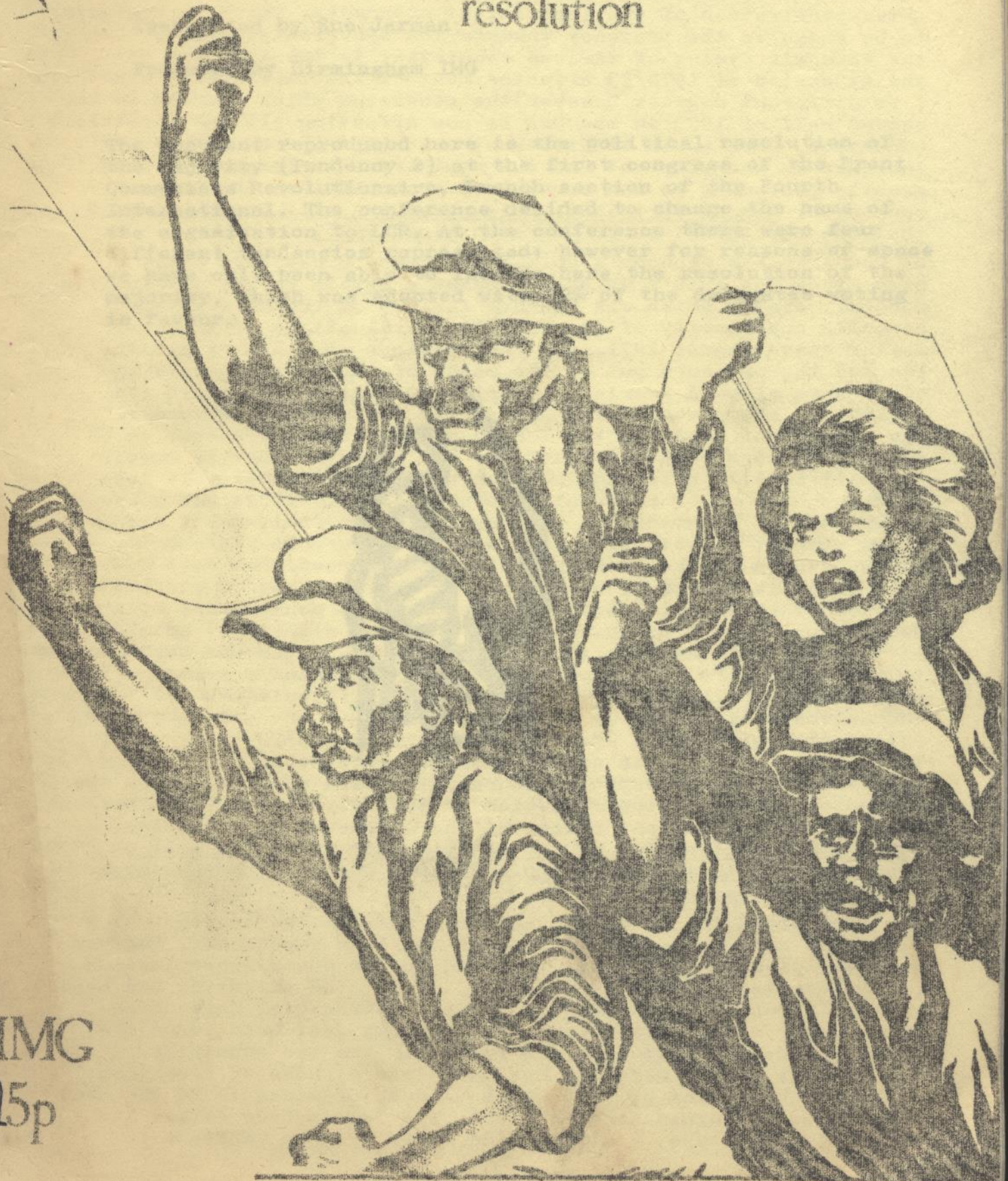


**LIGUE
COMMUNISTE
REVOLUTIONNAIRE**

founding conference
resolution



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LIGUE COMMUNISTE REVOLUTIONNAIRE

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE 1st NATIONAL CONFERENCE, DECEMBER 1974

Translated by Sue Jarman

Produced by Birmingham IMG

The document reproduced here is the political resolution of the majority (Tendency 2) at the first congress of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International. The conference decided to change the name of the organisation to LCR. At the conference there were four different tendencies represented; however for reasons of space we have only been able to include here the resolution of the majority, which was adopted with 59% of the delegates voting in favour.



(c) Since 1945 the French economy has only had recessions which were less marked than the German or American recessions. Further any recession in France was lessened by the non-synchronisation of the cycles of various economies. Today the situation has been partially modified. On top of France's structural dependence with regard to the West German economy has just been added the growing synchronisation of the cycles in the two countries. The Federal German Republic has gone into a phase of recession since the beginning of 1974 which already promises to be the most profound and longest since the war. The German bourgeoisie has been able to impose on its working class a large increase in

A HISTORIC CHANCE FOR THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

1) a) In all the imperialist countries the accumulation of capital has been very intense since 1945. It has however been more intense in most of the European countries and in Japan than in the USA or Great Britain. The economic cycles which are inherent in the functioning of the capitalist mode of production were characterised until the end of the 1960's by fairly long periods of expansion and fairly short phases of recession. The development of international trade has brought about a growing inter-penetration of the imperialist economies, which is beginning to be shown in the tendency towards the synchronisation of the economic cycles of various countries. In the same way as the expansion of 1972/73 affected most of the imperialist countries (to different degrees however) the recession which started in the second half of 1973 in the USA is now affecting all the capitalist countries, once again to different extents. The considerable increase in unemployment and the rapid rise in prices (varying greatly according to the countries) characterises the present recession. Almost certainly, this recession will be the longest that the capitalist world has seen since 1945.

b) The American economy's ability to compete has been dealt a blow since the 1950's which has meant a crisis in the international monetary system which was founded in 1945 on the unrivalled economic superiority of the USA. The devaluations of the dollar since August 1971, the revaluations of the Mark and the Yen and the pressure put on the wages of the American working class have allowed American imperialism partly to restore its ability to compete compared with other imperialist economies. Any attempt at changing the IMF to make it less dependent on US imperialism has been abandoned for the moment. What is more, the "oil crisis" hits the American bourgeoisie relatively less hard than the other imperialist bourgeoisies. It is not however a question of a definitive victory of US imperialism but rather of an attempt to establish a more or less durable plateau in the worsening in the economic balance of forces. One must add that this plateau is made possible by the increase of conflicts between other imperialist bourgeoisies (the consequence of a deep heterogeneity of interests in a crisis situation) notably at the heart of the EEC: the European bourgeoisies who have managed in the good years to agree on a customs union and a common agricultural policy, now, in a period of difficulties, see themselves obliged to put into question again the only two political realisations of "European integration". In 1970-71 the European and Japanese bourgeoisies, profiting from their superior capacity to compete, were able to lessen the economic effects of the recession to the detriment of the American economy and in the last resort of the American working class. Today the stabilisation of the relationship of forces will as a consequence make it impossible for the European bourgeoisies to repeat the same operation.

c) Since 1945 the French economy has only had recessions which were less marked than the German or American recessions. Further any recession in France was lessened by the non-synchronisation of the cycles of various economies. Today the situation has been partially modified. On top of France's structural dependence with regard to the West German economy has just been added the growing synchronisation of the cycles in the two countries. The Federal German Republic has gone into a phase of recession since the beginning of 1974 which already promises to be the most profound and longest since the war. The German bourgeoisie has been able to impose on its working class a large increase in

unemployment and a stagnation in buying power. This lets it limit inflation restructure its productive apparatus before undertaking a policy of expansion. In France the long phase of expansion since 1968 has now come to an end (the slowing down of production and investments). What is more, the government, which had until these last few months avoided imposing a stabilisation policy has no longer been able to escape this necessity: on the one hand the rise in prices is more rapid in France than in West Germany or the USA and on the other hand because of the increase in the price of oil the balance of payments has gone heavily into the red. In order to maintain its capacity to compete and in order to increase its exports the French bourgeoisie must slow down the rise in prices and put pressure on wages so as to diminish home consumption. This policy only aggravates the combined effects of the recession in France and in the other imperialist countries and leads to a big growth in unemployment. As a whole, these elements combine to make the recession which is beginning in France the longest (at least until the end of 1975) and the most profound since 1945; further, it will affect almost all industrial sectors.

2.

The general strike of May-June 1968 threw a search-light on the extent and profundity of the social transformations which have been going on since the Second World War. This period was marked in the capitalist countries of Western Europe by a high rate of economic growth and an accelerated accumulation and centralisation of capital: the rate of investment of French firms which hardly passed 10% in the first half of the century, reached 26% in 1965 and 29% in 1971. From this resulted a great change and rejuvenation of the working class whose ranks, contrary to superficial estimations, have grown between 1954 and 1964 by 1.5 million new proletarians.

This process has notably provoked phenomena as important as the rapid increase in the number of wage-earning women and the transformation of intellectual workers into wage-earners. In the proletariat the division of labour has been modified with on the one hand the development of highly qualified jobs and on the other the generalisation of work which is repetitive and has been divided up into its smallest components, and the massive dequalification of the labour force. Thus the categories of qualified workers are on the decline (apart from the chemicals industry) whereas the OS. (ouvriers specialises - "specialised workers" - the really skilled workers) represent now on more than a third of the working class. This transformation was accompanied by a more and more systematic call on immigrant labour which could be sacked at will, kept under supervision by the police, did not cost the social services much, and was presumably more docile.

Finally, there resulted from this general extension of wage labour a great development of the unproductive sectors or the indirectly productive sectors of the proletariat. This phenomenon is felt particularly in the commercial, banking and insurance sectors. These workers are exploited in the same way as productive workers. So they have an objective interest in overthrowing the capitalist relations of production, Their role would actually be decisive in paralysing the system. But due to their place and their function in the relations of production, they are not in the strongholds of capital where the creation of value is concentrated. Because they enter into the class struggle in a differentiated way they cannot develop their consciousness without taking into account the existence, the trade union and political experience, the concentration and even the work of a specific category: that of the productive workers. The productive workers alone are placed where the capitalist relations of production take their roots. This theoretical distinction between productive and non-productive workers is not therefore without consequence. It renders more valid the policy of the alliances of

the proletariat to unravel the revolutionary crisis and lay the basis of a new mode of production: the experience of workers' democracy, workers' control and active strikes will take on their own dynamic in the centres of production. They will be the condition of the hegemony of the proletariat in the alliances made, in the territorial structures of dual power, with large social sectors, notably fractions of the traditional and new petty bourgeoisie.

3.

In a parallel way the traditional petty bourgeoisie (small traders, small land-owning peasants) which has behaved as the faithful ally of the bourgeoisie and pillar of society from the French Revolution through the Commune up to the Liberation, has now lost its weight and its unity. The place of the peasantry in the active population has diminished rapidly since 1946. Whilst capitalism penetrates further into agriculture, a large part of the small peasantry, in debt and subjected to the conditions of the agriculture/food producing trusts, is undergoing a tendency to proletarianisation on their farms. From this results a modification of their consciousness and forms of struggle to a point where a peasants' vanguard call themselves peasant-workers and join their struggle explicitly to that of the working class.

Given the necessity for big capital to react to the in-built fall in its rate of profit by accelerating the circulation of capital, the small shop is gradually disappearing, crushed by the competition from the super- and hyper-markets. Far from pushing the petty-bourgeois shop-keepers towards the proletariat, this threat has instead made it receptive to the rallying cries of the conservatives and reactionaries, from the lunacies of the Cid-Unati, to the fascist-like crusades of Royer.

On the other hand, the rise of industrial capitalism, the accelerated rhythm of technological innovation, the increase in jobs of an administrative sort, have given rise to the development of professional categories which official statistics, in their confusion, put under the heading of technical engineers and managerial staff. Of the two million wage-earners in this category, some are really large shareholders or higher functionaries of the bourgeoisie disguised as wage-earners. But some in fact, especially amongst technicians, are really just a highly qualified layer of the proletariat. But there are also a large number of workers in these categories who due to their position in the division of labour are part of the collective labourer, whilst still supervising and organising the work, which makes them partly agents in the exploitation process of the labour force of the proletariat. It is on this basis that one can talk of a new petty-bourgeoisie.

The social regroupments happening around the two basic classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie, affect the petty bourgeoisie. Firstly, they accelerate the breaking up of an already disparate and divided petty-bourgeoisie which is in existence more as a group of fractions, as class vestiges, than as a unity. On the other hand the polarisation of the proletariat and bourgeoisie cuts across the various factions of the petty-bourgeoisie unequally, forcing some parts into the revolutionary camp. It will depend on a correct policy of alliances of the workers movement to gather around the proletariat a large enough social base to conquer the bourgeoisie, destroy the state and lay the foundations for a socialist society.

4. On a national level the general strike of May-June 1968 debunked the myth of peaceful coexistence between the classes and the stories of the disappearance or bourgeois nature of the proletariat. In May 1968 the principal protagonists of the class struggle could for the first time gauge their strength and observe one another. Since then the contours of each camp have been and are asserting themselves. Thus, after May '68, the regionalist movements have been able to find a social base in the peasantry, youth and intellectuals in those regions marked by the unequal and chaotic character of the development of capitalism. The critical situation of these regions (Brittany, Occitania, Corsica) has been aggravated since 1958 by the "strong state" policies crushing the small and medium peasantry and fragmenting the political forces (especially the social democrats) who won their credit and their customers by redistributing the goodies of the parliamentary republic. The fractions of the petty-bourgeoisie who started to struggle against the new domination of capital over them did not find in 1968 a workers movement able to understand their aspirations and to give them a class basis. It is these regionalist movements, half way between nationalist demands and the struggle for socialism, which have sometimes answered the pre-occupations and first experiences of sectors just entering the class struggle. It is in this context that we have defended the right to self-determination for those regions where there was a "nationalist" feeling, a deformed reflection of the aspirations of layers allied to the hilt to the bourgeoisie to rejoin the struggles of the proletariat. At the same time, we fought the inter-class basis of the regionalist demands. The growing polarisation between classes, the bourgeoisie's crisis of domination and the recomposition of the workers movement have already greatly influenced the maturing of the vanguard influenced by the regionalist movement. It is a process which is strengthening in the period to come, and which the regionalist movements will be able to promote.

This social polarisation has had delayed repercussions inside institutions like the army and the legal system, whereas the school system was affected before 1968. It would be naive to see in these movements in the army and among the judiciary the symptoms of the collapse or the irreversible decay of bourgeois institutions. These movements express, in their particular area, a taking of positions on one side or other of the dividing line between the classes. And however positive it may be, the public support given by some magistrates to factory occupations and their condemnation of the bosses' lock-out, must not obscure the fact that the vast majority of the judiciary continues to play its role faithfully at the service of the bourgeoisie. Similarly in the police, where for one Breton who gives his support to Lip, there are ten or a hundred Suprintendant Dides in power.

One particularly old and reactionary institution, the Catholic Church, is also undergoing the effects of this double polarisation. Its traditional education with the old bourgeois values of which it was the vehicle is thrown into question. The progress of industrialisation and urbanisation has meant that the rural bases essential for the Church's mass activities - in that they provided a recruiting pool for the convents and monasteries - have been sapped. Since the 1930s the Catholic hierarchy has tried to fight back by penetrating the "workers' world": it has made two appreciable breakthroughs - firstly with its youth movement (Jeunesse Ouvriere Catholique - Catholic Workers' Youth) and secondly with its adult organisation (ACO). But very quickly many militants refused an ideology of open collaboration between bosses and workers. Likewise the hierarchy has lost the organisational and ideological control of the CFDT (ex-CFTC - French federation of Catholic workers). The adventure of "worker-priests has gone

wrong with these pioneers sliding towards the ideas of the workers movement. Thus many working class Christian militants have joined the Communist Party, the Socialist Party or the PSU and were often the driving force in their union branches of the CGT or the CFDT. As to the Catholic organisation for young people in education (the JEC- Catholic students youth group), that is losing members to reformist or revolutionary organisations whenever there is a crisis. Finally, a certain number of the lower clergy, who by nature keep certain aspects of their position in society, often take the side of the workers' or peasants' organisations. Up till now the top hierarchy has been feverishly looking for a way to present the dogma and some way of intervening.

However, one of the most important steps forward in the revolutionary struggle since 1968 is the upsurge of anti-militarism, and in particular of revolutionary anti-militarism. The trial of the soldiers Devaux, Herve and Trouilleux in 1970 and the defence campaign organised for them, were only the first steps. Since then the waves of conscientious objection and of insubordination have strengthened and increased. It is only in the last year that the centre of gravity of the anti-militarist struggle has moved from those about to be called up to the barracks. The "Appel du Cent" (Appeal of the Hundred), a petition for soldiers to have democratic rights, took the movement a step forward at the time of the presidential election. This petition gathered several thousand signatures despite the punishments and the risk of repression. The rise in consciousness due to the petition has allowed the movement to make even further advances. The conscripted soldiers, more and more convinced of remaining workers in an army uniform, organising themselves into committees and maintaining their links with their unions are trying to make the rights and victories won by the workers' movement respected even in the barracks. This tendency was magnificently illustrated by the street demonstrations in September 1974 of the conscripts in Draguignan who filed out of their barracks in order to popularise their demands. At the same time one can see the first skirmishes against the colonial army in the French West Indies, in New Caledonia and in French Guyana. This rebirth of anti-militarism amongst the conscripts has contributed to a rebirth of civilian anti-militarism, with the appearance of organisations of support for the conscripts' struggles but, above all, in the last few months, with the taking over of this support by the organisations of the workers movement itself, at a local, regional and sometimes even at a national level.

5.

Since May 1968 the crisis of the bourgeois educational system, far from finding a solution in successive ministerial reforms has continued and got worse. Hardly a year has passed without a mass uprising of students and school pupils: the Guiot affair in 1971, the mobilisation against the Guichard circular in 1972, demonstrations such as have never been seen before against the Debre law in 1973, with for the first time a massive taking up of the struggle by apprentices in technical colleges, who in 1974 were the first to take up the struggle against the Royer-Fontanet laws.

Each mobilisation has shown progress in the democratic self-organisation of the youth movements, until in 1973 there appeared national strike committees of students, school pupils and apprentices. Each mobilisation has tied the struggles of young people to those of the working class, which was symbolised by the joint demonstration of the strike committees of students-school students-apprentices and the union confederations on 9th April 1973.

6.

The social crisis opened up in 1968 gave rise to a women's emancipation movement with new characteristics. Various factors condition this phenomenon in a long-term way. Firstly, the developments amongst wage-earning women. Secondly the politics of the reformist workers' movement which, instead of linking the struggle of women against economic exploitation with the struggle against the patriarchal oppression they undergo, glorifies the existing moral order and family structure. Finally, on top of the distrust women feel towards a workers movement which reproduces in its midst the mechanisms of women's oppression, there is distrust towards those experiments which call themselves socialist, where bureaucratic degeneration has gone hand-in-hand with the restoration and perpetuation of the patriarchal order and of its values. The result of this is a women's liberation movement which evolves spontaneously towards feminist positions. But the increase in the number of working women (a mixed struggle against exploitation, with a steep rise in divorces due to more women going out to work) and the general rise in revolution are exposing how capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression are inter-twined.

Thus feminist currents born since 1968, far from turning to bourgeois parliamentary feminism which has run out of steam, and out of more reforms, are turning to radical and revolutionary feminism in a confused way. It will depend on the role that communist women militants play in the women's movement, and on the role that the communist vanguard plays in the workers movement, whether the decisive integration of the women's liberation movement into the class struggle for the triumph of the socialist revolution will be possible. Realising that the coming of the dictatorship of the proletariat will not be enough to wrench out from one day to the next all the centuries-old and pre-capitalist roots of women's oppression, we must recognise the grounds for an autonomous women's movement, before and after the revolution, and help its development.

7.

For six years the working class has reflected on, developed and assimilated the extraordinary experience of May 1968. After a temporary lull in the struggles in 1969-70, the number and length of strikes has begun once more to grow. New sectors, new layers, new regions which hardly stirred in 1968 have taken up the struggle. Particularly women (Thionville, Cesnay etc.) and immigrants (Renault Pennroya, Cables de Lyon etc). Exemplary but isolated strikes (Batignolles in 1971 and Joint Francais in 1972) have been succeeded by strikes tending to spread to the level of the local area or branch (social security, banks, post office). The rise in class consciousness has been shown by the massive use of slogans for equal wage rises for all, and for workers' control over the speed of work, slogans used sometimes even by the unions. This rise in class consciousness has been apparent also in the development of workers' self-organisation with sovereign general meetings controlling the shop stewards committee (as at Lip) and in certain cases, the setting up of strike committees of union members and non-members, elected and re-callable (EGF-Brest, Credit Lyonnaise). The support of workers on strike has spread, making it possible to draw those parts of the population prepared to choose their

camp into the struggle, into solidarity, and sometimes into committees of support. However, if the appearance of vigorous mobile pickets is a step in the direction of traditional workers self-defence, these experiences have been embryonic and fragile, given the increase in employers' commandos and the intervention of the police in the factories.

The strike at Lip symbolises at the highest level the progress in class consciousness and the deep tendency of these struggles: factory occupations, active strikes, workers' control. With the present threats of unemployment, the Lip strike constitutes an example and an indispensable guide: it will inspire workers struggling against the employers' measures for increased profitability redundancies and the closing down of factories.

8.

The socialist revolution has a historic opportunity before it in Europe, and in France in particular. The opportunity depends on the one hand on the international situation; the partial defeat of imperialism in Vietnam, the increased crisis in Stalinism (Poland, Czechoslovakia), the defeat or instability of the dictatorships in Europe (Portugal, Greece, Spain), and the general increase in proletarian struggles on a continental scale. On the other hand it depends on the fusion of the contradictions accumulated since 1945 on a national scale.

The future offered by capitalism is bleak; inflation, unemployment, the consequences of intense urbanisation (noise, pollution), regional and demographic imbalances. Amongst the owners of capital themselves, the general euphoria of the 1950s has been replaced by the first signs of alarm: the denunciation of waste, the letter from Sicco Mansholt, the energy crisis. Far from leading to new intermediary stages between capitalism and socialism, to a restoration of bourgeois democracy, the crisis of capitalist society puts the socialist revolution right on the order of the day.

Two systems, two types of logic, two conceptions of collective living are confronting one another. A society ruled by the blind laws of the market, of uncontrolled competition and of the chaotic class of private initiatives cannot solve the present crisis. Only the expropriation of the large means of production, the democratic planning of the economy according to social needs decided collectively; only a great reduction in working hours, the division of the common tasks amongst all available hands and heads, and a general increase in education will lead to real solutions. The workers are discovering in their masses that maximum happiness does not coincide with the maximum growth rate fetishised by capital. The desire growing in them is for a society where time for living will be recognised by a great reduction in working hours, a society where life will become a pleasure, due to the replacement of alienated and mechanised labour by automation. The desire is growing in them for a society where the satisfaction of social and cultural needs, discussed and defined collectively, replaces the frenzy of consumption, manipulated by advertising. The desire growing in them is for a society where the liberation of millions of minds, mutilated at the moment by exploitation and oppression, will bring forth a new source of energy, unknown before, and will favour the invention of new ways of living.

This desire is embodied from now on in the struggles, demands, and forms of organisation of the working class. The confused aspirations to socialist self-management, brought about by the struggles against hierarchy and the requirements of workers' self-organisation, and the vigilant anti-bureaucracy, are proof of this. May 1968 was a genuine crisis of social and ideological collapse, which was made palatable for the bourgeoisie by the absence of an implanted revolutionary party. The delayed effects of May 1968

are the most important and are still at work in the social body. Despite its confused and erratic appearance, the protest movement sweeping right through society is helping to form an anti-capitalist bloc around the working class, and in the next confrontations this bloc will have a much clearer shape than in 1968. It is this opportunity which must be seized. For the process is not irreversible. If the proletariat shows itself incapable of responding to the hopes of those layers now looking to it, if it doesn't open out a vast revolutionary perspective, if it doesn't show the proof of its determination, of its will for radical social change, then these possible allies will turn away from the proletariat and will go and tamely lick the crumbs from the hands of the bourgeoisie.

9.

Although the pre-revolutionary crises of June 1936, the Liberation, and of May 1968 clearly showed the revolutionary capacities of the proletariat, none of them had a serious chance of victory, mainly because of the absence of a revolutionary party, and the extreme weakness of the organised and conscious vanguard. Taken as a whole the masses had not been penetrated by the great strategic debates between the road of reformist capitulation and that of the road of the revolutionary conquest of power. Except for local exceptions, they did not dispose of a framework for outflanking reformist perspectives and they did not on a large scale construct organisations of dual power, embryos of the future revolutionary power.

This has been changing since 1968. Certainly the confrontation between the reformist road and a revolutionary strategy is not yet taking the form of a concrete debate between an implanted revolutionary party and the reformist political organisations. But, under the pressure of revolutionaries, a lively polemic against reformism is present in the struggles, being led by a growing fraction of the broad vanguard. It is penetrating the trade unions, and more pointedly, large sections of the proletariat. The problems of building a revolutionary party are thus in a totally new context: for the first time in the struggles to come, the jockeying for parliamentary position between the working class and the bourgeoisie can be transcended, and the conditions for a generalised offensive of the class for taking power reappear. It is this chance that it is necessary to seize

II - THE DECLINE AND DECADENCE OF THE BONAPARTIST STRONG STATE

10.

The maximum expansion of big capital required a strong government, capable of taking quick decisions, capable of accelerating the concentration of the French economy (still backward in several fields), capable of backing it up in its struggle to win international trade, and capable of constructing the apparatus needed for civil war against the proletariat should the need arise. These requirements caused the crisis of parliamentary democracy and the tendency in the main European countries towards the strong state. This tendency towards the establishment of the strong state - inherent in monopoly capitalism - is characterised by the movement of the centre of gravity of the State towards the executive, the strengthening of the judiciary's arsenal of repression, and the increasing use of the army and police to keep the population in check (in France: Article 16, the anti-Wreckers Law, etc).

Although the European bourgeois states have these features in common, this does not mean that the strong state represents some new stable system of rule which will replace paralysed parliamentary democracy. It is more of a bastardised system, a transitory form of government, intended by the bourgeoisie to prepare for future social confrontations.

In present conditions the bourgeoisie cannot easily find the basis for a mass fascist movement, and so it will continue to orientate itself towards the strengthening of the state apparatus and the para-state forces.

If some people have seen in the Gaullist strong state the perfect archetype of a strong state, it is because its setting up coincided with the coming of the Bonapartist regime: the form of the strong state has been marked from the beginning by the imprint of Bonapartism. In France the strong state does not exist as a firmly rooted framework, as a solid institutional system independent of Bonapartism. The amended constitution of 1958 is still bastardised, contradictory and a source of possible conflicts between Parliament and the President if the authority or arbitration of a Bonapart is lacking. To transcend these contradictions the bourgeoisie would need a defeat of the working class, giving it the chance of a new economic start, of a boost in the mechanisms for integrating the working class and of re-establishing its alliance with the petty bourgeoisie. Without this, it can hardly hope to find the electoral base for a large conservative party which it needs.

11. The Bonapartist Gaullist regime was built on the basis of a workers' defeat, of the liquidation of the Algerian war and a period of economic expansion. These factors allowed it to be set up as a referee above class and party conflicts and to win some working class votes. It relied on a grouping of adventurers from the Gaullist party of the resistance, some leftovers from Petainism, and some members of the RPF, a kind of "10th Decembers Society". It tried to integrate and neutralise the working class by a complete policy of class collaboration, going from the Tutee proceedings to the projects for workers' participation and the ruling in 1967 on "workers having a share in the profits made by their firm". Although these tricks were, on the whole, exposed for what they were, illusions remained in class collaboration until after the fall of De Gaulle, due to the exceptional economic expansion: from 1968-72 the French GNP increased by 26% as compared with 20.8% in Germany, 14.5% in Italy, 8.8% in GB, 11% in the US. From 1969-73, French exports increased in volume slightly more than Japanese exports and much more than the exports of other developed capitalist countries. The competitiveness of French capitalism is partly due to the devaluation in 1969, but mainly due to an increase in the intensity of the labour process, the record length of the working week, the slow increase in wages, in a word the relative social lull which followed 1968. From 1968-72 wages went up on average 12% a year as compared with 20% in Germany and Italy; in this period five times fewer working days were lost due to strikes than in Britain. Nevertheless, the minimum wage rose on average 14% a year and the crumbs of expansion nourished Chaban's plans and fed the myth of a new society.

However, the balance of forces which Gaullism rested on were undermined even before 1968. But the general strike of May-June upset it for ever. Out of this has come a new relation of forces, expressed in the increase in numbers, the lowering of the average age, and the renewal of the consciousness and combativity of the working class. Thenceforth one of the important bases of the regime, the relative resignation of a defeated working class - disappeared, and the regime could only change or totter. Less than a year after 1968, at the referendum of April 1969, the bourgeoisie got rid of De Gaulle, with Giscard D'Estaing giving him the final blow. Pompidou, who was prepared to take over, proposed a formula of continuity; taking the new relation of forces into account, he increased the presidential majority by imposing on all the factions of the UDR (Gaullists) a merger with the independent Republicans and the CDP - putting up this new majority in the 1969 elections.

The second blow for the regime was its failure to integrate or neutralise the working class by offering workers' participation and share-holding without consulting the unions. The policy of "contrats de progres" (progress contracts - agreements with the unions on no strikes for a certain period in return for wage increases) takes this into account and recognises the unions as natural negotiators with the government and the employers, which fits into the logic of the strengthening of union rights negotiated at Grenelle. However, the policies of Chaban-Delmas have been viewed in various ways by the bourgeoisie and by his own movement. According to Chirac, they were made for "voters who would not vote for us". The dismissal of Chaban and the arrival of Messmer at the head of the government in July 1972 marked a new orientation; the start of the pre-election campaign. Without abandoning the "contrat" policy, the government now had to turn to the "under-privileged", and lure them by skilful demagogic manoeuvres, such as the Provins programme, a series of financial provisions aimed at small craftsmen, shopkeepers, junior soldiers, agricultural workers and technicians. Although the majority won in the 1973 elections, the UDR lost its absolute majority in the parliament. The regime suffered a new defeat.

Chaban's failure at the presidential elections was only a new stage and not the last in the downfall of the regime. By standing, he claimed to embody "the gathering together of the spirit of Gaullism" at the very same moment when the UDR had become just another faction in parliament, less homogenous than the others. He wanted to give this gathering a popular tint by using the themes of the progress contracts and of the new society where, with the end of expansionist euphoria, the prospects of class collaboration were less and less attractive. He saw himself really as the defender of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, at the very same moment when the contradictions of a regime lacking a man of stature were sharpening, because the movement on which it was based was weak and divided. It is significant that Pompidou, who filled a political vacuum by declaring his candidacy as early as January 1969 in Rome, was unable to appoint a successor when he knew he was dying. It is thus logical that, from the point of view of its interests, the bourgeoisie chose Giscard D'Estaing.

12. What solutions can Giscard offer for the crisis in the regime and its institutions? It would be logical for him to complete the transformation of the regime into a presidential regime, by legalising the incredible powers the president has, and by abolishing the presidential right to dissolve parliament. For such a project to succeed, it is necessary to build a large conservative party, a driving belt for presidential policy; it would be necessary also to have two large parties, either bourgeois or controlled by the bourgeoisie. The probability that this condition will be fulfilled is small, so the transformation into a presidential regime is unlikely.

With what can Giscard forge lasting alliances? In the present economic context, how can he win back the favours of fractions of the petty bourgeoisie, apart from with a few goodies at election time? Would the Union of the Left (including the CP) be a safe enough partner in a two-party system? (Not that the bourgeoisie is afraid of reformist policies - but they are afraid of the social dynamic which might surpass them). For as long as there are these problems and questions making the stabilisation of the presidential regime dubious, the social and political polarisation started in 1968, will continue. This is not 1945. And the same causes which ruined the populist aspirations of Gaullism will prevent the formation of a Christian-Democrat or Conservative Party with mass electoral support. This is why the new majority, which Giscard talked about during his campaign, will instead of heading for

organic fusion, remain a fragile presidential coalition.

Giscard was, for big capital, the safest candidate. Sensing difficult times ahead, he based his campaign on anti-communism and electoral hand-outs. He appeared as the resolute candidate of the union of right-wingers, the candidate of a bourgeoisie refusing any compromise with the CP. But elected president on just 51% of the votes, he could not be too right-wing without running the risk of fragmentation and social conflict. His first measures were aimed at winning from the Socialist Party the new urban petty-bourgeoisie and the highly qualified sections of the proletariat (the vote for eighteen-year olds, laws on contraception and abortion, creation of a secretary of State for women's affairs, a ministry for the quality of life, setting up a board to look into the reform of firms). As far as the institutions of state are concerned, the projects for constitutional reform have tackled only a few puny details. In foreign policy, although the government made a few steps towards getting France into the periphery structures of NATO, it clashed head on with American imperialism on the sale of arms (Dassault) and in the Palestinian question.

Thus Giscard's regime appears as a regime for administering the crisis, retaining the degrading and worn-out traits it inherits from Bonapartism. Far from opening the way for a new system of bourgeois domination, it just substitutes the Giscard-state for the UDR-state, without being able to link itself to the electorate by building a big, implanted, conservative party. To make sure the roles are played as expected in the framework of the strong Bonapartist state, the bourgeoisie calls on the actors at its disposal. Pompidou said he would stand as president before the job was even vacant; he was already dressing-up in the cast-off clothes of a Bonapart. The balance of forces between the classes having been upset, Giscard is leaving the stage in the same cast-off clothes. Far from solving the crisis of the regime in its last phase of senile decadence, he is condemned to administer it. More than ever the Bonapartist strong state is evident as a state of transition and preparation for the social conflicts to come.

III - THE UNION OF THE LEFT AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

13. Thirteen million voters: more than 49% of the electorate. The vast majority of wage earners and young people. And that is despite the fact people under twenty-one and three million immigrants do not have the vote. Thirteen million votes in what was, despite the denials of the candidate himself, perceived as a class vote; this unprecedented result for the left illustrates the effects of the big shake-up of may 1968, and keeps a political solution on the horizon of workers struggles.

This puts the working class in a contradictory situation: a situation where the reformists preach moderation and patience until the elections (where they are bound to win), at the same time the workers see, as a result of their actions, a swing in their favour in the balance of class forces, and an encouragement for their immediate struggles against unemployment and the cost of living: the government and the employers must surrender! And if they don't, the workers parties must take over the government! After a brief period of waiting and thinking, it is this new state of mind of the masses which contributed to the upsurge of struggles in autumn 1974, carrying on the struggle of the beginning of the year, provisionally suspended for the elections.

Thus the contradiction which used to exist between the combativity of the base and the sell-outs of the union leadership in the absence of perspectives at a parliamentary level has shifted. The contradiction is now between the Union of the Left's class collaboration and the dynamic of social mobilisation encouraged, despite themselves, by the uniting of reformist parties and the union bureaucracies. Whilst the working class sees in the Union of the Left a step towards its own unity, the reformists maintain a division in the unions and oppose democratic, united committees at the base. Whilst the working class sees the Common Programme as a step towards workers' power, the reformists are getting ready to loyally administer the bourgeois state, defend the "national interest", side-by-side with the small employers and the national monopolies.

14. Feeling an electoral victory within reach, but drawing his own peculiar lessons from the Chilean tragedy, G. Marchais explained to communist militants from the Central Committee in June 1974: "Even if we get 50.2% of a formal majority, it would not be enough. We need to get a lot of people around our movement if we want the experiment that we are proposing to be a success". It is to win these people that the CP has adopted the perspective of a "Union of the People of France", that it has endeavoured to explain that the steps from the Common Programme to socialism will be uncomplicated, and in the stage to come there will only be democratic changes, that it has offered its hand to the Gaullists - and that it has opened its doors "without restrictions" to anyone who agrees with these democratic changes. By doing this the CP is accepting more explicitly than ever the framework of the 1958 constitution and the strong state left by De Gaulle; and by trying to get a majority in the presidential elections through the Union of the Left, it is trying to legally run bourgeois society. This policy of a Union of the People of France has a theoretical basis in the thesis of state monopoly capitalism developed by the CP, which substitutes for the fundamental class struggle a theory of class collaboration with one part of the bourgeoisie, - non-monopoly capital.

In fact, throughout Mitterand's electoral campaign, the Union of the Left confirmed its vocation as a loyal administrator of capitalist society. Taking its results into account and the fragility of the regime, it stood as the last possible resort, the final card the bourgeoisie could play were there an open political or social crisis. In preparation for possible government responsibilities, the CP and the SP are trying to get a broader social and political base. Similarly, the Italian CP offers the Christian-Democrats a "historic compromise"; the Spanish CP chooses for allies a "democratic junta", liberal monarchist movements and the "civilised" sections of the army; the Portuguese CP participates in a government of class collaboration alongside the Armed Forces Movement. It is in the same light that the Union of the Left has increased its advances towards young soldiers and technicians since autumn 1973.

But the politicisation caused in France by the setting up of a strong state, and the general strike of 1968, is unsuited to alliances and alternating parliamentary combinations. That is why, to this day, none of the large bourgeois political formations has seriously envisaged allying itself with the Union of the Left. They would prefer, if necessary, to offer the government to the reformists and then to strangle them in a network of commitments and legal constraints, as the Christian Democrats did in Chile. Only some individuals (like Jobert, Charbonnel, Hamon) and small groups (like the UJP) are considering forming a fourth and bourgeois component of the Union of the Left, or a third and a half component, the Radical Party of the Left holding its doors wide open for them.

15. The draft drawn up by the CP and the Socialist Party is a draft for class collaboration: their Common Programme is a class collaborationist programme. There is no doubt that the CP and the SP want to see the Union of the Left broadened and transformed into a classical Popular Front. That is why, because the Left Radicals symbolise and embody the reformists desire for an inter-class alliance, revolutionary militants had to call for a vote only for the CP and SP candidates. But for the moment the Union of the Left represents essentially an alliance between working class reformist, social democratic and stalinist, parties; and one can in no way define Mitterand's candidacy as that of a constituted Popular Front.

The realisation of a draft for class collaboration and the application can be done by an inter-class alliance of the Popular Front sort. But it is not always necessary: the workers reformist parties can form governments on their own. By mixing up a proposed class collaboration and the politics of class collaboration experienced by the masses, by confusing an intended Popular Front with a constituted Popular Front, we are only spreading confusion as to the concrete tasks of revolutionaries. Thus to see a project for class collaboration and an alliance with significant sections of the bourgeoisie as the determining factor in how one should vote, puts revolutionaries in a mesh of insoluble contradictions. It can lead to the generalisation of an abstentionist position, in that it is true that every social democratic and today, Stalinist party has a political line of class collaboration and plans to ally itself to sections of the bourgeoisie. That can make us forget that reformists in government do not necessarily need bourgeois ministers to carry out anti-working class and counter-revolutionary policies. That does not matter much where revolutionary communist policies are concerned at an election; what matters is for the masses to have practical experience of reformism in government to lose their bourgeois-democratic illusions, and to see how the appearance of significant sections of the bourgeoisie (like the army in Allende's government) could cause a change in the attitude of the masses and of revolutionary militants as far as a government of reformist workers organisations is concerned.

That is why, if they had called for abstention in the second round of the presidential elections, the revolutionaries would have been concretely shown up as not allowing the working class to experience reformism in power and its electoral "road" to socialism; they would have been shown up as neutral in a confrontation between on the one hand the workers' movement organised in a reformist direction and on the other hand the totality of the bourgeois representative parties. The essential precondition, in calling for a vote for reformists, is to keep total independence of propaganda and agitation, and to use it.

The candidacy of Charles Piaget (one of the leaders of the Lip struggle, a member of the PSU) in the first round, on the basis of a programmatic agreement, would have, by its symbolic character and its mass resonance, reinforced the impact of revolutionary explanations. When this candidacy did not work out, the FCR used all the means at its disposition in standing Alain Krivine as a candidate in the first round and in leading a campaign, between the two rounds, aimed at making workers suspicious of Mitterand.

16. To denounce the Union of the Left as a constituted Popular Front could only lead to a dangerous confusion of tasks - such as choosing, as the main crux of battle, the split of the CP and the SP from the Left radicals or (for those who consider the SP to be a bourgeois party) the split of the CP from the SP and the Left Radicals. Or errors such as demanding that the

CP apply their programme, when they have not got a programme qualitatively distinct from the Common Programme, and when the Union of the Left is already a first application of their programme.

It is not certain that the Union of the Left would have to transform itself into a classical Popular Front to get into government. The acceptance of the institutions and laws of the Bonapartist string state already gives the CP and the SP important guarantees. This means that the bourgeoisie can keep an omnipotent president above the government, with the right to dissolve parliament. And if a left-wing president were elected, the mechanism of the institutions would release him from the parties he is supposed to represent, free him from his electoral promises and put him into the role of referee between the classes. Thus Mitterand explicitly prepared himself for the role of a left-wing Bonapart by parading himself as a potential president of all the French, by drawing up a presidential charter distinct from the Common Programme (which was limited to agreements about government) and foreseeing a government made up of individual personalities (including communists) rather than of workers' parties as such.

That is why, although it is correct and educational to denounce all attempts at class collaboration, such as the presence of the Left Radicals in the Union of the Left, at the moment the focus of battle should be elsewhere. It should be on the struggle for the self-organisation of the working class, the best guarantee against all future class collaboration. It should be on the struggle for dismantling the strong state, on the struggle for dismantling the 1958 constitution, on the struggle against unfair legal practices for the defence and extension of democratic and working class rights and the struggle for the election, by proportional representation of a Constituent Assembly. Because, contrary to what the reformists claim, dismantling the strong state is not a formal and legalistic pre-occupation, but a fight against the civil war apparatus the bourgeoisie has created and which the reformists are preparing to peacefully occupy rather than destroy.

17.

Two years after the signing of the Common Programme, the CP has already lost its place as the main electoral party of the Left. This simple statement throws light on the powerful contradictions growing in the orientation of the CP. Moreover, the role as a brake or as an election pressure tool, which the CP members inside the CGT are trying to make that union play, has led the union to significant defeats in the election of full-timers to the profit of the CFDT. And finally, the CP was, for the first time, opposed on the left by revolutionary organisations who have, since 1968, gained a significant implantation in the broad workers' vanguard and who are less and less easily labelled as tiny student groups.

The CP has to pay the price for its electoralism. While still obliged to pay some attention to what is happening amongst the masses, the CP, marked by its past, must move further to the right, to re-assure the voters it is courting.

The Union of the Left also benefits the social democrats, who win credibility at elections, and who, without actually committing themselves to anything, try to fool workers by pretending that all the talk about socialism and workers' management comes from them.

The links that the CP has with the USSR is another source of contradictions. No longer are these links a source of prestige for the CP, as they were after October 1917 or even after Stalingrad, useful for its implantation in the working class. The new generation of workers finds it hard to see Brezjnev as a revolutionary hero; the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and its counter-revolutionary foreign policy are more and more widely

known. However, maintaining links with the USSR stays an element in the reformist strategy of the CP. It means they can propose the concrete perspective of a liason or association with the USSR and the Eastern bloc, a political and commerical perspective completely lacking to social democracy. And it is not by coincidence that the Spanish CP, faced with the crisis of Franco's regime, is tightening up its slackened links with the USSR and improving its relations with the Portuguese CP. Neither is it a coincidence that the "exterior" faction of the Greek CP (linked to the USSR) is developing in the same way.

Of course, the Soviet bureaucracy has for many years shown quite openly its support for French bourgeois governments which distanced themselves even slightly from the USA, rather than wait for a left-wing or social-democratic government, of which many of the leaders are pro-American - which explains the visit the Soviet ambassador made to Giscard during the presidential elections. But the Stalinist bureaucracy is realistic and were there a left-wing government it would put pressure on the CP to get the best possible guarantees.

The contradictions faced by the CP illustrate the incompleated process of social democratisation it is undergoing; this social-democratisation is shown in the thre-way modification of the CP's relationships -- with the masses, with the USSR and with the bourgeois state.

A) The masses: with the radicalisation which developed in all the European countries after 1968, the CPs were in a different situation from the one they experienced in 1934-36 or 1945-47. In these two situations the most militant workers to emerge from the struggles were won to the reformist organisations, and in particular the CP which seemed the most left-wing. In both cases the period of upsurge was followed by a period of ebb (world war, cold war) which prevented a real development of revolutionary implantation. After '68 on the other hand, a large number of radicalised workers went beyond the traditional organisations. The continued militancy meant the inroads into reformist domination could be deepened. A broad, new vanguard, free from the control of the traditional leaderships, has developed in the working class and amongst the youth. These factors have caused real problems for the CP and especially for the JC (Young Communists) and the CGT (which is in the middle of the contradiction between the electoralist strategy and the workers' militancy); a standstill or decline of union influence in certain "bastions" (strongly organised factories) together with simultaneous progress amongst technicians and backward sectors, defeats in the professional elections after the strikes, the wearing down of experienced militants and the lifelessness of the factory cells (explaining the accent put on the factory cells at the 20th Congress of the CP).

B) The bourgeois state apparatus. The process of social democratisation of the CP is shown both in the systematic development of parliamentary and electoral illusions (which used to be the principal property of the social democrats) and the absence of any revolutionary education. The success of their reformist orientation has meant that some of the European CPs which are mass parties have been able to win a whole series of positions and benefits comparable to those which traditional social democracy wins: parliamentary and municipal positions, trade union abitration commissions, positions on various associations. The long period of relative stability of West European capitalism and the absence of any big revolutionary upsurge between 1945 and 1968 helped considerably this evolution, in a similar way to the role played by the period of imperialist growth in Europe for the Second International.

C) The USSR: peaceful coexistence and the politics of detente mean the USSR is no longer directly threatened. That does not mean that the existence of Communist parties linked to the Soviet Union is no longer of any importance in their eyes. But it gives them a different function., namely to put pressure on the national bourgeoisies in the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy and to help maintain the international status quo. And in return the USSR no longer has the same role for the CP. After Stalin's crimes were revealed, after Hungary, after Czechoslovakia, the USSR became an embarrassment, not only for the new generation of militants who are turning towards socialism, but also for the "new layers", lower managerial staff, technicians and teachers, whose electoral favours the CP is trying to win. That is why (as a relationship of unconditional allegiance to the USSR is coming into contradiction with the CP's national interests) the European CPs are trying the former strict subordination with "critical fraternity" and put the accent on the national road to socialism.

Although the CP is fully engaged in a process of social democratisation, this process is not completed. The CP has still got a lot of power in the working class, with which it retains strong organisational ties; this means that it can harden its tactics and make its practice more supple to manoeuvre the balance of power in the Union of the Left back into its favour, by playing its implantation against the alliance of the Social Democrats.

Its links with the masses change, but it continues to organise them and is not content to merely influence them electorally. It is more and more involved in running the bourgeois state apparatus, but unlike social democracy it has not been associated for years at a time with the exercise of power. Its links with the USSR are changing function and form without actually breaking. This is how the CP remains a Stalinist reformist party, which does not contradict - far from it - the fact that it has irreversibly joined class collaboration and the bourgeois order. The result of this is however sharp contradictions which during the process of social democratisation will make the CP pay a higher and higher price, without being able to change its politics at all. The 21st special Congress is important for this reason. The CP responded to the contradictions inherent to its line by speaking in a louder voice and tightening up organisationally. But it confirmed the essential line: an appeal to the PME, to national capital, to the Gaullists, and the broadening of the Union of the Left to the "Union of the People of France"

18)

As the main beneficiary of Mitterand's candidacy, the Socialist Party continues its electoral climb and continues to change the relationship of forces in the Union of the Left in its favour. The support it has gained since the Epinay congress is no longer limited to salaried intellectuals and the periphery of the working class. It is beginning in a small way, to get to the heart of the working class by winning cadres of the CFDT (trade union federation). The conference on socialism, held in October 1974, was aimed at speeding up this process. This current of support has a complex significance: it encompasses resolutely reformist and anti-communist positions, as well as anti-stalinist and centrist positions. It is to the right, but in a way also to the left, of the CP.

Discredited by the role it played in De Gaulle's coming to power, the old SFIO found itself at the crossroads in the middle of the 1960s. Its traditional bases in the proletariat, in declining industries, was fading fast. Its top people, its elected officers saw their prerogatives being eaten away by the extension of the

of the strong state. It was forced either to break its last links with the working class and become just another small bourgeois electoral group, as happened to Saragat's Italian Socialist Party and as could not be foreseen by Deferre's catastrophe at the 1969 Presidential elections. Or it could strengthen these links, by decisively rejecting any pawns for a third force of the centre, and joining in a programmatic alliance with the CP. It was this second choice that Mitterand embodies and which is the starting point for his success. In 1969 he was opposed to Deferre's candidacy: "We should be firmly anchored on the left. The CP is our natural ally. I am simply stating that the union of the Left goes via the CP". Also from these origins comes the work done in the CFDT and the re-vitalisation of the traditional relations between the old apparatus of the SFIO and the free-mason bureaucracy of the FO (Force Ouvriere, the third and smallest union in France, notorious as a weak and ineffectual union).

It is not a question of a programmatic choice, but of an electoral necessity: to regain lost ground, social democracy had no other choice than to get new roots in the wage-earning population. If its orientation in this direction meant that it had some successes at first recruiting from the new urban petty bourgeoisie, polarised by the proletariat, it is because of the line of least resistance of the Stalinist apparatus: that does not mean that the SP is a party of the petty bourgeoisie, for which one does not know where autonomy or political homogeneity will come from. Now the SP has regained and re-inforced its electoral positions in the working class itself, including members of the CGT. In the conditions of social and political polarisation which have existed in France since May '68, the SP as a bourgeois party of working class composition hope to break their alliance with other parties, without heading for political suicide, so long as these conditions persist. There will be tension and friction between the CP and the SP, but neither have got an alternative way forward. They are condemned to stay with each other.

19.

In the absence of strong social democratic or revolutionary parties, the CFDT was able to, immediately after 1968, draw in various radicalised centrist and revolutionary syndicalist militants. The atmosphere at the 35th Congress and the themes of socialism based on workers management adequately symbolise this confused radicalisation. Nowadays, the union leadership of Edmond Maire uses the argument of the rebirth of the SP to get the CFDT a position in the wake of the Union of the Left, insisting on the division of tasks between the party and the unions. The only difference between the leaderships of the CFDT and the CGT now tends to be the CFDT's position on the SP and its ideological gloss. It would seem that the period of strained and difficult unity of the CGT and the CFDT which started after May '68, is being replaced by a bureaucratic unity, inaugurated by the "far-reaching" agreement of the 26th June 1974, a real "anti-Lip" agreement, aimed at all forms of workers' self-organisation. In return, this orientation of the leadership has led to the formation of a right-wing opposition within the CFDT (in the name of independence of the union) and a class struggle opposition, oppositions which made themselves felt in the muffled hostility to the planning of the conference.

In the CGT the differentiations are happening more slowly. This is mainly because the existence of clear political perspectives allows the union leadership the use of more subtle tactics than at the time of "responsible unionism". Not having to fear for the moment being outflanked in any big political way, the leadership can go along with and absorb the workers' militancy in much the same way as the Italian union bureaucracy. This attitude was adopted by

the French CP when it changed its line at the time of the demonstrations of young people against the Debre law. For the moment the differentiations in the CGT will not take the form of national currents, but rather there will be local oppositions on the tactics of struggle and on union democracy.

20. With the presidential elections came the end of a political period: that of the period following May '68. The fall of Gaullism, the decadence of the regime, the electoral gains of the Left, and the restructuring now in progress in the workers' movement, sketch the first outline of the period we are entering. The revolutionary extreme left, which, with the exception of the PSU, burst onto the political scene in 1968, has now had six years to think, to consolidate and to harden. It must now settle down to other, more ambitious, tasks. The revolutionary organisations must now show that they are capable of going forward and of bringing about changes in themselves, without which they will regress or fade back into insignificance.

In the past period, whilst the reformists, without any political perspectives, were slamming on the brakes, the extreme left showed it was able to stimulate large-scale mobilisations (campaigns against the Burgos trials, the funeral of Pierre Overney, anti-fascist mobilisations, young people's struggles, anti-imperialist campaigns) and to liven up the support given to exemplary workers' struggles (Joint Francais, Lip). Today reformism, propped up by the electoral successes of the Union of the Left, is weighing heavily on the extreme left.

There is a danger of certain groups leaping into the battle against reformism, and unable to offer a complete alternative, just concentrating on the economic side of struggles at a local level, from day to day, and on sectarianism.

The future of the different groups of the far left will depend:

- on their ability to get a firm base in the broad workers' vanguard
- above all on their attitude to the Union of the Left.

The OCI has for a long time been split from the organised far left. Its inability to understand both the development of the CFDT and the process of recomposition of the workers movement isolates it from part of the broad vanguard. This goes hand-in-hand with its right-wing propagandism and fundamental opportunism towards the reformist leadership and especially towards the old right-wing layers of social democracy.

The long-term project of Lutte Ouvriere is not only the building alongside the CP of a revolutionary workers party, as a result of its own expansion, but also the reconstruction, alongside the reformist unions, of a "clean" workers' movement under its own leadership. This explains their practice of favouring the union divisions wanted by the reformists. Immediately after May '68 Lutte Ouvriere created a facade of unity with the other left groups so as to use the political impact of the whole extreme Left to win the radicalised workers to its own ranks; now LO is orientated to a definite break from the organised extreme left which it characterises as petty bourgeois, and which it sees as an obstacle to its transformation into the revolutionary party.

To this organisational sectarianism is added political opportunism, which has already led to programmatic capitulations (notably on the question of anti-militarism). Its attitude to the Union of the Left is a mixture of right-wing propagandism and in practice a retreat to economism. The inability to comprehend the recomposition of the workers movement leads them to ignore the radicalisation of the CFDT, and to underestimate the rise of the SP, thus limiting its interventions to the effects they will have on the workers of the CP.

This context encourages the resurgence of Maoist-Stalinist tendencies (PCR-HR) who are opposed not only to the CP, but also to workers under the CP's influence. Given this position and their unconditional support for China, the Maoists can be seen as a "hard" alternative by the least sophisticated elements of the broad vanguard.

"Révolution" was formed on the basis of an ultra-left misunderstanding of Stalinism and of a fundamental opportunism towards the various spontaneist and anti-union elements of the broad vanguard. The appearance on the scene of a credible reformist perspective pushed it towards electoral opportunism backed by a retreat into economism, which reveals the fact that they find themselves lacking programmatically compared with the Union of the Left. Logically, they should now orientate themselves towards a centrist adaptation vis-a-vis the left currents in the CFDT, an evolution which has until now been stopped by the relation of forces on the extreme left and by its own sectarianism. The rebirth of Stalinist-Maoist tendencies should force "Révolution" to clarify its deliberately ambiguous position on China, a position which meant that it could parasite off the crisis of Mao-Spontaneism.

Finally, at the very moment when it is necessary and vital to start a process of reorientation inside the extreme left, there is a danger that these groups will respond to a new situation by sectarianism, offering to a broad vanguard which has already learnt the hard way about the bureaucratic functioning of reformist organisations, a caricature of of democratic centralism. It is significant that none of these organisations (LO, Révolution, PCR) recognise the right of tendency formation within the group, and that LO does not hold a conference to decide on policy and elect a leadership.

If the revolutionary extreme left is too weak to oppose reformist perspectives with anything other than propagandist solutions, the conditions are nevertheless better than ever for it to get a strong base in the working class. The reactions to the CP's extraordinary congress at the base, and particularly among the young members show the contradictions engendered by its line. On the other hand, the rejection by the class struggle current in the CFDT and the majority of the PSU of the idea of simply joining forces with the SP show, in their way, a political wariness towards the reformist road, after the experience of May '68 and the tragic example of Chile.

The centrist left of the PSU is from now on in a majority in that organisation. But in the future the party will no longer be able to play the role of arbiter between the ultra-left and the revolutionary marxists (as it did immediately after May) or between the revolutionaries and the reformists (as it did in the more recent period). The new composite leadership will have to clarify its own positions on the fundamental strategic questions on the problems of alliances and on the construction of a revolutionary party.

It will be catastrophic if the groups of the extreme left meet the new situation in a scattered fashion, each sticking fearfully to its own positions. That could only lead to a division and disorientation of the forces looking for a socialist perspective. That could only lead to a defeatist attitude towards the reformists, by waiting for their electoral victory as a necessary step and preparing for a major outflanking in a hypothetical future situation which may never be realised. The mistakes of the Chilean MIR in relation to the Popular Unity should serve as a lesson to us. That is why the development of the extreme left must pass through a major debate on strategic orientation and systematic unified work in various mass activities such as central political campaigns. That does not mean that we must be happy with any old united front of revolutionaries and supporters of workers' management. Revolutionary strategy and socialist workers management, the present situation and the tasks of revolutionaries and the type of party and International we must build are the decisive points to debate on the extreme left. This debate is in no way academic. It will proceed by public confrontations, by discussion at the base and the top of the organisations (in particular national and local meetings of organised workers), joint activities in the unions, in the women's movement, the youth movement, the anti-militarist movement.

Due to their place on the extreme left, the LCR and the PSU have got a particular responsibility for the success of such a step. For it must be clearly said that we must look much farther ahead than the next tactical alliance, the next wary co-operation. On the basis of open and unsectarian practice, we must look ahead to the building of a joint revolutionary organisation - without rushing in to anything, without confusion, without fragile compromises or ambiguities, but with determination. Because it is the necessary instrument for the tasks ahead of us and the conditions are ripening for us to take a decisive step in this direction.

IV - THE PRIORITIES FOR OUR ACTION

21. As we have seen, the French economy has entered a period of recession deeper and longer than ever before. In the crisis of positions of the CP and the SP are noticeably different.

According to the CP the crisis is due to the hold of the big monopolies on the national economy. To improve the state of the economy it will be enough to apply the Common Programme and increase the demand for commodities inside France, by increasing the purchasing power of the consumer. The SP, on the other hand, tries to appear in the eyes of the bourgeoisie as capable of administering the crisis at the expense of the workers, by stabilisation measures. In fact the only cure for the present crisis in the frame work of capitalist relations of production and on an international level is to put pressure on wages and to eliminate unprofitable businesses, while increasing the competitiveness of other businesses. If there were a Union of the Left government, it is obvious that the CP would suffer much more than the SP from putting this kind of policy into practice.

The period '69-74 was principally marked by an attack on the economic level of "marginal" sectors of the working class (small businesses, retail, bank employees and civil servants) a phenomenon linked to the needs of restructuring the French economy. The larger sections of the working class (engineering, chemicals) have on the other hand relatively benefitted from the expansion of the branches of industry (by increased employment and purchasing power).

The economic turnabout now happening means that these "central" sectors will also be gradually affected by the recession. From now on the whole of the working class will have to face an attack by the bourgeoisie both at the level of its purchasing power (limitations on wage rises despite inflation) and at the level of employment (massive increase in unemployment in almost all branches of industry lasting for quite a long time). For the first time since 1967, the objective economic conditions are combining in a way that allows the most important sectors of the class to enter the struggle and the generalisation of workers' struggles!

The government has shown that it is incapable of stopping the dizzying rise of prices. The multinational trusts and the bosses are fighting tooth and nail to keep their profits. Inflation cuts into the purchasing power of workers. To guarantee and improve purchasing power we need: a minimum wage of 1700 francs and a rise of 200 francs for everyone; a sliding scale of wages, allowances and pensions, applicable monthly on a cost of living index worked out by the unions; the suppression of taxes on consumption, and above all of VAT, the salt tax of our times! Steeply rising taxes on wealth!

The official figure already shows 700,000 at the end of 1974. There are many more if you add the hidden unemployed, young people without work, part-time workers. The situation is even worse in the USA and other European countries. The closing down of Titan Coder, the Tanneries d'Annonay and the redundancies at Neogravure foreshadow many others. The workers must not pay the costs of the chaos of capitalism. The Lip workers showed the way!

No to redundancies! No to factory closures! No to de-nationalisation of the nationalised and public sectors! For the right to veto redundancies!

Reduction of the speed of work! A 35 hour week! Sliding scale of working hours: the sharing of work amongst all available hands and minds without a reduction in wages. Vocational training for everyone during working hours!

The satisfaction of these demands is possible, the means exist, the workers can prove this by imposing workers' control of production, supervision of the stocks and the order books!

Opening of the account books! Workers veto on redundancies!
Workers supervision of production!

Expropriation -- that is to say nationalisation without compensation of all the big industrial trusts, an indispensable condition for the democratic planning of the economy at the service of the workers' needs!

To face the discontent of the workers, the bourgeoisie is counting on being able to divide the workers by discrimination on grounds of sex, nationality and race.

Equal wages and equal status for equal work!
Immediate monthly wages and confirmation of staff status for auxiliary workers! For the suppression of modern slave trades!
Against all immigrant controls, against all specific regulations which maintain a barrier between French and immigrant workers, the same political, union and social rights for all workers, regardless of nationality or race!
Immediate opening up of the frontiers! Repeal of the Fontanet-Marcellin circular, which puts immigrants at the mercy of the bosses and the police!
The end of all deportation!
Support for the struggles of immigrant workers! Prohibition of all racist papers, meetings and demonstrations!

23. For the fusion of the unions with the right of tendencies!
For workers democracy and the united workers' control of their own
struggles!

Faced with the united forces of the bosses and government,
workers' unity is indispensable. There are various political currents
in the working class. Each defends its conception of socialism
and how to get there. But permanent debate and the unity of the
working class are not incompatible. We are for the existence of
one unified union organisation; one working class, one union with
the right of tendency! It is now possible to prepare for the
unification of the unions, including the FEN (teachers' union);
by holding big inter-union meetings on factory floor problems;
by creating inter-union committees open to the non-unionised (women,
young people and immigrants in particular).

In struggles and in strikes: the regular holding of a sovereign
general meeting of workers, which takes the decisions and decide
on the various positions. When it is possible, the election of
strike committees, with delegates from all workshops, elected and
recallable; public meetings of the strike committee. The general
meeting and the strike committee strengthen the unity of the
workers, their control on decision making, the formulation of
demands and the negotiations. These can give rise to factory
committees or supervisory committees, to ensure workers' supervision
of job security and of the speed of work, to make sure that the work-
ers gains are respected and maintained after the struggle.

24. Against the bosses gangs and a government of civil war, for the
self-defence of workers organisations and struggles! The right of
organisation and expression for soldiers, workers in uniform!

Since the nasty fright of 1968, the bourgeoisie has been installing
various devices against the working class: increased police force,
more and more bosses gangs and militias, training of the army against
the "internal enemy". You can no longer count the number of strikes
with occupations where the government and the bosses have sent in
the police or their gangs (SAC, CPT). We must respond to these
attacks by workers' self-defence: no more police in the factories!

Massive and mobile pickets! - the embryo of the workers' militia of
tomorrow!

A self-defence pact of workers' organisations against attacks on their
struggles, their meeting places, their militants! Strikes in
solidarity with striking factories faced with police intervention!

The government uses the army against strikes (transport, dustmen,
postmen) and against the struggles for emancipation in the colonies.
The ministers claim that the army is the "last rampart of the liberal
society". The bourgeoisie imposes an iron discipline on its army
and prepares it for the struggle against the "interior enemy", in
other words the workers. Against this army which enrolls young people
and is preparing for civil war, support for the demands of the
Appeal of the Hundred! Under a uniform, the soldier is still a
worker!

Free choice of the place and date of call-up between 18 and 25!
Pay equal to the minimum national wage and free transport!
Reduction of the period of military service to the time necessary
for learning the use of arms!

The right of those who sign on (for regular service) to terminate
their contract! The right of women to learn how to use arms!

No bribery for privileges, free time outside working hours, down with
shutting up soldiers in barracks!

Disbanding of the military police, abolition of military courts,
closure of military prisons! Right to information and freedom of
speech in military confines, right to the political and military
organisation of soldiers.

Support for the struggles of conscientious objectors, dissidents and soldiers in the barracks, unification of the civilian anti-militarist organisations (CDA, CAM, IDS, CSOC). Taking in charge of aid to soldiers by the workers' movement itself, starting with the unions (sponsorship, support for workers demands, unionisation of conscripts).

25. Against the Strong State, defence of democratic liberties, repeal of the 1958 constitution and all special powers! Dismantle the strong state.

On the basis of the military coup d'Etat of 1958 the bourgeoisie set up the strong state. In 16 years of absolute rule, they have increased special powers, the special squads and anti-working class measures. Thus the bourgeoisie has all the means and legal guarantees to paralyse a government of workers' organisations which accepted this framework. That is why we must break, dismantle, the institutions of the strong state.

Repeal of the 1958 constitution! Constituent assembly by proportional representation! Right to vote at 16! Right to vote for immigrant workers! Down with the special courts, the state security court, the "loi ant-casseurs" (anti-wreckers law) Down with detention without trial and the judiciary powers of the police! For the end of special repression commandos: CRS, special brigades and the mobile units! For an end to capital's armed leagues (SAC, CDR, CET)! Complete recognition of the union rights of policemen, including the right to strike!
Abolition of all censorship!

26. Down with French colonialism! Solidarity with the peoples in struggle! Unconditional independence for the French colonies! French troops out of Africa!

For the end of arms sales to the dictatorships! France out of the Atlantic pact! Down with imperialist military pacts! For the end of police and military collaboration with Franco's dictatorship!

For the defence of political prisoners in Spain, Chile, Brazil, Ceylon, South Vietnam, Israel, Czechoslovakia, the USSR.....and to all peoples fighting for their national and social emancipation! Total freedom of activity and movement for political refugees! Co-ordination of workers' organisations and struggles on a European scale!

27. For a workers' government! For a government of workers' organisations imposed by the mobilisation of the working class!

With a president just barely elected, Giscard's regime is on reprieve. With the threats of crisis, of unemployment and a high cost of living, the workers know they cannot wait for a hypothetical victory at the elections. They know their demands can be won by a third round of social struggle which can make the government meet their demands. And if the government holds out, they can bring it down with a general strike.

But to guarantee the workers' victories on a long-term scale, we must go further, towards the setting up of a real workers' government! Only a workers' government can satisfy their demands for the expropriation of large capital, for the organisation of a democratically planned economy, for a great reduction in working hours, for the setting up of a state monopoly of foreign trade, the purging of the administration, the dismantling of the Strong state, the arming of the workers against reaction and the move towards the United Socialist States of Europe, the workers answer to a capitalist Europe.

The Union of the Left, which the socialist party and the Communist Party propose as a concrete alternative to right-wing governments, illustrates the perspective of class collaboration of these parties. We must demand first of all the breaking of all ties, all agreements and all compromises between workers' organisations and bourgeois organisations. To workers who ask how we can get rid of this anti-social regime and what we should replace it with, we must answer: by the co-ordination, generalisation and centralisation of the struggles, by setting up a government of workers' organisations, elected or not, based on the mobilisation of the workers, to put into action a genuine anti-capitalist programme!

V- HOW DO WE GO TO THE MASSES?

28. Our analysis of the political situation, of the crisis of the regime and of the reformists answer, defines the framework of our work in the masses, the conditions for the penetration of our slogans.

Although the relationship of forces between the reformist parties and the communist vanguard is heavily in favour of the former, it is tending to change with the emergence and maturing of a broad vanguard, which emerged from the struggles, and which is breaking in a lasting way from reformist practice in struggles, without spontaneously adopting in consequence an entire revolutionary programme.

In answer to the question, "Who are we trying to reach?" we say: the masses of course, but while taking account of their experience, their different levels of consciousness and forms of organisation. We address the masses starting from the needs and pre-occupations which flow objectively from their situation (and not from such needs as the reformists express in their way) to win over the confidence they still give largely to the reformist leaderships. In this battle, the existence of a broad workers vanguard means we can take certain initiatives when they are necessary and not trail behind the reformist leaderships; we can respond, as far as our means permit us, to the tasks put on the order of the day during class struggles, and we can confront the reformists with their responsibilities.

Although we can turn to the masses and teach the workers of vanguard to turn to their class brothers who have not yet understood as much as they have, that does not mean that we can directly organise the masses, independently of the reformist leaderships, apart from exceptional circumstances. Any mass organisation in which the reformists do not participate is automatically faced with the problem of how to relate to the reformists. All the more, because the changes of the last few months (the development of the broad vanguard, the strengthening of revolutionary communists on the extreme left), it is still impossible to impose on the reformists a systematic unity of action from rank and file to leadership. That is, unless one trails behind their initiatives. Our way forward aims at taking up campaigns and starting actions which impose and propose systematically unity in action with the reformists, within the perspective of an Anti-Capitalist United Front.

Within this line of march, we oppose those who idolise the broad workers' vanguard, seeing it as a replacement proletariat, as we oppose those who despise or ignore the vanguard because it is confused, and who prefer to look to the reformist organisations in a privileged manner.

29. Our perspectives will take firmer shape according to the type of mobilisation of social forces in play and the type of unity which results from them.

The unions represent, despite their bureaucratic practices, a permanent framework for united work between revolutionaries and reformists, on the basis of defence of workers' interests and of their class independence. In the unions we aim to build broad tendencies grouping advanced workers around an orientation of class struggle, underlining that such a tendency must pose the question of political channels for the struggle. If our lack of forces stops us announcing the formation of such a tendency on a national scale in the CGT or CFDT, we can get on with creating more or less stable tendencies at a local level.

These local tendencies would, of course, mainly distinguish themselves on questions of trade union practice.

In those areas where there is no organic unity with reformists, we see two possibilities. In anti-imperialist organisations (FSI and Chile committees) and anti-militarist committees (CDA) the centre of gravity goes mainly through the broad vanguard, although during campaigns and mobilisations the local committees would draw people from much broader layers. It would be naive to think that these organisations could attract reformist currents by lowering the political content of their platforms: they would thus lose the means of winning and educating the broad vanguard, without even having organic unity with the reformists. Only in action can unity be imposed on the reformists, as has been illustrated by the campaigns of the Secours Rouge (Red Help), Burgos, the FSI, the Chile committees and to a lesser extent, locally, the CDA.

In those fields where there is a specific social base of radicalisation, the dialectical relation between the masses, the broad vanguard and the communist vanguard takes on a particular form. There result also specific organisational responses. This is the case in the women's movement which can, despite the absence of reformists as such, organise local groups which contain a wide variety of levels of consciousness, and a wide variety of ideological currents. We can create within the movement a nationally co-ordinated class struggle wing. This is also the case in the movements of the youth, where unity with the reformists happens periodically in struggles, through strike committees or mobilisation, without the possibility of the existence of a permanent united mass organisation, apart from the front organisations of one group or another.

In the final analysis, the forms of organisation in these various areas, their united character and their type of platform depend on the development of the relation of forces between reformists and revolutionaries in the workers movement.

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Within this line of work, we oppose those who believe the broad workers' vanguard, seeing it as a replacement proletariat, as we oppose those who debate or ignore the vanguard because it is confused, and who prefer to look to the reformist organisations in a privileged manner.