itself with certainty is how to identify who is revolutionary and who is counter-revolutionary after the proletariat has seized power. “If one says that only parties and organizations that have no bourgeois (and petty-bourgeois?) program or ideology, or are not ‘engaged in anti-socialist or anti-Soviet propaganda and/or agitation’ are to be legalized, how is one to determine the dividing line? (...) What is the dividing line between ‘bourgeois program’ and ‘reformist ideology?’”¹ When it is a case of determining the “dividing line” the USec is full of doubts, and the document abandons the absolute to submerge itself into a total relativism.

The second aspect of this: How does the USec extricate itself from this situation? Very simple! The USec finds legal, normative solutions to these problems, returning once more to what is abstract and absolute, and far removed from the class struggle — “unfettered political freedom” for everyone, and the adoption of the most liberal penal code in history in the face of civil war. Clearly, it never occurred to our comrades, for whom everything was in doubt at a certain point, to question whether it will be possible to keep power in the hands of the workers if there is “unfettered political freedom” from the beginning.

These absolute legal guarantees are, and always will be, completely useless. These absolute norms — absolute democracy for capitalist and reactionary parties, and super-democratic penal codes and constitutions to judge counter-revolutionaries who have risen up in arms against workers' power —

¹ USFI: *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, op. cit., p.9.

are tools only for the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolution to use against the bureaucracy. The only Trotskyist guarantee lies in the development of class struggle and the permanent mobilization of workers; just as the only effective opposition to bureaucratic abuses in a trade union is workers' mobilization. No statute can ever prevent bureaucratic manoeuvres and abuses; they can only be defeated by mobilization.

There are a whole series of aspects, around this question of theory and method, which the USec majority seems to ignore. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is not free from a series of dialectical laws such as the relation between the means and the end, the whole and its parts, between liberty and necessity.

The goal of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is not to grant “unfettered political freedom” to counter-revolutionaries, as the USec resolution seems to suggest in the guise of freedom for everybody, but the smashing of the counter-revolution and the development of socialist revolution on the national and international arena. The granting of freedoms is important, but it is still only a means subordinate to the ultimate goal of establishing the revolution, and destroying the counter-revolution. Therefore, between the revolutionary ends and means, between democracy and freedom, there exists a very contradictory relation which ought to be recognized and tackled, never avoided. The USec majority eliminates this contradiction from their program. They do not accept that the goals of the revolution necessitate the restriction of democratic freedom.

Similarly with the famous law Marxism inherited from Hegel, “freedom is consciousness of necessity”. As Trotsky explained, this fundamental dialectical law means that absolute freedom does not exist; on the contrary, freedom means the understanding, acceptance, and development of necessities. Anyone who understands the need behind thirst will consciously drink the most healthy liquids, and this is the only real human freedom there is. No normal person will take the ridiculous, absolute freedom of drinking any liquid to quench their thirst in order to prove that they are free. That is the freedom of lunatics. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, a strike, or any workers' struggle cannot, or should not ignore the dialectical relation between freedom and necessity. No Marxist worthy of the name would postulate “unfettered political freedom” for everyone, particularly counter-revolutionaries, without taking the other side of the relation into account: the urgent needs of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Freedoms which take these urgent needs of the dictatorship into account (are conscious of them) will indeed be granted. Freedoms which are not linked to revolutionary necessity will be like the freedom of a lunatic who drinks urine or stagnant water, in order to prove that he is free.

Finally, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is subject to the Marxist law that the whole governs and conditions its parts — without denying that at certain times a part may revolutionize or exceed the whole. This means that workers' revolutionary dictatorship governs and conditions its parts (workers as individuals, class sectors, etc.).

These three dialectical laws which apply to the workers' dictatorship can be combined to form another, far more general law: the means used, and the freedoms of each part (individuals, tendencies and workers sectors) are contingent upon the goal of defending and developing the socialist revolution, the urgent need of defeating bourgeois or imperialist counter-revolution; and imposing the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. In Conclusion: only those sectors which accept and recognize the urgent need for the defence of the revolutionary dictatorship, and the defeat of the counter-revolution can aspire to general freedom and democracy.

But the USec prefers not to get involved with the complexities of dialectics, their reasoning is very simple: they take categories —socialism, democracy, dictatorship of the proletariat—, give them all similar attributes, and define them on a historical scale. Socialism and democracy, both become “unfettered political freedom” for all inhabitants, and a new civilization with a penal code emerges which is far superior to anything we have known in barbarous class society. Ergo, socialism and absolute democracy have become synonymous to our comrades. Furthermore, since the “dictatorship of the proletariat” is a necessary condition for the emergence of “socialist democracy” —“Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialist Democracy” is, after all, the title of the resolution—, these become identical. This is what the entire document sets out to prove.

Unfortunately, all Marxist theory this century has been based on the theoretical finding that “socialist democracy” is an opposite, contradictory category to “dictatorship of the proletariat”. They are dialectically opposed, and historically related. The workers' dictatorship will engender its opposite,

“socialist democracy”, as a seed engenders a plant, by negating itself. However, if a category engenders its opposite, this does not make them identical, as the USec claims.

The mistake of identifying “socialist democracy” with “dictatorship of the proletariat” extends, into a manic use of the principle of identity for everything: thus “soviet democracy” becomes “socialist democracy”, with a few extra trimmings.

In these, as in other concepts, the US falls into Stalinism. Stalin said exactly the same things in 1936. In defining the USSR, he said: “That social organization which we have created may be called a Soviet socialist organization, still not wholly completed, but at root a socialist organization of society”.² This statement of Stalin’s — who, like the USec, considers that “soviet” is a synonym of “socialist” (the USec adds the term “democratic”, but still identifies both terms) — was criticized by Trotsky in terms similar to the ones we have used to criticize the resolution: “The social organization is called ‘Soviet socialist’, but the Soviets are a form of state, and socialism is a social regime. These designations are not only not identical but, from the point of view of our interest, antagonistic. Insofar as the social organization has become socialistic, the soviets ought to drop away like the scaffolding after a building is finished”.³

The USec makes all these mistakes because it fails to understand that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional stage. In this stage, the old barbarous method of class society, class and revolutionary oppression, combine with the objective of human liberation. In other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat is forced to use barbarous, coercive methods, repressing those sectors of society which politically and socially represent the counter-revolution, in order to open the way for a humane, socialist society without coercion or repression.

The authors of the resolution have understood neither Trotsky nor Marxism in general. Trotsky showed us very clearly that a socialist or communist system of the future, with unfettered freedom for everyone, is something completely different from a “transitional system”. “The dictatorship reflects the past barbarism and not the future culture. It necessarily lays down severe limitations upon all forms of activity, including spiritual creation. The program of the revolution from the very beginning regarded these limitations as a temporary evil, and assumed the obligation, in proportion as the new regime was consolidated, to remove one after the other all restrictions upon freedom”.⁴

The dictatorship of the proletariat, this barbarous regime, cannot give “unfettered political freedom” from the start as the USec would like. Quite the contrary, it must impose “severe limitations upon all forms of activity” in order to gradually remove “all restrictions upon freedom”.

2. A summary of our differences

It is not strange, therefore, that this methodology so alien to Marxism displayed by the USec majority in its document should be the basis of a systematic revision of Trotskyism.

In order to leave no room for doubt about this assertion, and at the same time clarify the position for all militants and sympathizers, it is necessary to finish this work by summarizing and enumerating the almost complete disagreements we hold with the comrades of the USec. As this document has tried to show, the principles on which we disagree are the following.

1. The first and most important difference is over nothing less than the method of the transitional program. The characteristic feature of this method is its systematic combination of different tasks in response to concrete situations which arise in the class struggle both on a national and an international scale. This is why the transitional program never raises an isolated demand, task or method, but rather a dynamic, changing combination. It is a system of tasks modified by the concrete situation, the incarnation of the law of uneven and combined development: a dynamic, systematic program which moves at the same pace as reality.

Thus, the transitional program, the theory of permanent revolution and the law of uneven and combined development are all attacked from two fronts. The first is that of the opportunist bureaucrats

² Stalin, Josef quoted by Trotsky, Leon, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., pp. 63.

³ Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

⁴ Ibid, p. 180.

who will only fight on minimal or democratic demands, applying pressure. The second is the ultraleftist method of making only maximum demands, and abandoning all others to chance: always concentrating on the most extreme methods — general strike, guerrillas, etc.

Just as there have never been two identical situations in history, neither can there be two identical transitional programs for two different stages or countries. The unity of the program is given by the objective of developing a permanent mobilization of workers; the conquest of power by the proletariat, led by Trotskyist parties through a workers' revolution; and the development of national and international socialist revolution. Apart from these historic objectives of the theory of permanent revolution, programs change from one country to another and from one moment to another in the class struggle. The USec document, with its fixed and identical program for all countries in the world — “unfettered political freedom” for counter-revolutionary parties —, negates the method of the Transitional Program, just as, the Stalinist one-party conception negates it. A true Trotskyist will never cling to a single demand because we have the method of the Transitional Program which forces us to modify, systematize, mediate and relativize slogans according to the concrete circumstances at every stage of the class struggle. If we should say — along with the US — that from the very first days of the dictatorship of the proletariat, if there is no civil war, we will give the broadest freedoms to counter-revolutionary parties, then we are replacing the Transitional Program with a maximum program of democratic freedom, without knowing whether it will be relevant to the different stages of the class struggle. Thus, demands become absolute and permanent instead of “episodic and incidental”, tailored to the needs of the class struggle, and the defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

2. This attack on the method of the Transitional Program forces the USec majority — whether or not they admit it — to question the theory of permanent revolution. The USec is not only destroying the method of the Transitional Program when they impose exactly the same program in every country in the world — the multiparty system, absolute freedom for counter-revolutionary parties, and the application of an ultra-liberal, inviolable penal code when counter-revolutionaries instigate civil war— they are also negating the most important concept of the theory of permanent revolution, which asserts that the permanent mobilization of workers should not be subject to, or constrained by any programmatic, constitutional or penal norms, nor any fixed, immovable or absolute institutions. Marx and Trotsky's theory is the complete opposite of this: the permanent mobilization of workers does not stop before any norms or institutions; on the contrary, it tosses them all into the air.

3. Two other extremely serious revisions rise out of this substantial modification of the theory of permanent revolution.

The first is the abandonment of the international socialist revolution against imperialism, and of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale as the only valid premise on which to build socialism. It will exist on a world scale, or not at all. The resolution focuses on national revolution and the building of socialism in struggle against national capitalism, imposing and developing proletarian dictatorships which build socialism inside national boundaries. Nothing illustrates this fall into the Stalinist theory of “socialism in one country” better than the absence from the vocabulary of the resolution of such indispensable Trotskyist concepts as “imperialism”, “international socialist revolution”, “imperialist counter-revolution”, “worldwide dictatorship of the proletariat”, “liquidation of all national borders as the indispensable pre-requisite for socialism”.

4. The second is the failure to recognize the decisive role of the Fourth International; this under-estimation applies both before and after the conquest of power in the process of international socialist revolution against imperialism.

The role of our International and all the Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like parties, in the intransigent struggle against the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties, towards the establishment of revolutionary dictatorships of the proletariat, is indispensable. In the resolution it is replaced by soviets, and mysterious soviet parties which take power and develop the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is a revision of Lenin's theory — enriched and complemented by Trotsky — which asserts that the only organism which can lead a social revolution in the capitalist countries, and a political revolution in the workers' states, which will culminate in a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is a Bolshevik party. The Fourth International is, therefore, the only organization which can lead the international socialist revolution against imperialism.

5: There is no indication that the central axis of Trotskyist politics is the systematic struggle against imperialism, given that socialism can only be built after its defeat. Imperialism does not exist for the resolution: not on a political level, not as counter-revolution, not as democracy, economy, or in any way whatsoever.

6. In its failure to recognize that after it takes power, the proletariat must take up the struggle against imperialism, and that in fact the class struggle intensifies; the USec falls back on the theory of socialism in one country. Because of this, the resolution does not define the two stages of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the first being that of socialist revolution on a world scale, the defeat of imperialism, and reinforcement of workers' government; the second stage being the building of socialism, and the progressive weakening of the dictatorship once imperialism has been defeated. Neither is there any indication that the first stage of development of socialist revolution is combined with the task of building socialism. The USec reduces everything into the task of building socialism in one country, thus neglecting the international socialist revolution.

7. The USec ignores the mortal confrontation with imperialism, offering a perspective for peaceful revolutionary development over the next decades. This is completely counterposed to the perspective of a period of "wars, revolutions, crises" predicted by revolutionary Marxism.

8. There is no orientation for Trotskyism to fulfil one of its most important political obligations: to be in the vanguard of the armed struggle which must challenge imperialist counter-revolution, both before and after the seizure of power. Hence the abandonment of the Red Terror.

There is a complete revision of the Leninist-Trotskyist concept of the armed insurrection of the proletariat, which ought to be prepared and led by a Bolshevik party, as the only way to achieve the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of armed insurrection, we are presented with an abstract and peaceful socialist revolution, devoid of armed struggle before and during the conquest of power, led by soviets with unspecified leaderships which take over the government thanks to the demonstration and exposition of the wonders of the most absolute workers' democracy.

9. In their eagerness to defend peaceful means, the USec has produced what is probably the first Marxist document devoted to the dictatorship of the proletariat and civil war, which does not use the dictatorships of Cromwell and Robespierre as analogies. On the contrary, without mentioning them by name, they use the authors of the bourgeois treatises on penal law as examples of the maximum expression of proletarian politics in times of civil war. As a consequence, the USec would restrict the judgement of those counter-revolutionaries who take up arms against workers' power and participate in civil war, to an extremely liberal penal code in which the concepts of "retroactive delinquency" and "collective responsibility of social groups, families, etc." are eliminated. This would replace the coercive revolutionary Marxist policy, which judges on the basis of political and social criteria and gives a free rein to the initiative of the masses.

10. The resolution opposes the Leninist-Trotskyist definition of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat as a dictatorship based on force which confronts the counter-revolution in open war. It replaces this conception with the defence of "unfettered political freedom" for counter-revolutionaries.

11. The Leninist-Trotskyist conception of soviets and dictatorship as organizations for militants and revolutionaries, and the industrial proletariat, is modified in order to redefine them as organs of the state, open to the whole population including counter-revolutionary sectors.

12. There has been a complete abandonment of the propaganda for the defence of the existing workers' states and dictatorships as being infinitely more progressive than bourgeois democracy. It is also a capitulation to bourgeois democratic public opinion which affirms that the "proletarian democracy" of Mao's China was the same as that which existed under Chiang Kai-shek.

The same goes for Vietnam: workers' democracy under French and Yankee occupation was the same as that which exists at present under a proletarian dictatorship. As if this were not enough, we are told that there are more "democratic freedoms" in imperialist countries than in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

13. The Trotskyist program for political revolution in the USSR and the bureaucratized workers' states which defends the multiparty system for soviet parties — that is, parties which a soviet majority

has agreed to legalize — has been replaced by a defence of absolute freedom and political legality for all parties, whether or not they are counter-revolutionary.

14. As a further result of ignoring imperialism, the resolution completely omits the Leninist definition of bourgeois democracy as imperialist democracy, and takes up the ultraleftist definition of bourgeois democracy in general. This category confuses or equates the democracy of imperialist countries with that of the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

15. There is an abandonment of the characteristic Trotskyist combination of worker and bourgeois-democratic demands and institutions for mobilization and proletarian revolution in the struggle against imperialist counter-revolution in the period prior to the seizure of power. Instead of this, there is an ultraleftist position of exclusive defence of workers' demands and institutions.

16. The traditional Marxist definition of political parties as representing classes or class sectors is replaced by a demographic and rationalist type of definition.

17. The resolution discards the International Communist and Trotskyist theory which asserts that there are essentially two types of workers' parties: the reformist and opportunist parties which represent bureaucratic and privileged sectors of the labour movement, and act directly or indirectly as agents of imperialism, on the one hand; and Trotskyist parties, the only authentically revolutionary internationalist workers' parties, on the other. In its place, there is an undistinguishable and motley display of workers' parties. The failure to define with precision the two political poles of the workers' movement makes it impossible to categorize correctly ultraleftist and centrist organizations; to discover which of them are progressive and orienting towards Trotskyism, which of them are retrogressive and pointing towards the counter-revolutionary camp.

18. The resolution thus disguises the sinister counter-revolutionary part played by the Social Democratic and Stalinist Parties, both in the present and in the first stages of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. As a consequence, there is no attempt to prepare our parties for the open battle on every terrain which must be waged against the counter-revolutionary bureaucracies. This is absolutely critical since this inevitable struggle will be fought at the heart of the workers' movement, and is the most important event for which we must prepare.

19. The dialectical method goes overboard. Instead of relativizing the means and the ends of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, and the development of international socialist revolution against imperialism, the resolution preaches a gospel of absolute norms and institutions. This shows a complete disdain for the fundamental laws of Marxist dialectics with regard to the contradictory relationship between means and ends, necessity and liberty, the whole and its parts, form and content. Instead of this, we are presented a formal method through which everything results from the development of the most absolute rights and freedoms for everybody, without reference to the means and the end of proletarian dictatorship.

20. The resolution covertly criticizes the politics of Lenin and Trotsky when they were in power, since they did the opposite of what the resolution prescribes as obligatory for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

21. The resolution rejects Trotsky's politics in relation to the USSR up until 1934. The crux of this political position was the unconditional defence of the monopoly of state power by the Communist Party, the one-party system and the banning of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries. The resolution opposes this historic position of Trotsky's and Trotskyism, advocating at all times a multiparty system under the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the one exception of civil war which must be regulated by the application of an ultra-liberal, strict penal code.

3. The seven essential characteristics of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat

The effect of the formal, juridical type of concept which characterizes the theses is that the content, the function of the dictatorship, is nowhere to be found. What do we want it for, or, more precisely, do we need it?

According to the USec, permanent revolution and mobilization will cease to be the supreme objectives after the taking of power. Thus, the authors of the resolution draw up a dictatorship of the proletariat without a precise and determinate political objective. For them, the objectives become: the automatic implementation of a soviet type of absolute democracy, defensive measures to “prevent the re-establishment of private property”, and the systematically reiterated objective of “building socialism”. Not once does the USec mention the continuing struggle for the international socialist revolution against imperialism.

We clearly define the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat as the organization and control of the state by the working class, to further develop national and international socialist revolution. This is the reason for what we want it and need it; to develop the permanent mobilization of workers until the victory of the socialist revolution on a world scale.

On the basis of all we have said, we can briefly summarize the seven essential characteristics of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat; these stem from this goal and from our critique:

1. The main task of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of a Trotskyist party, in its first stage of confrontation with imperialist counter-revolution, is to drive world revolution against imperialism. This main task is combined with the subordinate task of establishing the basis for socialism by economic planning; an accelerated development of the productive forces; and of consumption by the masses through the soviets; workers’ control, and/or any other forms of workers’ and mass self-organization, which can educate the masses in relation to the management of the new society; the permanent mobilization against imperialism and the influence of the exploiters.

2. The roots of this self-organization are found in the productive, economic structure; its axis will be the largest and most modern factories and the industrial proletariat, with no popular or territorial features in its basic organization.

3. The dictatorship is not that of all the proletariat, nor all the working masses, but rather of the majority of the proletariat and workers who have mobilized for the revolution and the revolutionary soviets.

4. There will be the most severe class discipline: those who do not fulfil their duties and obligations, even if they are workers, will be forced to carry out the decisions of workers’ power.

5. The dictatorship is led by an internationalist, Marxist, revolutionary party which is committed to the objective of world revolution. This means that it must be a Trotskyist party, or one which tends towards Trotskyism.

6. The broadest democracy will exist only for the industrial proletariat and revolutionary workers, i.e., those who respect and fight for the resolutions adopted by the revolutionary working class in power. Only these sectors have the absolute right, as individual toilers and workers, to criticize any political resolution in any organ or meeting of the revolutionary workers’ movement, without fear of coercion or repression. This individual right of any revolutionary toiler or worker is total and absolute. It will depend on the circumstances of the workers’ dictatorship whether this individual right is transformed into the right of tendencies, or into a multiparty revolutionary or soviet system. The general, programmatic principle would tend towards the multiparty soviet system, with the revolutionary soviet deciding by majority vote which parties to recognize.

7. These characteristics do not prescribe the unremitting repression and coercion of all bourgeois and worker opponents of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat at all times. The opposite is true: without its laying down a precedent, nor as a “categorical imperative”, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat will be inclined to give the broadest freedoms of press, opinion, assembly, ideology, propaganda and politics allowed for by the conditions of the revolutionary struggle against world imperialism. This tendency must be emphasized for all sectors of the labour movement and workers, even if objectively, they are in the service of counter-revolutionary parties.

Bogota, July 1978