



International Trotskyist Review

**THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL TROTSKYIST COMMITTEE**

for the Political Regeneration of the Fourth International

Number 3
Autumn 1988

**The Founding Documents of the
Trotskyist International Liaison
Committee (TILC) -
December 1979**

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!

**THE FOUNDING DOCUMENTS OF THE TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL
LIAISON COMMITTEE (TILC)—DECEMBER 1979**

CONTENTS

Introduction: Why We Reprint Two Old Documents	1
Note on Texts	3
Resolution on "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle"	7
The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle	15
Declaration of Intent	58

Provisional address:

**ITC c/o RWL
P.O. Box 1297
Detroit, Michigan 48231
USA**

INTRODUCTION: WHY WE REPRINT TWO OLD DOCUMENTS

In this number of *ITR* we reprint two of the three founding documents of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC), the predecessor organization of the International Trotskyist Committee (ITC). (The third founding document, TILC's "Programmatic Bases" or "Nine Points," substantially revised, became in July 1984 one of the ITC's four founding documents, "The Programmatic Principles of the International Trotskyist Committee.")

We do not republish these two texts, adopted in December 1979 and April 1980 and long ago buried by the leadership that originally proposed them, because we regard them as in all respects exemplary documents. Rather, we republish them because they are a part of our own political heritage as central expressions of the politics of TILC and the British Workers Socialist League (WSL), headed by Alan Thornett and John Lister, which founded, led, and ultimately abandoned TILC. This does not mean that we see the major importance of these documents in the key points of consistent Trotskyism summed up in them that the ITC has carried over into its own struggles today. Since, not surprisingly, we prefer our own, clarified and more precise summaries of these points, we would find little more than archival interest in these texts ourselves if all they amounted to were somewhat primitive expressions of our own positions.

We think these two documents reveal especially well, in their peculiar combination of remarkable political strengths and dangerous political weaknesses, the contradictions of the Thornett-Lister leadership of the WSL and TILC and thus the contradictions out of which, in a sense, our own tendency was born.

TILC's two central distinctive principles were: 1) the continuing validity of the Transitional Program and the necessity of its application in the day-to-day class struggle and 2) the necessity of the revolutionary regroupment of Trotskyists through a fight for the principled reconstruction of the Fourth International. These principles summed up the most essential lessons derived from the experience of the Thornett leadership and the WSL from its formation in 1974 in struggle against Healyite sectarianism, through a series of extraordinary trade union struggles over the course of the 1970s, to the decision—following years of largely fruitless discussions with other currents laying claim to Trotskyism—to form TILC as a nonsectarian antirevisionist international organization, developing toward democratic centralism on the basis of essentially Thornettite politics.

In founding TILC, the WSL and the Thornett-Lister leadership took a small but decisively important step toward resolving the crisis of the Fourth International by creating a structure aimed at quickly forming a democratic-centralist international tendency to struggle among all the fragments of the Fourth International for its reconstruction on a principled, orthodox Trotskyist basis. Just as this step expressed, more than any other action, the considerable political and practical strengths of the WSL and its leadership, so the abandonment of TILC by Thornett and Lister little more than three years after its foundation—in the interests of a purely British fusion with the rightward-moving, Labour Party-liquidationist organization headed by Sean Matgamna—expressed an acute political degeneration of a kind only too typical of the revisionism, maneuverism, and cynicism of all the major Trotskyist-centrist trends of the crisis of the Fourth International. The two TILC documents below reveal in their main features both the distinctive political strengths that gave TILC its decisive—if primarily potential—importance and signs of the only too typical objectivism and confusion that have, tragically, been hallmarks of the crisis TILC was formed to resolve.

We reprint these TILC documents, then, for two major reasons.

First, they are crucial pieces of evidence related to the political struggle waged by the forces that eventually formed the ITC to save TILC from the wheelings and dealings of the Thornett-Matgamna fusion and develop it into the democratic-centralist international tendency it had been formed to create. Over and over again we employed Lister's own language in "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" to expose and condemn the national Trotskyism and maneuverism that had, by the end of 1982, become the prevailing traits of Thornett and Lister's politics as they clung desperately to fusion with Matgamna as a substitute for the organizational gains they had previously imagined would appear through the magical workings of the "ever forward movement of the working class." At the same time our own struggle to save TILC and what it stood for implied a rejection of the objectivist tendencies and deliberate political vagueness that marred these texts and, sadly, had come to express the prevailing elements in Thornettism in the 1980s. In founding the ITC we were compelled, explicitly and systematically, to reject these elements of objectivism and confusionism in TILC's legacy.

In other words, we present these two texts as important expressions of the contradictions we were ourselves compelled to resolve and overcome in the process of forming the ITC.

Beyond this, we also present these TILC documents as especially valuable to study precisely because of the peculiar way in which they combine expression of decisively important and rare political strengths with objectivist tendencies ultimately typical of and central to the centrist degeneration that has been the most fundamental feature of the *overall* crisis of the Fourth International. The confusion of Trotskyism with militant workerism and a mindless optimism born of endless enthusing over spontaneous workers' struggles is especially a danger in periods of upsurge in the class struggle. The study of these TILC documents can help today's Trotskyist militants understand the pervasive failure of *all* the Trotskyist-centrist trends to make real gains in the worldwide upsurge of the 1960s and 1970s and so help avoid the repetition of grave mistakes in the upsurges to come in the 1990s.

In July 1984 the Founding Conference of the ITC adopted a resolution calling for the reprinting of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle," along with a critical introduction and commentary. Since this resolution itself contains a comprehensive statement of our overall critical assessment of this document, we have printed it before the two TILC texts as the critical introduction and commentary it calls for.

The TILC "Declaration of Intent," printed after "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle," is, in effect, a brief statement of the main points of the longer document most pertinent to the reconstruction of the Fourth International. While clarifying a number of the key elements in TILC's attitude toward Trotskyist regroupment, it also makes clearer the political confusion necessarily flowing from the Thornett leadership's incapacity to characterize the various revisionist trends scientifically.

Thus, in the Introduction adopted in April 1980, the Healyites and Spartacists (who had just hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan) cozily rub shoulders in the "world Trotskyist movement" with the Morenists, Mandelites, Lambertists, and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Meanwhile, the Declaration proper announces that the Mandelites, Lambertists, and Healyites have simply "abandoned the principles and method of the Transitional Program" (but apparently not the Spartacists or the Morenists) while implicitly rejecting characterizing *any* of these trends as centrist (point 3, paragraphs 1, 5, 7). (Amendments submitted by the Italian and French comrades at TILC's founding conference to correct some of this confusion were rejected by the conference.)

Further information on the history of TILC and further political analysis of the crisis of TILC can be found in the Introduction to *ITR* 1 and in the ITC's balance sheet of TILC, to be published in *ITR* 4.

Resident Secretariat
International Trotskyist Committee
July 1988

NOTE ON TEXTS

The final, amended text of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" is published in English here for the first time. That the publication of the final form of TILC's major founding document has fallen to the ITC is due to the fact that the handling of this document by the TILC Secretariat became itself an expression of the crisis of TILC.

The Workers Socialist League of Britain circulated the first draft of this document, signed by John Lister, editor of the WSL's weekly newspaper, and dated June 1979, in an internal bulletin "issued prior to [the] WSL International Summer School, July 1979." After internal discussion in the WSL and a process of revision and additions, in which it is clear a number of WSL comrades made substantial contributions (although Lister may have drafted the actual changes in the text), the WSL published the second draft in its *International Discussion Bulletin*, no. 1, November 1979. The text in this bulletin—in effect an international preconference bulletin—was the text used in the discussions and decisions at TILC's founding conference.

The TILC founding conference, held 28-31 December 1979 in Oxford, adopted some forty-six amendments, many substantial and some quite extensive, all but six or seven of these submitted by a delegation of Italian and French comrades functioning at the conference as the Committee for an International Bolshevik-Leninist Faction (CIBLF), organized by the Italian Gruppo Bolscevico-Lenista (GBL). The CIBLF amendments had been drafted in Italian. The TILC founding conference, which deliberated in English, discussed the CIBLF amendments on the basis of a rough English translation supplied by the CIBLF and oral explanation. (Our copy of this CIBLF English translation contains only the first twenty of the fifty-four amendments proposed by the CIBLF.)

After the TILC founding conference, a three-page insert containing amendments to "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" was printed by the WSL and circulated with copies of the November 1979 WSL *International Discussion Bulletin* as a temporary measure pending production of the final text of TILC's founding documents. For the amendments which had been drafted in Italian (the overwhelming majority of amendments adopted), this insert had only a very rough English translation—generally adequate but at some points unreadable, at others only barely comprehensible—which Lister had revised after the founding conference in only extremely minor ways and obviously without reference to the Italian original.

In reality it was not until April 1983 that the TILC Secretariat (that is, in practice, John Lister) got around to producing some sort of final text of this document. Preoccupied with its unprincipled national fusion with the Matgamnaites, the Thornett-Lister leadership had dramatically deprioritized even the most basic TILC technical work, in effect preparing the way for its political decision to scuttle TILC altogether as a concession to Matgamna.

In producing his version of a final text of TILC's central political document, Lister showed his sense of priorities even more than in the previous months of delay. Lister simply scissored-

and-pasted together the November 1979 text and the three-page amendments insert and made (bad) photocopies of the result. In the process, Lister omitted entire amendments and parts of amendments and stuck other amendments into the text at the wrong points. He brought a stack of copies of this useless text to the April 1983 TILC meeting, abandoning them under a chair when he walked out of the meeting—and TILC itself—in a fit of personal pique at the sheer prospect of the left tendency in TILC putting forward motions aimed at saving TILC that he didn't like.

For the portions of the document originally drafted in English and not amended (the bulk of the document), we have based our text on the text in the November 1979 WSL *International Discussion Bulletin*. We have used the June 1979 draft to check suspected typographical errors and in checking one CIBLF amendment that refers to this earlier draft. We have corrected grammatical and typographical errors in this text and considerably repunctuated its original very careless punctuation. All quotations have been checked against sources available in 1979, corrections made, and references supplied. Some inconsistent usages have been rendered consistent. We have naturally made no change in either meaning or style. Where correcting a grammatical or some other mistake would alter meaning (as when grammatical confusion is inseparable from a certain confusion of thought), the mistake has been left uncorrected. We have expanded many abbreviations and added one explanatory phrase (identifying Euskadi as “the Basque country”).

For the WSL's own amendments, naturally originally drafted in English, we have based our text on the 1980 three-page amendments insert. We have used this insert as well to establish which amendments were adopted and the final text of amendments that were themselves amended during the course of the conference. However, Lister's carelessness in the handling of this document forced us to collate even those amendments submitted originally by the WSL in English with the Italian texts (see below), to make sure nothing was left out.

For obvious reasons, we have had to retranslate the amendments originally drafted in Italian. We have used two Italian texts. The first text appears in a GBL *Bollettino interno* dated 24 February 1980 (“Emendamenti presentati e votazioni alla pre-conferenza di Oxford [28-31 dicembre 1979]”). This internal bulletin contains the original Italian text of all the amendments to “The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle” proposed by the CIBLF, an Italian translation of the four amendments proposed by the Danish comrades, along with careful indications of the action taken by the TILC founding conference on each amendment. The second text is the very careful Italian translation (with a few discrepancies) of the final, amended document printed in the GBL's journal, *Il Militante*, no. 19, summer-winter 1980.

For the two amendments from the Danish comrades adopted by the conference and all the adopted CIBLF amendments, these two Italian texts have been the basis of our text, the later Italian text being normally preferred where the two texts differed. (We have not had the capacity to consult the Danish translation of the final text.)

Given the mess left by the TILC Secretariat, certain arbitrary editorial decisions have been inevitable.

Since we have felt compelled to retain the paragraphing of the November 1979 text, we should point out that this document was originally drafted to be printed on pages divided into two columns—thus the journalistic convention of short paragraphs, which in our format sometimes looks a bit ridiculous.

Our text of the “Declaration of Intent” is based on the text published in TILC's *International Discussion Bulletin*, no. 2, 1980, with typographical and grammatical mistakes corrected, some abbreviations expanded, and format clarified. The TILC founding conference adopted twelve

CIBLF amendments to the "Declaration of Intent." We have checked these portions of the final text of the "Declaration" against the Italian original of these amendments (in the *Bollettino interno* cited above), the final Italian text (in *Il Militante*, no. 19), and the CIBLF's English translation used at the conference. We have retranslated one amendment.

We have taken the text of the ITC "Resolution on 'The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle'" from the *International Internal Bulletin of the International Trotskyist Committee*, 1985 series, no. 1, part 1. Quotations and references have been altered where necessary to conform to the final text printed in this *ITR* and references clarified and expanded. Two explanatory phrases have been inserted in the first paragraph of the second section of the resolution: "(the Yaffeism)" in sentence 5; "(the Healyism)" in sentence 6.

ITR
July 1988

RESOLUTION ON "THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM IN TODAY'S CLASS STRUGGLE"

Adopted by the Founding Conference of the
International Trotskyist Committee
27 July 1984

The First International Conference of the International Trotskyist Committee (ITC) recognizes "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" as an important document in the historical development of our tendency and part of our political heritage. "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" was the central programmatic document of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC) from its founding in December 1979 through its transformation into the ITC in July 1984.

For nearly five years "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" served as the main political reference point for TILC. The document differentiated TILC not only from the social democrats, Stalinists, and petty-bourgeois nationalists but also from the various Trotskyist-centrist currents. It strongly put forward two central tenets of TILC: 1) The crisis of world proletarian leadership can be resolved only through the application of the Transitional Program by consistent revolutionists—that is, Trotskyists—in the course of the class struggle. 2) None of the existing international tendencies claiming to be Trotskyist can be regarded as the Fourth International or the "embryo" of the Fourth International, nor can TILC be regarded as such. Rather, the Fourth International must be politically regenerated and organizationally reconstructed through a process of regroupment of consistent Trotskyists, Trotskyist-centrists won to consistent Trotskyism, and non-Trotskyist revolutionaries won to Trotskyism.

While recognizing the historical and political importance of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle," the First International Conference of the ITC does not adopt the document as a founding document of the ITC for three reasons: 1) The document is dated, having been written in 1979 as half program, half international perspectives document. 2) The document contains a number of major political weaknesses, most importantly a tendency to regard the ascendancy of the consistent Trotskyists and the victory of the world revolution as automatically guaranteed by the "ever-forward movement" of the workers' class struggle under the impact of the "ever-worsening" capitalist economic crisis. 3) The document is written in a rambling, journalistic style with many imprecise political formulations.

Taken together, these problems make revision of the document an almost impossible task. Fortunately, such revision is also an unnecessary task. The programmatic parts of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" have been superseded by more precise and concise documents, "The Programmatic Principles of the International Trotskyist Committee" and "The Crisis of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Consistent Trotskyists," adopted by the First International Conference of the ITC. The international perspectives parts have been superseded by events and by statements since 1979 from TILC and from its sections and sympathizing sections.

1. Political Strengths of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle"

The most important political strength of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" is its advocacy of the political method implied by its title: the application of the Transitional Program in the class struggle—the transitional approach.

A readiness to fight for the demands and methods of the Transitional Program and to give leadership in all struggles—no matter how partial—must be the general orientation of the Trotskyist movement. (“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle,” section 5, “The Fight in the Trade Unions”; below, p. 26. All quotes following are from this document. All emphases indicated in quoted matter are in the original.)

Through the transitional approach, the revolutionary organization helps mobilize and lead workers, helps politicize struggles and raise workers’ consciousness, exposes the existing misleaderships of the working class, and wins and consolidates politically advanced workers.

“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” has a correct overall understanding of the curve of development of the world capitalist economy. It recognizes that monopoly capitalism—imperialism—is reactionary not only politically but also economically. It recognizes that world capitalism stabilized in the 1950s and 1960s, based on the post-World War II defeat of the world working class due to social-democratic, Stalinist, and petty-bourgeois-nationalist betrayals. It recognizes that a new period of economic stagnation and decline began with the 1970s and will continue until it is ended by socialist revolution or capitalist disaster.

On the basis of this economic understanding, “The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” reaffirms the revolutionary potential of the working class worldwide. The imperialists and their hangers-on, the neocolonial capitalists, and even the Stalinist bureaucrats can find no way out of the economic crisis. They have entered into political crisis as they attempt to counter the growing combativity of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, in the neocolonies, and in the degenerated and deformed workers’ states. The class struggle is intensifying worldwide, and the world political situation is polarizing. The alternatives of socialism or barbarism are becoming more and more sharply defined.

“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” correctly reaffirms the centrality of the crisis of proletarian leadership.

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.

This characterization of the epoch, which is central to the Trotskyist Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International in 1938, remains absolutely valid both in the light of the experience of the last forty years and the reality of the class struggle today.

Its conclusion—the necessity for the building of independent Trotskyist parties to lead the struggles of the oppressed masses in every country—has also been vindicated, though in a negative way, time and time again by the counterrevolutionary maneuvers and open treachery of all the currents of reformism and Stalinism. (Section 1, “The Transitional Program: Valid Today!”; p. 15)

The resolution of the crisis of proletarian leadership requires that Trotskyists combat and defeat the existing leaderships of the mass organizations of the working class. This can be done through the fight for the demands of the Transitional Program in the course of the class struggle. “The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” says the following about the fight for leadership in the trade unions.

Whatever the struggle—whether it be for transitional demands or simply on basic trade union rights—Trotskyists must be able to attract forces by finding the

point of conflict with the trade union bureaucracies from which the fight could develop. (Section 5, "The Fight in the Trade Unions"; p. 26)

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" correctly insists on the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism. Stalinist bureaucracies may undertake progressive actions—for example, aid to anti-imperialist struggles. But this does not change the overall counterrevolutionary character of their policies. The bureaucrats are "aiding" the anti-imperialist struggle in order to control and limit it and in order to get leverage to force the imperialists to make a deal at the expense of the world revolution.

At the same time, "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" calls for unconditional defense of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states against imperialist attack.

Trotskyists *defend* the progressive economic base of the workers' states—the nationalized property relations—against *all* forms of attack by imperialism. But at *no* point do we relent in the struggle for the political program and practical actions that can enable the workers within these deformed states to consolidate their independent strength and mount the necessary armed overthrow of their bureaucratic gangster rulers. (Section 12, "The Deformed and Degenerated Workers' States," subsec. e, "Against 'State Capitalist' and Pabloite Revisionism"; p. 48)

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" has a relatively extensive section (section 13) on women workers, in which it correctly links the struggle for women's emancipation to the struggle for socialism. Women's oppression results from the economic and social conditions capitalism requires for its survival. The current intensification of women's oppression results from the intensifying capitalist crisis. Trotskyists must put forward a revolutionary working-class perspective for fighting against women's oppression and a socialist perspective for ending it.

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" takes a generally quite good position on the fight to end gay oppression.

At the same time, revolutionaries must declare themselves and show themselves in practice to be fundamentally opposed to *all* forms of sexual discrimination and oppression—including the state repression of homosexual men and women. Their sexuality is seen as a challenge to the "norms" of the bourgeois family unit and to the reactionary attempts by the Stalinist bureaucracies to preserve and strengthen these "norms."

In taking up this basic democratic issue, we stress the link between sexual oppression and the desperate measures by crisis-ridden capitalism to divide the working class along racial and sexual lines and to reassert its crumbling, reactionary, imperialist moral values. Marxists must challenge and expose all of the pseudo-"scientific" rationalizations devised by bourgeois ideologists to reinforce racist and sexist notions. (Section 13, "Turn to the Woman Worker!"; p. 49)

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle," in section 14 ("Forward with the Youth!"), rightly stresses the importance of youth to any serious revolutionary perspective. Youth tend to have more of the idealism, militance, self-sacrifice, and energy needed for revolutionary struggle. They tend to be in the forefront of all struggles of the working class and will be the basis for reconstructing the Fourth International.

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" contains an extensive and generally correct critique of Pabloism and the deficient and in the end degenerate "anti-Pabloism" of the

International Committee. The Pabloites adapted to the Stalinist, social-democratic, and petty-bourgeois-nationalist misleaders of the working class. They in practice abandoned the struggle to build Trotskyist parties nationally and internationally as alternative leaderships. The "anti-Pabloites" too often attempted to defend their "orthodoxy" by imposing idealist schemas on reality. In the end, most of them adapted to nonproletarian leaderships even more ferociously than did the "Pabloites."

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" correctly rejects the claims of any of the existing international tendencies to represent the political continuity of the Fourth International. It calls for the reconstruction of the Fourth International on a principled basis.

Only a fundamental political *break* from the opportunist organizational and political compromises of the past can open the door to real unity in action. This is why the signatories to this program insist that, in the ideological arming of the working class and the intervention of Marxists into the labor movement, there must be agreement on the need for parties and a reconstructed International constructed on the Bolshevik pattern, based on the political and organizational principle of *democratic centralism*. This means complete democracy within the movement in arriving at decisions, combined with strict adherence by all members to centralized discipline in carrying out the decisions of the majority. (Section 16, "Reconstruct the Fourth International"; p. 56)

2. Political Weaknesses of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle"

The economic analysis of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" correctly characterizes the present period as one of general economic decline in all the capitalist countries. But it tends to misstate and overstate this, creating the impression of an "ever-worsening economic crisis." The document describes capitalism as an *absolute* fetter on the further development of production, which is not true. Its economic analysis is an eclectic combination of Yaffeism and Healyism. First (the Yaffeism) the falling tendency of the rate of profit marches in idealist fashion through history. Then (the Healyism) a Wall Street panic breaks out, leading to the collapse of an overextended system of credit. The document provides no sense of the ups as well as downs of the world capitalist economy even during a period when its overall curve of development is turning down.

A strength of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" is its affirmation of the revolutionary potential of the working class worldwide. However, this strength is converted into a weakness when it leads to groundless optimism on a day-to-day basis, rather than historical optimism based on a Marxist understanding of the laws of history and of capitalist society. Throughout "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" the working class always advances, never retreats.

This view contributed to the disorientation of the Thornett leadership of the Workers Socialist League of Britain (WSL) during the post-1979 ebb in the British class struggle. Thornett began looking for shortcuts in the form of the WSL's desperate fusion with the International Communist League (ICL) and the "fused" WSL's opportunist intervention into the 1980-1982 crisis of the British Labour Party. Thornett failed in his political responsibility to carry through to a decisive outcome the fight against the revisionism and opportunism of the Matgamna leadership of the WSL when he could not rely on the "forward movement" of the working class automatically to defeat Matgamna for him. The Thornett leadership also argued repeatedly and wrongly within TILC that the working class was advancing rather than retreating outside of Britain—for example, in Italy and the US.

“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” correctly argues for the application of the Transitional Program in the class struggle. But it focusses almost exclusively on the mobilization of the masses in struggle against the capitalists and the labor bureaucrats. This is only one aspect of a dialectical process. The other aspect is the winning of the proletarian vanguard, the recruitment and consolidation of politically advanced workers to build the revolutionary party. In general, the tasks of winning the vanguard and winning the masses are inseparable. In order to do *either* for any period of time, a revolutionary organization must do *both*—through the fight for transitional demands and the application of the policy of the united front in the course of the class struggle. However, the emphasis given the two aspects of the process varies depending on the state of the class struggle and the size and influence of the revolutionary organization.

As a small organization, the WSL should always have given more emphasis than it did to the recruitment and consolidation of politically advanced workers. The need for a shift in this direction became acute when the ebb in the British class struggle meant that the WSL could no longer lead mass struggles on the scale it had previously been able to. The WSL failed to shift emphasis from “winning the masses” to “winning the vanguard” and went into crisis.

“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” correctly calls for an intransigent fight in the unions and the other workers’ organizations in order to dislodge the bureaucratic misleaders and replace them with revolutionary leadership. However, the document directs most of its fire at the Stalinist misleaders. It criticizes the petty-bourgeois nationalists somewhat less and the social-democratic misleaders least of all. Even with the amendments from the Italian Bolshevik-Leninist Group (GBL) in 1979, the document tends to be somewhat soft on the social democrats. It is no accident that Thornett should conciliate Matgamna, who adapted to the “left” Labour Party bureaucrats.

“The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle” correctly states that “the culmination of the struggle for [the workers’-government] demand must in the final instance—as in Russia in October 1917—be the definitive break with and destruction of the political forms, institutions, and state machinery of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*” (Section 9; p. 31). However, the document continues with an ambiguous statement which can be read to imply that a reformist “workers’ government” is an *inevitable* step in the development of the struggle for socialist revolution.

The workers’-government slogan thus contains within it the dynamic of the class struggle in which the working class, gaining in strength and self-confidence, demands increasingly more of its bureaucratic mass leaders, to the point where it insists that these leaders break from the bourgeoisie, take power in their own hands, and implement measures in the interests of the proletariat. (Section 9, “The Workers’ Government Demand”; p. 31)

The class struggle *may* develop in this direction—with the intervention of a revolutionary party. But it may not. The working class may abandon its former mass leaders *before* it demands that they take state power.

The ambiguity of this passage was not decisive for TILC, because TILC also had the “Fundamental Programmatic Principles” (“The Nine Points”), which is absolutely clear on the question of the workers’ government. But confusion around the workers’ government was quite important for the WSL. The ICL-WSL draft fusion platform, written by Matgamna and amended by Lister, contained a passage on the workers’ government which could only be read as implying that a reformist “workers’ government” is an inevitable step in the development of the class struggle. Moreover, the “fused” WSL, at Matgamna’s insistence, did not subscribe to the founding documents of TILC.

At the GBL's insistence, the ICL-WSL fusion platform was amended to clear up the confusion Matgamna was attempting to create. But it is of no small importance in the subsequent degeneration of the WSL that Thornett and Lister could be so easily confused over so basic a question.

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" correctly characterizes Stalinism as counterrevolutionary. But it goes overboard in this characterization and lapses into Stalinophobia. As mentioned above, the document denounces Stalinism disproportionately more than social democracy. It stresses the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism to the point where the reader wonders how the Soviet and other Stalinist bureaucracies could have been an instrument for the overthrow of capitalist property in countries containing one-quarter of the world's population. The document even strongly suggests that the Stalinist bureaucracies of Yugoslavia, Romania, and China may bring about or permit capitalist restoration in the near future.

It is little wonder that the WSL right wing could remain comfortably within the WSL and have a position effectively opposed to defense of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states against imperialism. Nor is it any wonder that the Thornett leadership never fought out the issue of Afghanistan with the Matgamna leadership, which effectively took a nondefensist position, too.

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" overall makes clear TILC's principled stand against racism, national chauvinism, and other forms of oppression of racial, national, or ethnic minorities. However, the document has no section specifically on such oppression. Moreover, its treatment of racial, national, and ethnic oppression, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, is neither comprehensive nor systematic enough to provide a guide for revolutionary action.

"The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" correctly refuses to recognize the claims of any of the existing international tendencies to represent the political continuity of the Fourth International. The document correctly refuses to claim that TILC—or the WSL—is such. Nonetheless, the document manages to be both somewhat opportunist and somewhat sectarian at the same time. The opportunism emerges, for example, in the following passage.

At the same time, we stress the refusal of *any* of the main currents of postwar Trotskyism objectively to examine the roots of the crises that have split and confused the world movement and reduced it to its present anarchic state. This refusal to discuss the experiences of the fight for the program means that *none* of the existing international tendencies is equipped to lay claim to represent the political continuity of the Fourth International or to lead the fight for its reconstruction. (Section 15, "Against Unprincipled Revisionism"; p. 55)

Having spent five pages critiquing Pabloite revisionism, the document seems to reduce the question to a "refusal to discuss the experiences of the fight for the program"! In other words, *revisionism is reduced to sectarianism*. The Thornett leadership, particularly Lister, made the same reduction in their "struggle" with Matgamna. They focussed on the secondary problem of Matgamna's well known "factionalism," rather than the primary problem of his opportunist revisionism.

The sectarianism emerges, for example, in the document's proposed solution to the crisis of the Fourth International.

It is for this reason that the signatories of this document agree to undertake the task of fighting on a world scale for the necessary principled discussion of the program and historical experiences of the Fourth International, which alone can lay

the basis for it to be reconstructed as a disciplined, democratic-centralist, united, world party adequate to the task of leading the world's proletariat in the fight for its emancipation. (Section 15, "Against Unprincipled Revisionism"; p. 55)

The document's solution—"discussions" with international tendencies whose leaderships have no interest in discussions—is hopelessly inadequate. The reader can only assume that the authors of the document really do not have any idea how to intervene in the crisis of the Fourth International. Nor do they seem to have much interest in developing policies which might be effective.

This apparently sectarian indifference was borne out by the failure of the WSL leadership—TILC's leadership—to devote enough resources to international work to undertake any serious initiatives. It was also borne out by the old, pre-fusion WSL leadership's conciliation of the national-sectarian Matgamna leadership and their willingness to abandon their own international organization, TILC, for what they perceived to be their national "advantage."

In addition to these specific political weaknesses which proved significant in the WSL's subsequent degeneration and the TILC split, "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" is marred by a loose, journalistic style and many, many imprecise formulations. Most of these cannot be attributed to systematic political errors. But they make revision of the document by a process of specific amendments rather than rewriting all but impossible. Randomly opening the document at page 34, for example, one finds the following lead paragraph in the section on permanent revolution.

The diversity and complexity of many of the struggles in the colonial and semicolonial countries—ranging from the struggles of Indian workers and peasants, through the historic struggle of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their occupied homeland, to the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe and the struggles against imperialist puppet regimes—defy attempts to put forward a general catchall program of demands or a unified pattern of tactics. But certain political questions and questions of method reemerge again and again and require a clear answer by the Trotskyist movement. (Section 11, "Permanent Revolution"; pp. 34–35)

We will leave aside the problem of sloppy literary style ("the diversity and complexity of many of the struggles," etc.). The formulation "defy attempts to put forward a general catchall program of demands or a unified pattern of tactics" is imprecise. It is possible to put forward a "general catchall program of demands." The Transitional Program is such a program. And it is possible to put forward a "unified pattern [sic] of tactics." What is not possible is to specify without a concrete analysis *which particular* demands and *which particular* tactics should be emphasized in a particular country at a particular time.

Finally, "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" is dated. It was written in 1979 after the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and amended after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. But it could not and does not refer to the events since then in Afghanistan, Turkey, Poland, Greece, Spain, Lebanon, Chad, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, the Philippines, etc. This, of course, could be remedied, if it were not for the problems indicated above.

3. Republication of "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle"

The First International Conference of the ITC directs the International Secretariat to republish "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle" as an historical document of our tendency, along with a commentary reflecting the main points of this resolution. The

International Secretariat shall also draft or commission an international perspectives document to be completed and acted on by the next International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting in six (6) months and a program of action to be completed and acted on by the next ITC International Conference.

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM IN TODAY'S CLASS STRUGGLE

Adopted by the Founding Conference of the
Trotskyist International Liaison Committee,
Held 28–31 December 1979

1. The Transitional Program: Valid Today!

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.

This characterization of the epoch, which is central to the Trotskyist Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International in 1938, remains absolutely valid both in the light of the experience of the last forty years and the reality of the class struggle today.

Its conclusion—the necessity for the building of independent Trotskyist parties to lead the struggles of the oppressed masses in every country—has also been vindicated, though in a negative way, time and time again by the counterrevolutionary maneuvers and open treachery of all the currents of reformism and Stalinism.

Within a year of the foundation of the Fourth International, the reactionary policies of these mass currents had cleared the way for the imperialist bourgeoisie to plunge the world once more into the horrors of war. The new depths of class collaboration achieved during and after World War II reflected the conscious commitment of both reformist and Stalinist leaders to the preservation of capitalist rule.

The cynical postwar carve-up of the world into “peacefully coexisting” spheres of influence and the consequent knifing by Stalin of revolutionary struggles in Greece, Iran, and Vietnam and sabotage of possible revolutions in France and Italy, reflected the mutual fear of the independent struggles of the working class shared by both the imperialist leaders and the Kremlin bureaucracy. As part of this counterrevolutionary postwar settlement, Stalinism also actively connived at the restoration or maintenance of colonial rule in Indochina, Algeria, and elsewhere.

The Kremlin leaders' dread of the emergence of a mass movement that might sweep them from their parasitic positions of power and privilege has colored every aspect of postwar policy, and in particular the savage repression of workers' uprisings in East Germany (1953) and Hungary (1956) as well as the military invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968).

Within the Western capitalist countries, leaders of the Communist Parties (CPs) have also adopted policies reflecting their awareness that revolutionary upheavals would not only jeopardize the international balance of forces on which the Soviet bureaucracy rests, but also threaten the bureaucratic hold they exercise over their parties at home.

Thus, in France in May-June 1968, the mass CP directed the ten million-strong general strike along a course which led to its being bought off with wage concessions; in Italy, we have seen the Stalinists in a long-term political “compromise” with the main bourgeois party, the Christian Democrats; in Spain, the Communist Party has collaborated shamelessly with Franco's heirs in the Suarez government; and in the revolutionary upheavals in Portugal, the Stalinists acted to block any attempt by workers to seek a line independent of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA).

The reformists, for their part, have also consistently maintained their role of servile footmen for their "own" bourgeoisie, seeking above all to maintain the stability and profitability of capitalism.

In fact, in the postwar period the social democratic parties in the imperialist countries have consolidated and enormously expanded their role as direct managers of the bourgeois state in the interests of capitalism (as, for example, in Britain and Germany). International social democracy has maintained corrupt ties with US imperialism in particular, which has regularly provided financing to the social democrats and made direct use of them on numerous occasions.

Nor did the end of the Cold War change this situation. On the contrary, since 1968, with the rise of the class struggle on a world scale, social democracy has only enlarged its counterrevolutionary role.

For example, in 1975, Soares's Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) was the primary instrument employed by imperialism to secure the defeat of the proletarian revolution in Portugal. In recent years, social democracy has also made special efforts to develop its counterrevolutionary activities in the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (as, for example, in Southern Africa and Nicaragua).

In this wretched role they have time and again found themselves in a more or less explicit alliance with the "peaceful roaders" of the national Stalinist parties—with most devastating impact in the case of their joint support for and participation in Allende's "Popular Unity" regime in Chile. There, a popular-front alliance with the military and compromises with monopoly capitalism created the conditions for Pinochet's crushing military coup in 1973.

But the postwar upsurge of revolutionary struggles in the colonial and semicolonial countries has also brought to the fore the inadequacy and the ultimate treachery of a further type of mass leader—the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist.

Such forces range from guerrilla leaders in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to the petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership of liberation struggles in Palestine, Ireland, Euskadi (the Basque country), and Kurdistan. But they also include "left"-talking national bourgeois or petty-bourgeois governments ranging from Libya, Iraq, Angola, and Tanzania to Michael Manley's regime in Jamaica.

But no matter how "left" their rhetoric, these movements must, without the construction of a *conscious*, Trotskyist leadership, remain aloof from the task of mobilizing the working class and find themselves sucked in to growing collaboration and ties with imperialism or—as in the case of Cuba—drawn into the scheming counterrevolutionary politics of Stalinism.

Immense uprisings have ousted the Shah and dictator Somoza. Though the leadership of these struggles remained in the hands of nonproletarian forces, a decisive factor was the role played by the working class. These struggles have given a new impulse to the world struggle against imperialism and placed the socialist revolution on the agenda.

The crisis of leadership in the semicolonial countries is perhaps most vividly exposed in the evolution of the Iranian revolution. But the lack of a conscious Trotskyist leadership acting within that uprising has helped to create the conditions where the reactionary Khomeini regime can attempt to stabilize capitalist property relations.

Every attempt that has been made in the postwar period to find shortcuts around the building of mass Trotskyist parties by adapting politically to Stalinism, reformism, and petty-

bourgeois nationalism, has resulted in the political disorientation and disarming of the working class and a turn away from the vital struggle for its political independence.

In reaffirming the correctness of the Transitional Program and its relevance to today's class struggle, we insist that Trotskyists *reject on principle* any kind of political bloc or partnership with the bureaucratic leaders of existing mass formations in which the revolutionary program and the strength of the working class are subordinated in any way to the interests of the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, "progressive" military juntas, or sections of the labor bureaucracy.

The proletariat, the propertyless class exploited by the bourgeoisie as the living instrument of capitalist production and the source of surplus value, is the *only* consistently revolutionary class in society. And as the Transitional Program stresses:

Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, that is, chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership....

...the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, *can be resolved only by the Fourth International.* [TILC's emphasis]

2. The Economic Crisis

Through the 19th century, capitalism, despite its vicious exploitation of the working class, played an overall progressive role in freeing the productive forces from the restrictions of feudalism and developing the division of labor on a world scale. But, since the turn of the century, with the growth of monopoly and the complete division of the world among rival imperialist powers, the social contradictions of capitalism had intensified to the point where capitalist private property became an absolute fetter on the further development of the productive forces.

Lenin, analyzing these developments in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, showed how our epoch was one of "capitalism in transition or, more precisely,...moribund capitalism." He shows how the emergence of monopoly from capitalism, which reflected the incompatibility of the advanced means of production with individual private ownership and foreshadows the centralization of planning and production that would take place under socialism, threw an even greater burden of oppression onto the working class.

This emerged clearly in the first imperialist World War. By 1914 the imperialist expansion of European capital had ceased to be sufficient to offset the general tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Capitalism could no longer exploit new sources of surplus value on a sufficient scale to preserve the value of European capital.

With the world already divided up among competing superpowers, new fields for imperialist expansion could only be found in a redivision of the spoils. Thus the closing years of the last century saw the intensification of the imperialist competition for markets and for sources of surplus value, which engendered the conflicts leading up to World War I.

Only war could undertake the redivision of markets and the destruction of excess capital on a sufficient scale to restore the rate of profit for the surviving capitalists. However, the war, combined with the unprecedented resurgence and strengthening of the working-class movement before and after the hostilities, not only failed to resolve these problems, but objectively worsened the plight of imperialism.

Tsarist Russia was taken out of its sphere altogether, while revolutionary upsurges throughout Europe forced the postwar bourgeoisie onto the defensive. In many states, sops and

reforms were conceded to contain this upsurge, while a more comprehensive political counteroffensive and attack on living standards were prepared, using to the full the treachery of the social-chauvinists in the reformist parties.

At the same time, although the world hegemony of British imperialism and of sterling as the major world currency had been shattered once and for all, the US dollar was not yet able to replace it. The political and economic crisis remained unresolved throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Capitalism survived its prolonged crisis during this period only because of the betrayals of the leaders of the working class. The degeneration of the Comintern under Stalin on the one hand and the continuing treachery of social democracy on the other, combined to lead workers time and time again to defeat at the hands of imperialism.

Twenty-five years of economic stagnation and decay, followed by the immense destruction of World War II, finally provided the conditions for the reestablishment of an equilibrium of world capitalist accumulation. The wholesale destruction of human and capital resources during the war, the emergence of American imperialism as the overwhelming economic and military power, together with the defeats inflicted on the working class worldwide through the direct treachery of the Stalinist and reformist leaders, combined to temporarily overcome the contradictions that had wracked world imperialism.

From this position of economic dominance—holding two-thirds of the world's productive capacity and 75 percent of its capital—the USA was able to take on the role of defender of imperialism and political arbiter of the relations among nation-states on a world scale. In the Bretton Woods Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the USA forced the other imperialist powers to accept a world monetary system based on the dollar as an international reserve currency and a general reduction of preferential tariffs on world trade.

The agreement for the dollar to act as international reserve currency, formally tied to gold, rested on the strength of the USA and the worldwide demand for US commodities. With the dollar acting as an internationally accepted means of payment and the foundation of a stable monetary system, the basis was laid for the restoration and expansion of world trade and for the development of the credit system.

Of course, simply the provision of a universally acceptable world currency was not in itself a guarantee of stable capitalist accumulation—certainly not to the extent of opening up over twenty years of the most sustained growth of the productive forces in its history. For this a massive restructuring of capital and increase in exploitation and the productivity of labor had to be forced through, while at the same time eliminating excess capital.

Key to this was the collaboration of the Stalinist and reformist leaders during and after the war. These parties, continuing to hold the confidence of the masses (partly as a result of the huge objective difficulties confronted before and during the war by the small and still inexperienced forces of the Fourth International) played a crucial role in strangling revolutionary movements in France, Italy, and Greece.

Even so, despite all the efforts of the bourgeoisie and its allies throughout Europe, whole sections of capitalist industry could no longer realize an adequate profit. The need for state takeover of these industries highlights the inability of capitalist production to take forward the development of the productive forces in a stable manner.

Thus it was on the basis of the systematic betrayal of the working class over three decades, the renewal and rationalization of capital on a massive scale during and after the war, and the

stabilization and expansion of the world market disrupted by years of depression and war under the domination of US imperialism, that the postwar expansion of capitalism got under way.

Although, after two world wars and years of depression and decay, capitalism was able finally to break through the barriers it had itself created and enter into a new period of equilibrium, the fundamental contradictions of capitalism in the imperialist epoch could in no way be abolished. As the "boom" went on, these selfsame barriers were inevitably re-created.

The vast accumulation of capital during the boom turned inevitably into overaccumulation—the overproduction of goods, not insofar as they serve social needs, but insofar as they serve as capital.

The overproduction of capital (which Marx regarded as "the essential phenomenon in all crises") is an expression of the fact that capital, in its search for profit, is driven to expand accumulation *without limit* but must do so on a base which is necessarily *limited*—exploitable living labor.

As only living labor produces surplus value, the amount of surplus value relative to the value of capital tends to decline and so the rate of profit tends to fall.

This tendency for the rate of profit to fall, re-emerging with renewed accumulation, is a fundamental historical contradiction of capitalist production. While capitalism constantly revolutionizes the productive forces, driven on by the need to accumulate, in doing so the productive forces inevitably come into conflict with the restrictive social relations of capitalist production.

The inevitable result is a tendency to crisis, with the maintenance and development of the productive forces being threatened by the demand of capitalism for an ever greater expansion of profit. The existence of capital itself becomes the barrier to any further development of production.

In contrast to the form taken by previous capitalist crises, the decline in the rate of profit as the boom got under way did not at first lead to any restriction in production. The expansion of credit together with the steady increase in state spending (including an unprecedented increase in spending on armaments) for a whole period allowed a continued growth of production, but at the expense of a further undermining of the basis for capitalist production.

Credit itself is a normal means of financing capital outlay; the expansion of credit is viable insofar as it leads to an expansion of surplus value and of profitable production. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, with the rate of profit declining, the expansion of credit, though it enabled production to continue at a high level, meant also that sectors of industry with a low or nonexistent rate of profit were maintained.

This extension of credit beyond the base of profitable production fuelled a steadily growing rate of inflation. This inflation is itself part of the attempt by capital to struggle against the effects of the falling rate of profit through cutting real wages.

As long as the working class was able to offset this inflation through wage increases, then inflation was ineffective in restoring the rate of profit.

In fact, the mounting inflation itself has become one of the factors threatening the stability of capitalism. It wipes out profits in the very act of trying to preserve them, and an uncontrollable spiral is threatened.

As the number of workers in manufacturing industry fell, as productivity increased without a corresponding expansion in the overall market, successive capitalist governments were forced by the strength of the working class to maintain relatively full employment by an expansion of the state sector.

A considerable part of this expenditure neither enters into the process of capitalist accumulation nor forms part of the value of labor power; it must be financed out of a deduction from surplus value and so exacerbates the fall in the rate of profit.

The increasing proportion of state spending which has taken the form of handouts to sections of capital facing imminent collapse represents merely a redistribution of surplus value. In relieving the immediate problems of the least profitable sections of capital, this kind of expenditure worsens the problems of the rest.

In the aftermath of the war, capitalist industry in Europe and Japan was re-established with the aid of massive loans and grants from the USA under the Marshall Plan. The US imperialists' decision to restore their competitors' economies as an outlet for their exports, rather than maintain their domination of "poor relations" perpetually threatened by their own working class, was to lead to an undermining of American dominance and of the stable monetary system.

Gradually, in the postwar period, the pattern of world trade shifted away from Britain and the USA towards Europe and Japan. (The share of Britain and the USA in world exports declined from 35 percent in 1948 to only 25 percent in 1968 and continued to fall.)

With sharpening competition on world markets as the imperialist nations fought to maintain their share of a declining mass of profits, this shifted pattern of trade came into conflict with the monetary system established postwar. The Bretton Woods agreement had established the dollar as an international means of payment, and with other currencies tied to a fixed dollar exchange rate.

The link between the dollar and gold was not of immediate importance in this period as the overwhelming strength of the US economy meant that what foreign capitalists wanted with their dollars was not gold but US commodities. However, as Germany and Japan began to contest America's position on the world market and the USA's growth rate slowed and its balance of payments went into deficit, increasingly large dollar holders demanded they be converted into gold by the US treasury, and the dollar's position was challenged.

This led by August 1971 to the complete suspension of gold convertibility by the US government and the devaluation of the dollar. With the exchange rates of currencies severed from any connection with gold as an objective standard of value, the existence of any stable means of payment on the world market is increasingly endangered, threatening a collapse of world trade itself.

This severance of the link between the dollar and gold was the result of the decline in the relative strength of the United States in relation to the other imperialist economies. It has opened up a period of extreme currency instability and the renewed use of competitive devaluations as a nationalist response to the crisis. Like inflation, to which it is closely related, this currency instability has itself become a threat to the stability of the entire capitalist system of world trade.

The immediate consequence of the suspension of dollar convertibility was to relax the external constraints on the monetary and credit policies of each domestic government. To aid the efforts of their own industries to expand production and exports, each national government moved to expand credit, assisting the development of the "mini-boom" of 1972-1973, while at the same time giving a massive boost to inflation.

No monetary policy, however, could alter the fact of the steady decline in the rate of profit. With the collapse of the “mini-boom,” all the major imperialist countries were faced with a crisis of historic proportions, the grounds for which had been laid in the preceding two decades.

In each country, production slumped, bringing record unemployment and a string of bankruptcies in major industrial and commercial companies, while inflation climbed to record levels. All the measures (expansion of credit, state spending, government subsidies) which had served to disguise the falling rate of profit and stave off the crisis were immediately identified by the bourgeoisie as their opposite—as the *cause* of the crisis itself. But the roots of the crisis do not lie in any particular measure taken by the bourgeoisie; what the crisis signifies is the complete historical impasse reached by capitalist production.

It is necessary for Trotskyists to analyze in much more detail the processes and contradictions of the twenty-five-year postwar boom—to look at it on a world scale and to examine it from the standpoint of the writings of Lenin and Trotsky on the epoch of imperialism. Further work is also necessary on the conception of the crisis developed by the International Committee and on the analyses of the International and United Secretariats, as well as revisionist notions of “neocapitalism” and the so-called *permanent arms economy*.

But the fundamental elements of today’s capitalist crisis have themselves helped us to see the inadequacy of past impressionist theories—whether they be those of Keynes or Mandel. These contradictions stand exposed today as the chief fetter on the development of the productive forces.

Having developed the productive forces and the productivity of labor beyond the limits of the existing capitalist social relations, capitalism turns now to devour and destroy the wealth it has created. While capitalist society produces too little relative to human needs, it produces too much relative to the surplus value available for the further accumulation of capital.

This social crisis can only be resolved in the interest of the whole of mankind by the working class under revolutionary leadership establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and replacing the stagnation, chaos, and destruction of capitalism’s death agony by conscious planning of production under socialism on an international scale.

3. Political Crisis of Postwar Imperialism

Despite its outward appearance of strength and stability during the period of the postwar “boom,” imperialism in fact emerged from the war profoundly weakened. Amid mounting struggles on a world scale, it has found the balance of forces increasingly unfavorable for the measures necessary if the inexorable slide in the rate of profit is to be halted.

The fact that the imperialist powers, from a position of weakness, were forced to a formal carve-up of the postwar world into agreed “spheres of influence” with the Soviet Union is significant in this respect. The imperialists recognized that the total collapse of prewar and wartime fascist and totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe left them without dependable allies in any efforts they may make to recapture control of these areas.

They therefore conceded them to the Kremlin, in exchange for moves by the Stalinists to head off mass struggles that could have overthrown capitalism in Italy, France, and Greece.

Since that point, the imperialists have been forced to watch impotently as capitalist property relations were bureaucratically overturned by Stalinist leaders, not only throughout the Eastern Europe “buffer” countries, but also in Yugoslavia (agreed as a fifty-fifty division between the imperialists and the Kremlin) and in China.

The outright military defeat of the imperialists in the North of Vietnam in 1954 was followed up by the humiliation of US imperialism, as its embargo on Castro's petty-bourgeois nationalist regime in Cuba led to the gathering of Castro into the embrace of Kremlin foreign policy, the expropriation of US and other capitalist holdings in Cuba, and the emergence of a deformed workers' state only a few miles from the Florida coastline.

The Cuban revolution, in fact, was a high point of the rising postwar tide of liberation struggles in the colonial and semicolonial countries, which also led to the effective dismemberment of much of the Western European empires in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The efforts by US imperialism to head off such struggles led to the establishment during the 1950s and 1960s of a series of CIA-backed coups installing vicious bonapartist and military dictatorships—the first of which was the Shah of Iran and the most recent the Chilean Pinochet dictatorship. But the breakup of the “boom,” bringing an intensification of misery, exploitation, and anti-imperialist struggles in these countries, has thrown these puppet regimes—which include Zaire, Indonesia, and Brazil—into growing profound crisis.

The mounting economic crisis within the advanced capitalist countries has brought since the late 1960s a simultaneous rise in colonial liberation struggles and militant struggles by the working class within the imperialist countries themselves.

The French General Strike of 1968 in particular marked the onset of a period of radicalization of the class struggle in the metropolitan capitalist countries. Most significant in this process were: the two prerevolutionary upsurges in Italy from 1968 to 1971 and from 1974 to 1976; the large antifascist mobilizations of the Spanish proletariat in 1970–1971 (subsequently shamefully betrayed by the Stalinist and social democratic leaderships); the struggles of the British proletariat that stopped the Labour government's proposed antiunion legislation in 1969 and led to the fall of the Conservative government in 1974; the struggles of Greek Polytechnic students and workers in 1973, which anticipated the fall of the Colonels' junta in 1974; and, finally—the highest point—the proletarian mobilization in the Portuguese revolution of 1974–1975. Moreover, in the last ten years the most “stable” European countries as well and even the USA itself have been shaken by mass strikes by workers struggling to defend jobs and wages. Nor should the ongoing relative stabilization of the class struggle in Europe be seen as sufficient to restore the equilibrium of capitalist rule, which is still ever more shaken by the political and economic crisis.

The same period has seen the defeat of US imperialism and its puppets in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Angola; these defeats have been accompanied by other tenacious liberation struggles and working-class resistance in black Africa, the Sahara, Eritrea, the Middle East, and Ireland as well as Central and Latin America.

In Iran, the Shah's regime, armed to the teeth and seemingly an impregnable bastion of imperialist interests in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, has been swept aside by a mass movement in which the courageous strikes by workers in the oilfields, industry, and government played a very important role.

The economic crisis and the upsurge of the working class and the colonial revolution have provoked a sharpening of interimperialist contradictions, which has transformed the old situation of solidarity among the imperialist robbers of the 1950s and 1960s and led to a profound crisis of political leadership for imperialism. The clearest expression of this crisis has been the absolute lack of coherent and competent political leadership for US imperialism from the resignation of Nixon through today.

Such a period of political instability and weakness for the imperialists should, however, by no means give rise to the illusion that there is any automatic process whereby imperialism will gradually or peacefully concede power to the working class.

Every setback suffered by the imperialists increases their desperation and drives them to consider the most extreme solutions. It is significant that the postwar period in which the political weakness of imperialism has been most manifest has brought herculean efforts by US and other capitalists to develop forms of nuclear weaponry and other military technology that offer a hope of compensating for the growing unreliability of armies (Iran!) and popular hostility to imperialist war (anti-Vietnam War movement).

This "arms race" by the imperialists has forced the Soviet Union to undertake similar military programs—and has itself contributed massively to the capitalist world economic crisis.

It is impossible to rule out a situation in which a desperate capitalist class seeks a "solution" to its problems in the shape of a war for the reconquest of the lost markets and labor force in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

In most capitalist countries, the political weakness of the bourgeoisie and the continuing relative strength of the proletariat prevent the adoption in the short run of fascist perspectives—that is, the general suppression of all democratic rights and the organizations of the working class. However, the sharpening crisis together with the continuing lack of revolutionary proletarian leadership raise the danger of the future reactionary mobilization of the petty-bourgeois and lumpenproletarian masses and/or a direct attack by the forces of the bourgeois state against the working class as a whole. In Turkey, in fact, this danger is imminent, insofar as the present government already rests on fascist support and white terror is used widely against the forces of the working class.

The political weakness of imperialism in the present epoch can be turned to the advantage of the working class only by the construction of Trotskyist parties capable of resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

4. The Struggle for Leadership in the Imperialist Countries

Imperialism is politically and economically weaker than ever before, but the advantage remains in the hands of imperialism so long as the question of working-class leadership remains unresolved. Forty years of experience of the working class in struggle have confirmed Trotsky's 1938 analysis that:

The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a prerevolutionary state of society. The chief obstacle in the path of transforming the prerevolutionary into a revolutionary state is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership: its petty-bourgeois cowardice before the big bourgeoisie and its perfidious connection with it even in its death agony.

The economic crisis that now drives every section of capitalists onto the offensive against the working class, throwing millions into unemployment and poverty, highlights precisely this bankruptcy of the existing reformist and Stalinist leaders.

In the 1930s these traitors adopted the class-collaborationist strategy of the Popular Front under the guise of a broad front against fascism, after Stalinist "Third Period" sectarianism had helped create the German catastrophe. In thus subordinating the working class and its interests to the program of "liberal" capitalism, the Popular Front rejected any pretense of a socialist perspective, headed off the mass struggles then under way in France, and paved the way for the

defeat of the Spanish revolution. Such is the bitter price of Stalinist "peaceful coexistence" and the reformists' cynical demagoguery on the gradual transition to socialism.

Now in the 1970s, as workers' mass struggles have placed the overthrow of capitalist rule on the agenda, the reactionary politics of the popular front are once more being dragged out by reformists and Stalinists desperate to forestall moves towards working-class political independence. They do so *consciously*, even in the aftermath of the Chilean events of 1973, and with the harsh lessons of the 1930s Popular Front before them.

Indeed, the weaker capitalism becomes, the more it has turned for support to the labor bureaucracy; and the more that revolutionary struggles threaten to overturn the existing balance of class forces, the more the counterrevolutionary efforts of reformists and Stalinists alike are devoted towards preserving the status quo.

Whether it be in the Spanish Moncloa Pact, the defeated British Social Contract, the scandalous deal by Italy's Stalinists with the Christian Democrats, or in tacit support for Portuguese military President Eanes, the reformist and Stalinist parties of Europe have time and again showed their willingness to collaborate with the employers in imposing "austerity" plans designed to drive up profits at workers' expense.

While developing the politics of the popular front, several of the mass Communist Parties of Western Europe have adopted the explicitly reformist theories of "Eurocommunism," in which even the pretense of seeking to establish the Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat has been publicly abandoned.

The essence of Eurocommunism is a nationalistic defense of long-term and brazen collaboration with the Stalinists' "own" ruling class—to the extent of full-scale support for wage-cutting "austerity" plans carried out by bourgeois governments in Italy and in Spain, support for the strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state in Italy and Spain, explicit support for the reactionary NATO imperialist alliance from the Italian Communist Party leaders.

Such a line-up, unlike the lethal Popular Front policies of the 1930s, takes place no longer on the direct instructions of the Kremlin—indeed the Comintern was formally liquidated by Stalin in the midst of the second imperialist war as a step to ingratiate himself with his imperialist "allies." The Eurocommunists have themselves emphasized their rejection of any international perspective and the necessity for each CP to chart its own national course.

The pressures that have forced the Eurocommunist leaders into new levels of class collaboration have their origin in their fear and hostility towards the forward movement of the working class, which—in a period of acute capitalist crisis—threatens to disrupt the balance of class forces on which the bureaucratic CP structures have come to depend.

Faced with the choice of unleashing massive working-class struggles or standing alongside their "own" capitalist classes in stemming such struggles, the Eurocommunist leaders have clearly and predictably chosen the second course—despite the conflict this creates within the rank and file of their own parties.

Yet, though they can no longer be relied upon to act on the instructions of the Kremlin, the counterrevolutionary political line carried out by these Stalinist leaders still matches the requirements of the Soviet bureaucracy for a preservation of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism.

Thus the Kremlin leaders have an interest in upholding the Eurocommunists, while they in turn require the international and historic links to the Russian revolution as an essential "left" cover for their collaborationist policies.

The apparent "openness" of Eurocommunist parties to criticism and discussion, far from being a concession to the mass movements of the working class, is an adaptation to the individualism and liberalism of the petty bourgeoisie and part of the attempt by the Stalinist leaders to prove themselves respectable and "responsible" enough to play a role in popular-front-style bourgeois governments.

It is important to note the way in which Eurocommunist criticism of the political regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR is also connected to their attempts to appease anticommunist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers in their own countries.

There is little doubt that this now openly rightward shift by such veteran Stalinist leaders as Santiago Carrillo and Enrico Berlinguer will intensify the contradiction between the militant membership of the Euro-CPs and their reactionary leadership. But the only way this contradiction can be developed is through a relentless struggle by the Trotskyist movement to expose the utter bankruptcy of *both* wings of Stalinism and to spell out the necessary program for independent working-class action on jobs and wages.

We are neither "for" the Eurocommunists nor "for" Moscow; neither of them does or can represent the independent interests of the working class. But we must intervene among the sections of the rank-and-file workers up to now dominated by the Stalinists, as a part of our fight for the construction of Trotskyist parties on a revolutionary perspective *against* Stalinism and reformism.

It is from this standpoint also that we must approach centrist groupings that have partially broken from reformism or Stalinism. Only a thoroughgoing, principled struggle based on spelling out the Transitional Program and Trotskyist perspectives, can enable us to win to Bolshevism the best elements from these organizations and politically destroy these further obstacles on the road to socialist revolution.

Our main focus, however, is on the practical fight to mobilize working-class action against the attacks being waged by the capitalist class. In this period of crisis, even existing jobs, wages, and conditions can only be defended by a leadership that is prepared to wage a root-and-branch attack on the supposed "right" of the capitalist to safeguard his profits at the expense of the working class.

The reformists and Stalinists are, of course, incapable of offering any such fight, while the centrists who are not drawn into consistently revolutionary politics wind up tailing the bureaucratic misleaders. The left-talkers seek to head off the most militant workers into ineffective and demoralizing token protests, while the open right-wing bureaucrats collaborate brazenly with management's rationalization plans through forms of "workers' participation" or simply arguments about "viability" and "the national interest."

Centrist currents will often protest at this and seek to counterpose "militant" alternatives. Only the Transitional Program offers a system of demands that not only connect with today's objective problems and today's consciousness within the working class but also lead workers in such a way as to point to the necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. And only the Transitional Program connects these demands with the necessity for revolutionary parties to lead that overthrow.

5. The Fight in the Trade Unions

The demands of the Program have been widely misunderstood, ignored, or opportunistically distorted in the forty years since they were formulated. But in today's class struggle, with the growing contradiction between the readiness of the working class to fight and the determination of their official leaders to betray, the struggle for these demands and for the kind of independent working-class organization to which they lead, offers the most effective way of challenging and exposing the labor bureaucrats.

Future cadres of the revolutionary party will be found among the fresh layers of workers thrown into conflict with their misleaders in the course of the class struggle. But forces drawn from a middle-class milieu will become a drag on the building of the movement if they do not acquaint themselves at first hand with day-to-day struggles and problems of the workers' movement.

Day-to-day struggle alone, however, does not create communists, and a fight against middle-class dilettantism must go along with opposition to any tendency towards syndicalism and nationalism among worker comrades. It is in this process of struggle that the selection of communists takes place.

A readiness to fight for the demands and methods of the Transitional Program and to give leadership in all struggles—no matter how partial—must be the general orientation of the Trotskyist movement.

Interventions of a qualitative character must flow from an understanding, given the deep crisis of leadership, of the political significance of even some apparently minor class battles. In the course of the fight, our understanding of the program must be deepened and developed—particularly the knowledge that its correct application is not a formal question but derives essentially from a correct understanding of the period through which the workers' struggle is passing.

Whatever the struggle—whether it be for transitional demands or simply on basic trade union rights—Trotskyists must be able to attract forces by finding the *point of conflict* with the trade union bureaucracies from which the fight could develop.

We must continue the fight to train cadres in the struggle who can themselves arrive at the next steps needed for the development of political independence and working-class revolutionary leadership.

Such an intervention must be based firmly on our appraisal of the counterrevolutionary role of the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies.

Revolutionary work in the unions must begin from a number of assumptions. The first of these is that in this period there is *no* battle in the workers' movement, however small, which can be won without the mobilization of the working class and confronting the bankrupt and counterrevolutionary bureaucrats.

Secondly, as long as the present bureaucracy remains at the head of the working class, workers will have to be ceaselessly brought into conflict with it in order to enable them to make the necessary political break from reformism. There is *no* easy way round this central task, such as by setting up some pure "rank-and-file movement" unadulterated by the problems of leading the working class under their present leaders.

Thirdly, we are convinced that the method of the Transitional Program consists *not* in the mere repetition of the words on its printed pages but in the *actual mobilization* of the working class independently of the class enemy and in conflict with the bureaucrats who aim always to tie it to the employers and the capitalist order.

For these three reasons we cannot make it a condition of our participation in any struggle in the workers' movement that it should begin with a rounded program, including correct positions on governmental questions. To say that only movements with a worked-out program can be successful would be to miss the meaning of the program which has the central role of mobilizing the independent strength of the working class and raising it from its existing level of consciousness to a grasp of the need for socialist revolution in confrontation with its reformist or Stalinist bureaucratic leaders and their various centrist, Maoist, and left-reformist hangers-on.

It is for these reasons that Trotskyist work in the unions, while grounded on the programmatic principle of working-class independence, must be flexible in its form and organization.

Trotskyists must spearhead all struggles against attempts to shackle the unions to the state—through repressive legislation, court interference, compulsory “arbitration,” etc.—or to the employers, through forms of “workers’ participation” and similar class-collaborationist systems designed to suck leading trade union representatives into acting as an arm of management in the imposition of speed-up, sackings, and wage controls.

For similar reasons, Trotskyists resolutely oppose capitalist *import controls*, which effectively tie workers in any country to nationalist efforts to protect their “own” bourgeoisie against “foreign” competitors at the expense of workers in other countries.

All forms of outside interference in the machinery of the workers’ movement—including the imposition of secret or postal balloting designed to split the mass strength of the working class and pressurize trade unionists as “individuals”—must be combatted.

At the same time, the struggle against the reformist and Stalinist union bureaucracy must include specific demands for the regular *election* of all full-time labor-movement officials, for them to be subject to recall at any time, and for them to be paid no more than the average wage of the members they represent.

In some countries where the existing trade union organizations are tied more or less openly and directly to the political parties or state machinery of the bourgeoisie, the struggle for the independence of the unions is obviously linked to the fight to *break* such reactionary links and, where appropriate, to fight for the unions to construct independent, labor parties to represent the class interests of the proletariat.

Marxists, following on the method spelled out by Trotsky in his discussions with SWP leaders on the Transitional Program, fight for such labor parties to be established not on a reformist platform but on a full and adequate program of transitional and democratic demands, while recognizing that, in the very break by trade unions from bourgeois parties, an important opening could be created for the struggle for independent working-class politics. It is important that every avenue for propaganda and agitation on the class divide between the labor movement and the organizations of the bourgeoisie is exploited by Marxists and the necessity for class political independence retained in the forefront of political work in these countries.

In many more countries a fight is also necessary against the system of stringent “no strike” clauses inserted by employers into three-year legally-binding contracts. Such contracts leave workers exposed not only to inflation but also to frontal attacks from employers who fully exploit

the fact that plant-level strike action is illegal and subject to vigorous repression by national union officials.

Wages and conditions must be fully protected by a sliding scale of wages based on a cost-of-living index compiled by elected committees and must be negotiated at least every year; and workers must assert the right to strike on any issue without fear of legal penalties and bureaucratic victimization.

Whether the struggle at hand be on wages or jobs or to force nationalization of a particular firm, the program of the revolutionary party must bring right to the forefront at key stages the call for the building by workers in struggle of factory, occupation, and strike committees, and the extension of these where possible to local councils of action (soviets).

Such bodies offer an arena for the struggle for the revolutionary program and focus the attention of the workers' movement on its own strength and its own leadership.

As Bolsheviks, we see these organs as representing the unity and independence of the working class and its historic role in leading behind it the other oppressed masses. But this does not mean that workers' councils are sufficient in and of themselves to advance the spontaneous struggles of the working class. The crucial role in the development of such councils must be played by the intervention of the revolutionary party itself. We argue that all representative organizations of the oppressed masses must be allowed to participate in these soviet-type bodies and to fight within them for the adoption of their program. Representatives of the bourgeoisie must be excluded.

Given such political leadership from a developing Trotskyist party, we see such bodies as the future organs of workers' power. At some stage in the struggle, it will be the task of revolutionaries to call for all power to devolve to these bodies. At the present stage, however, it is crucial not to outpace the developing mass movement. Workers have first to be shown in practice that the soviet-type bodies can play a role in furthering their struggles. They must at the outset, therefore, be firmly linked to all the demands—economic and political—which can at the present stage of development of the mass struggle arouse sections of the working class to take action.

Thus the future instruments of workers' power can begin life as bodies to unite and organize strikes for specific demands or, in repressive regimes, to fight for the implementation of democratic demands such as the release of political prisoners or free elections to a Constituent Assembly.

The growing economic crisis in the postwar period, forcing the state to play an increasing role in industry through "nationalized" industries and the concessions won by the workers' movement in the form of state social security, health and education provision, mean that certain additional demands not contained in the Transitional Program must also be taken up by Trotskyists in the struggles to come.

In an area of production so closely related to the machinery of the capitalist state, the demand for the opening of the books of the "nationalized" industries and the public services acquires a particular importance.

On the one hand, this will expose those sections of the banks and those privately owned suppliers and contractors that profit from the exploitation of workers in the public sector; on the other, in making clear the case for nationalization of these sections without compensation and in revealing the ways in which the public sector is run in the interests of capitalism, workers can use the figures uncovered to spell out the necessity for workers' management of these sectors as part of a planned, socialist economy.

In advancing this challenge to control and property rights assumed by the capitalist state, the struggle against austerity cutbacks and closures in the public sector must center on the fight for *occupation* of threatened facilities, backed up by supporting strikes, both in the public sector and private industry.

In opposition to public-spending cuts designed to make private industry more profitable at the expense of the working class, we counterpose the demand for a sliding scale of public-service spending to fully protect these services against the effects of inflation, as assessed by elected trade union committees.

Such a demand builds on the method and principles of the Transitional Program in providing an independent proletarian answer to a problem that has emerged since 1938.

The practical fight for such demands—as the crucial “bridge” between the present consciousness of the working class and the consciousness required to accomplish the socialist revolution—is the task confronting every Trotskyist in each sector of the workers’ movement.

6. Democratic Demands

The renewed crisis of capitalism, added to its long-term economic failures, has meant that its survival depends more and more on the erosion of hard-won democratic freedoms in the imperialist countries.

These facts mean that revolutionaries are obliged to give democratic demands (freedom of expression and organization, representative elections, release of political prisoners, etc.) substantial prominence in their program. Such demands respond to the objective needs of the mass movement and are therefore often capable of strongly mobilizing the masses.

To prevent these demands becoming “a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie’s agents” (Transitional Program), revolutionaries must fight for these demands by linking them at all times with a program of democratic and transitional demands. At the same time, of course, revolutionaries fight for even democratic demands by *revolutionary* methods—through mobilizations of the working class, the construction of independent organizations committed to fight for these demands. Neither the program nor the method of fighting for it must in any way be subordinated in the interest of forming alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie and its agents.

7. The Struggle against Fascism

Though the working class on a world scale remains strong and though there have been profound setbacks inflicted on fascist regimes in the last few years, there remains the real threat that, as the devastation flowing from the economic crisis drives unemployment and poverty to new levels, the big bourgeoisie will seek the answer in the financing and mobilization of fascist parties.

Drawing forces from the most deprived and backward elements in the working class and ruined sections of the petty bourgeoisie, such lumpen gangs can be used in the absence of a revolutionary proletarian leadership as a battering ram to smash the organized strength of the working class. This is a real danger in today’s situation in Turkey. But fascist dangers also exist in other countries, as can be seen, for instance, in the development of the National Front in Britain and the increased activity of Fuerza Nueva in Spain.

In combatting the organized street violence of the fascists—the hired thugs of finance capital—the working class need, not cross-class alliances and pacifist propaganda, but the struggle for a United Front of workers' organizations, a central part of which takes the form of *workers' defense squads* to protect minorities and the labor movement against attack, combined with a relentless political struggle against those reformist and Stalinist leaders whose treachery and class collaboration help create the conditions for the growth of fascism.

Even under conditions that do not involve the immediate or medium-term possibility of the formation of mass fascist movements or that exclude any short-term or medium-term move by the big bourgeoisie in favor of a fascist solution (that is, the crushing of the organizations of the working class), the activities of fascist or semifascist gangs of varying sizes against more or less large sections of the workers' movement clearly pose the necessity of proletarian self-defense.

Workers' self-defense against the fascist thugs is necessary not only in order to construct a military force capable of blocking the further development of fascist parties and military organizations but also as a demand central to setting in motion the process of counterposing, both politically and physically, the independent forces of the proletariat to the bourgeois state (even in its most "democratic" forms). Trotskyist forces must obviously promote and facilitate the formation of such organizations of struggle, starting from the most conscious and combative militant workers and radicalized youth.

It is particularly important to begin this struggle within the mass organizations of the labor movement.

8. The Fight against War

At the same time, the wars and revolutionary struggle that characterize the epoch of imperialism place a special responsibility on the working class in the imperialist nations.

Theirs is the task of spearheading the struggle against the war plans and military aggression of their "own" bourgeoisie and mobilizing concrete solidarity action with anti-imperialist fighters in every country.

Particular attention must also be given to spelling out a policy of *unconditional defense* of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states against imperialist military aggression.

Trotskyists, however, have an obligation to conduct such solidarity work in such a way as to fight at each point for an independent class line for the working class—a line which avoids political compromises with either the various elements of the labor bureaucracy in the imperialist countries or the petty-bourgeois or bourgeois nationalist leaderships of colonial liberation struggles. This means fighting for workers to show solidarity through the methods of the international class struggle: blacking, strikes, etc., where appropriate; exceptional steps to ensure supplies in certain other cases.

As the Transitional Program spells out:

In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the USSR. *On the contrary*, it maintains full political independence from the one as from the other. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies and in the USSR, strengthens there the authority and influence of the Fourth International, and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country, the reactionary bureaucracy in the USSR. [TILC's emphasis]

Such a policy runs diametrically counter to the adaptations to the Stalinist bureaucracy represented in the "War-Revolution" theories of the postwar Fourth International. It is the correct method of the Transitional Program on these questions that must be defended and applied by Trotskyists in the struggles to come.

But the struggle for the political independence and leading role of the working class in international solidarity action in no way detracts from the obligation of Trotskyists to participate in and build mass antiwar mobilizations that weaken imperialism's ability to conduct colonial wars and which draw together broad layers of society opposing particular instances of military aggression.

In such circumstances, far from dropping or soft-peddling the fight for their central demands, Trotskyists must utilize every opportunity through propaganda and agitation to oppose pacifism and chauvinism and win sections of the mass antiwar movement to a Marxist program.

9. The Workers' Government Demand

At each step in the struggle for transitional and democratic demands, Trotskyists must weigh and consider the best tactical means of conducting the fight in such a way as to expose and discredit the existing treacherous mass leaders of the working class.

Such tactics will generally include fighting for workers to place specific *demands* on those trade union and political leaders that retain mass support for them to break from their present policies of class collaboration and act in the independent class interests of their members.

As the Transitional Program shows, the culmination of this approach is the formulation of demands on the reformist, Stalinist, and also petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders that they break with the bourgeoisie and form a *workers' (and peasants') government*.

The slogan can, as the Transitional Program shows, be used flexibly as an agitational slogan in particular situations. As such, its value is that it focusses the attention of the masses on the class collaboration of their leaders and the necessity for a government that will represent their independent interests. In every instance it is vital to couple the workers'-government slogan with the necessary program of *transitional demands* and with the struggle to mobilize the working class in independent organizations through which it will fight for such demands.

Such an approach is in explicit contrast to the various parliamentary formations passed off by reformist, centrist, and Stalinist currents as "workers'" or "workers' and peasants'" governments.

Indeed, while the call for a workers' government can be used as an agitational slogan to advance the political consciousness of the working class from the level of spontaneity to the comprehension of the necessity of the revolutionary seizure of power, the culmination of the struggle for this demand must in the final instance—as in Russia in October 1917—be the definitive break with and destruction of the political forms, institutions, and state machinery of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

The workers'-government slogan thus contains within it the dynamic of the class struggle in which the working class, gaining in strength and self-confidence, demands increasingly more of its bureaucratic mass leaders, to the point where it insists that these leaders break from the bourgeoisie, take power in their own hands, and implement measures in the interests of the proletariat.

As the Transitional Program stresses:

The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and SRs to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July days, definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks.

Now, just as much as in 1938, it is time to insist that:

The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organizations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semicorpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!"—is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organizations of the Second, Third, and Amsterdam Internationals.

While promising such leaders revolutionary support against capitalist reaction should they undertake the struggle for power, Trotskyists must maintain their political independence of such leaderships and persist with their own critical propaganda spelling out at each stage the role of the old leaders and the necessary program of demands to be fought for by the working class.

It is on the construction of such a Trotskyist revolutionary leadership, and *not* on any ability of the reformists and Stalinists to transform themselves into a revolutionary force, that the fate of the struggle for a workers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat must depend.

10. The Challenge to Imperialist Control

At a time when imperialism is facing the challenge of rising working-class struggles in the advanced capitalist countries, workers and peasants in colonial and semicolonial countries are being driven into sharper and politically developing levels of opposition.

Time and again, imperialist powers have shown their willingness to resort to any form of barbarism to secure the conditions for capitalist exploitation through the world.

In so doing, they have not always had to resort to direct military intervention themselves but have also sponsored armed, trained reactionary forces to act as local gendarmes of imperialist interests.

The armed might of the Israeli state, constituted by imperialism at the expense of the Palestinian masses, has long been developed to fit it for such a role.

South African troops are crucial, not only in suppressing workers inside the country, but as a regional imperialist police force, operating throughout Southern Africa to suppress and control any challenge to capitalist interests.

Behind its public condemnation and pretense of sanctions, the British state was quite prepared to rely on the repressive strength of its local agents in Zimbabwe before the escalating level of mass struggle forced a greater orientation towards a neocolonial solution to head it off.

The level of mass struggle has on more than one occasion forced imperialism to sacrifice its reactionary puppet of yesterday—as in Nicaragua and the Central African Republic—in a frantic effort to promote the conditions for the development of a *stable* reactionary agent of tomorrow.

In some situations—as in Angola in the wake of the 1974 events—imperialism has been forced to yield its direct political control, relying temporarily on the collaborationist politics of

Stalinism, petty-bourgeois nationalism, and reformism, as a way of securing indirect political control.

As imperialism moves towards neocolonial methods of stemming the Palestinian and Southern African struggles, however, any attempt to simply jettison a reactionary gendarme of imperialism brings with it its own problems.

Having fostered reactionary racism and nationalism and racially orientated systems of privilege to secure reliable agents historically, the imperialist powers are now coming up against strong opposition in both Zimbabwe and Israel to any efforts to modify the system of imperialist control.

At the same time, the imperialist powers are being forced by their quest for profits to take measures which have the consequences of weakening the economic stability of puppet regimes and agents and generating increasing levels of opposition from the oppressed masses.

The depression of world trade has brought the colonial and semicolonial countries even more acute crisis. The demand for raw materials—with the exception of oil—has fallen as production on a world scale has stagnated. Nor have the imperialist states been willing or able to increase their “aid” or investment programs to counteract the decline. Driven on by the fall in domestic rates of profit, the imperialists have instead been looking to the ex-colonial countries as a source of further increased exploitation. They have stepped up the pressure for the payment of outstanding loans and increased their interest rates. This has attacked the economic foundation even of crucial reactionary regimes such as that of Suharto in Indonesia and Mobutu in Zaire. And the underdeveloped countries have become more and more directly indebted to private banks in the imperialist nations. Such loans have less leeway for renegotiation and rescheduling than government loans, and so they sharpen the political consequences of the ever greater polarization of the world into creditor and debtor nations.

The puppet governments set up or sponsored by imperialism in Latin America, Africa, and Asia have thus been strong-armed into all-out assaults on the working class through “austerity” programs implemented under the watchful eye of the International Monetary Fund and the major capitalist banks. This, in turn, has driven the workers’ movement and the peasantry into new and more profound struggles in which grievances over national oppression have combined with resistance to economic attacks by imperialism and its agents.

While the level of struggle forces the imperialist powers to look to the collaboration of Stalinists and reformists in the efforts to maintain imperialist political control through neocolonialism, imperialism shows as clearly as ever its readiness to employ and support the most brutal forms of repression to maintain its decaying system of exploitation and oppression.

Even as the Shah of Iran was being sacrificed, imperialist aid was being rushed in to prop up the equally murderous Bokassa in black Africa—since sacrificed in favor of his no less murderous predecessor as dictator.

And even as imperialism maneuvers to secure a procapitalist compromise in Nicaragua at the expense of the dictator Somoza, Mobutu relies on imperialist aid to prop up his tottering dictatorship in Zaire.

In Southern Africa, the crises facing imperialism have meant that, even as it connives with the Stalinists and nationalists to secure neocolonial solutions which head off mass struggles, it is forced to rely increasingly heavily on the repressive strength of the most powerful promoter of imperialist interests in the region—the South African state.

The relative economic strength and firm social base on which the South African government can draw make it an indispensable ally of imperialist powers.

They are thus forced to support the system of racial privilege and repressive labor control through which the South African ruling class has built its economic strength, secured its social base, and provided the conditions for the extraction of profits for the local and overseas capitalists.

The current development of struggle by black workers in South Africa, coupled with a crisis of profitability, has forced sections of the ruling class (with the approval of imperialism) to promote a program of limited reforms aimed at developing a layer of skilled black workers, coopted with sections of the black petty bourgeoisie, to serve the interests of the ruling class. Such a program, however, goes together with continual repression of the mass of the working class.

Behind the publicly declared arms embargo of South Africa, the imperialist powers continue to provide the technology for and equipment of the South African repressive machine, to add to the massive stockpiles of imperialist supplies accrued from continuing secret deals.

As in South Africa, the reality of imperialist-sponsored brutal repression daily confronts workers in struggle through vast regions of the colonial and semicolonial world.

And as the level of struggle increases as workers and peasants confront the inability of imperialist-dominated economies and governments to meet their material needs, the level and extent of that repression must be expected to increase.

While seeking to exploit legal and semilegal openings, revolutionaries in such countries, where even the demands for minimal bourgeois-democratic rights are met with immediate repression, must be prepared to base themselves on almost exclusively illegal, clandestine work.

In conditions where the denial of bourgeois-democratic rights is coupled with massive state repression, acts of armed self-defense and resistance are put on the agenda as forms of working-class opposition.

While accepting the need for an underground existence and a program which incorporates the armed struggle, it is important to oppose any form of militarism, ultraleft armed adventurism, or guerrillaism (urban or rural). Revolutionaries must link armed struggle to the mobilization of the mass of the working class in pursuit of its own class interests. Underground work, including preparations for armed struggle, cannot be counterposed to mass work; rather, it must be seen as a recognition of the way in which that work must be carried out. Similarly, a commitment to armed struggle is not an alternative to the mobilization of the class around a program. It is a recognition of one of the tactics through which the mobilization will be directed against the state. Armed struggle is not a strategic goal in itself—it is a tactic in the struggle for the real goal: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The armed struggle up to the point of insurrection must unfold in close harmony with the development of mass mobilization of the working class. This political task can only be undertaken by a Trotskyist party armed with a program combining democratic and transitional demands.

11. Permanent Revolution

The diversity and complexity of many of the struggles in the colonial and semicolonial countries—ranging from the struggles of Indian workers and peasants, through the historic struggle of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their occupied homeland, to the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe and the struggles against imperialist puppet regimes—defy attempts to put forward

a general catchall program of demands or a unified pattern of tactics. But certain political questions and questions of method reemerge again and again and require a clear answer by the Trotskyist movement.

Firstly, the Transitional Program correctly lays stress on the crucial leading role that must be played in the struggle of the colonial and semicolonial countries by the proletariat. Trotsky sums this up in the formula of the *permanent revolution*. But in the light of opportunist interpretations of this theory in the postwar period, we must emphasize that the term *permanent revolution* is not in any way a passive *description* of an automatic, objective process; rather, it is a *strategy* to be applied and fought for in practice by the building of Trotskyist parties in each case.

The leading role of the working class and its ability to mobilize the support of the peasantry on a program of democratic and transitional demands rest on the ability of Trotskyists to combat the program spelled out in various cross-class "fronts" and "alliances" and to expose the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalinist, reformist, and nationalist currents.

As the Transitional Program stresses:

As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, *it is necessary to oppose the workers to the "national" bourgeoisie.* [TILC's emphasis]

This does not, of course, rule out the fullest practical solidarity of colonial peoples in repelling military attacks of imperialism, its puppets and agents. For specific and limited tasks under certain conditions, the proletariat and poor peasants can—without making any concessions in their own demands—wage a struggle jointly with sections of the "national" bourgeoisie against the imperialist enemy.

But it is wrong to seek to extend such temporary alliances to the level of a long-term political bloc, in which the independent program and struggles of the working class and poor peasants are subordinated to the political demands of the "democratic" bourgeoisie in the name of an "anti-imperialist front."

This is effectively to abandon the strategy of permanent revolution and adopt instead Stalin's Menshevik stageist conception of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Every attempt to lead the working class down the road of seeking *only* democratic rights must be challenged and opposed.

All recent events have shown that the national bourgeoisie can only lead the struggle against imperialism to a certain point. It is incapable of even defending democratic rights that are sometimes momentarily gained. Iran has particularly clearly demonstrated the validity of Trotsky's insistence that *only a socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class* can carry through even the struggle for democratic rights.

The alliance, as the Program points out, must be *not* with "the 'middle classes' in general" but with "the exploited layers of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie."

The culminating point in such an alliance must be the struggle for the building of soviets and the demand for a workers' and farmers' government independent of the parties of the bourgeoisie.

The task of the Trotskyists is, through building revolutionary parties, to carry out the patient propaganda work, agitation, and organization of the workers' movement and poor peasants around a program of democratic and transitional demands which start from today's

crushing material problems and lead workers and peasants to grasp the necessity for the socialist revolution.

In Iran, the present confrontation between the counterrevolutionary, reactionary Khomeini leadership and imperialism is an attempt to reinforce its weak foundations, both by diverting mass opposition and by channeling mass mobilization, but it cannot in any way achieve sufficient depth to ensure a favorable outcome. Now more than ever, the workers' vanguard must take the lead in the anti-imperialist struggle, exposing the absolute incapacity of the Khomeini regime while at the same time opposing any move made by proimperialist bourgeois elements. Both these tasks require the proletarian vanguard to become the champion of democratic demands with its own methods and perspectives, starting from the struggle for "national defense" through the independent mobilization of the toiling masses.

The postwar period has seen a number of spectacular military successes by anti-imperialist guerrilla forces, as in Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

A new wave of mass struggles is shaking the status quo in Latin America. This revival in the combativity of the working class and the popular masses has assumed a variety of forms—from trade union struggles in Chile and Brazil, to mass mobilizations in Peru and Bolivia, to actual revolution in Nicaragua. While this rising flood of class struggle clearly represents a general, decisive turn—now shifting to Latin America the main burden and the greatest intensity of social conflict—the crisis of proletarian leadership reveals its decisive character in this situation, both in the treachery of petty-bourgeois leaders (the Sandinistas in Nicaragua) and in the objective or subjective inadequacy of the Trotskyist forces.

The recent experience of the revolution in Nicaragua makes it dramatically clear why it is essential for revolutionaries to maintain an independent position over against petty-bourgeois nationalist forces committed to class collaboration with the national bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeois Sandinistas have openly engaged in collaboration with capitalist forces, despite the total collapse of the bourgeois state structure. Thus the popular-front regime itself is providing the conditions for reconstructing, *from scratch*, the entire framework of the bourgeois state apparatus, starting with the army and the police (gradually liquidating the popular militia), while harshly repressing militant workers. This is accompanied by an economic policy based on respect for foreign and local capitalism, despite the extreme devastation and widespread hunger in the country. Such a course is in obvious agreement with the Cuban (and Kremlin) policy of "peaceful coexistence."

This Nicaraguan experience therefore underlines once again the necessity of rejecting the false conception of permanent revolution as the "spontaneous growing over" of a "democratic stage" into a "socialist" one, as well as the necessity of combining the united front with petty-bourgeois anti-imperialist forces with the exposure of the limitations of their anti-imperialism, which derive from their incapacity to break with the "national bourgeoisie."

In those Middle East and black African countries where "progressive" bourgeois regimes hold sway on the basis of "nationalized" industry, while denying the most elementary democratic rights to the working class, women, or national minorities, the task of Trotskyists is to elaborate a specific and concrete program of demands showing the path of struggle for workers' management of industry, an end to sexual and national oppression, and the need for a genuinely internationalist foreign policy that can definitively break these countries from the grip of imperialism.

And in rendering unconditional support for national liberation struggles such as those in Kurdistan, Ireland, and Palestine, it is vital that Trotskyists also spell out clearly to the international workers' movement the programmatic bankruptcy of the existing petty-bourgeois leaderships of these struggles.

A revolutionary, Trotskyist leadership must be constructed in each case which is capable of preserving the independence of these struggles from compromises with imperialism or the counterrevolutionary pressures of Stalinism and which recognizes the necessity of rallying the support of the international workers' movement.

The Transitional Program clearly spells out the general principles from which the question of a program to mobilize the small farmers must be approached—stressing the necessity at each stage for the construction of independent organs of control by workers jointly with the poor peasants.

The colonial revolution in the current period can move rapidly forward against a weakened imperialism. But these revolutionary struggles will only achieve the possibility of leading to the overthrow of capitalism if Trotskyist parties fight to take the lead in drawing from the outset a clear class line and elaborate a concrete program that in each case orientates to the leading role of the proletariat.

In the struggle against imperialism in the colonial countries it is therefore crucial for revolutionaries to base themselves firmly on Trotsky's watchword for the united front in the advanced capitalist countries: march separately; strike together! Such a policy offers the only clear perspective to the struggles of the toiling masses and also the best means of exposing the treachery and inconsistency of the "democratic" national bourgeoisie.

It is at all times necessary for the working masses to pursue an independent way forward in the struggle for the independent class interests of the proletariat.

12. The Deformed and Degenerated Workers' States

a. The Postwar Overturns

It is scarcely surprising that it has been the developments of Stalinism that have most confused and disorientated the Trotskyist movement in the postwar period. The outcome of World War II was one which nobody within the Fourth International had predicted, and events from 1944 onwards moved in a complex, contradictory, and uneven fashion that test the Marxist method of analysis to the limit.

Trotsky assumed that the World War would hasten the political process within the Soviet Union, bring to a head the internal contradictions that had developed during the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy—between the progressive, nationalized property relations on the one side and the thoroughly reactionary nationalist bureaucratic ruling caste on the other.

Accordingly, he foresaw that the end of the War would find either, on the one hand, that the inability of the Kremlin bureaucracy to defend the USSR would open the way to an imperialist reconquest or the restoration of capitalism; or, on the other hand, that a political revolution would oust Stalin's clique of gangsters from their positions of power and privilege.

Neither proved to be the case. Far from being destroyed by its internal contradictions, Stalinism emerged from the war in a much *stronger* position in relation to imperialism than at the beginning.

Despite horrific human and material losses, worsened in the extreme by the incompetence of the Stalinist bureaucracy, its liquidation of the experienced Bolshevik general staff of the armed forces, and its perfidious attempt to defend the Soviet Union through the notorious 1939 Pact with

Hitler, the Red Army not only repulsed the attacks by imperialism but actually took control of a circle of Eastern European "buffer" countries, while Stalinist-led partisans defeated occupation forces, their puppets, and other reactionary elements in Yugoslavia and Albania.

Stalin at first intended to do no more than install pliable bourgeois coalition governments in these buffer countries, in order to use them as a bargaining counter in his "peace" talks with the imperialists. But the onset of the imperialist Cold War offensive and the inherent economic and political instability of these regimes (in which the hated bourgeois state machinery had crumbled almost beyond repair, bringing the frightening prospect of revolutionary struggles on the very borders of the USSR itself) led to the Kremlin decision to press forward with the definitive bureaucratic overturn of capitalist property relations.

This was accompanied by the purging of the Communist Parties and the consolidation of monolithic Stalinist state machinery.

Such moves were carried through only *after* the postwar upsurge of militancy in the working class of the buffer states had subsided. And they were carried out *from above* in totally bureaucratic fashion, under the watchful eye of the Red Army and the GPU. The masses were excluded at all times from any expression of political independence or real control over industry and the economy.

As such, the overturns fitted into the framework anticipated as a possibility by Trotsky in *In Defense of Marxism*:

It is more likely, however, that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large landowners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree: "Serfdom is abolished." This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants, nor by democratic principles, but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR.

Trotsky stresses the profound contradiction embodied in such a development—a contradiction that must not be "ironed out" or brushed aside but grasped by revolutionaries as crucial in the analysis and struggle against Stalinism:

This measure, revolutionary in character—"the expropriation of the expropriators"—is in this case achieved in a *military-bureaucratic fashion*. ("The USSR in War," 25 September 1939, in *In Defense of Marxism* [TILC's emphasis])

And a few sentences later, Trotsky warns against any tendency to generalize from this or that aspect of developments and attribute to Stalinism a new, historically progressive role:

The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

The postwar consolidation of Stalinist control over the buffer states as a bureaucratic method of defending the borders of the USSR itself did indeed run alongside the conscious betrayal of revolutionary possibilities in Greece, Italy, France, Iran, and Vietnam, as part of Stalin's counterrevolutionary postwar "spheres of influence" deal with the imperialist chiefs.

As such, it formed part of a *consistent counterrevolutionary stance*. The transformation of property relations in Eastern Europe gave no impetus whatever to the class consciousness of the workers, who were almost entirely excluded from involvement and whose independent organized strength remained ruthlessly repressed. And any stimulus such changes might have given to workers' struggles in Western Europe was more than compensated by the betrayals of mass Communist Parties in Greece, Italy, and France, which were crucial to the temporary stabilization of capitalism over two-thirds of the globe.

But the contradictions and nationalistic tensions beneath the apparently increased strength of Stalinism quickly began to surface. Facing particularly acute problems in preserving his bureaucratic control within Yugoslavia and with political confidence flowing from his long partisan struggle against the fascists (in which the Communist Party had effectively controlled large areas of the country for several years), Tito in 1948 broke publicly from the dictates of the Kremlin.

And in China, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Tse-tung, finding itself threatened with extinction by the nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek, ignored Stalin's advice and began its drive to power which culminated in a triumphant victory in 1949.

In neither Yugoslavia nor China did the Stalinist leadership offer the slightest independence or political initiative to the working class. Mao's military offensive rested almost exclusively on the peasantry and was followed by immediate attempts to form a bourgeois coalition; Tito's "break with Stalin" used simply the forms and trappings of a working-class mobilization to strengthen his base against possible Stalinist attack.

The danger these two developments posed for the Kremlin was *not* the possibility that either or both of these veteran Stalinist leaders had broken from their Stalinist politics to move leftwards, but that they demonstrated the fragile nature of Kremlin control over Stalinist bureaucracies which themselves, for the first time, held the reins of state power and a base of support in their own countries.

The search for bureaucratic-military means of defending the USSR, as the imperialists threw enormous material resources into the arms race, led to the hasty moves by the Kremlin to move to the aid of Castro's petty-bourgeois nationalist revolution that—with substantial popular support—overthrew the Batista dictatorship in 1959.

Having failed in its initial moves to consolidate a coalition government with sections of the "liberal" bourgeoisie, the Castro leadership found itself increasingly dependent on the economic and military support of the Soviet Union.

Under pressure of the US trade embargo, the Castro regime rallied support through a controlled mobilization of the masses while carrying through the expropriation of US and other imperialist capital in Cuba and replacing the old Batista state machinery with Castroite loyalists.

Conspicuously absent, however—for all the barrage of anti-imperialist and "Marxist" rhetoric—was any independent form of organization by the Cuban workers and peasants, whether these be workers' councils or genuine factory committees and workers' militia. As the petty-bourgeois Castroites, despite initial anticommunism, became assimilated politically into the orbit of Stalinism, one overriding common factor that united the two sides was their mutual opposition to the independent movement of the working class and its exercise of political power and management over the economy.

This same political line was reflected in the tentative moves by the Castroites to gather around international supporters elsewhere in Latin America based on their own petty-bourgeois guerrilla methods and with no concept whatever of politically mobilizing the working class.

By 1968, Castro had been far enough absorbed into Stalinist routinism to publicly support the Kremlin invasion of Czechoslovakia. And by 1973 he was lending the still prestigious backing of the Cuban revolution to Allende's doomed popular-front regime.

Further proof that Stalinist maneuvers were still aimed at securing a stable balance of class forces with imperialism on a world scale was offered by the development of the war of liberation in South Vietnam. For years, this conflict was cynically used by the Kremlin and to a lesser extent by Peking as a bargaining counter in dealings with US imperialism. But the most desperate efforts by the imperialists to shore up a corrupt and tottering puppet regime in Saigon came up against the forward movement of the world colonial revolution, the growth of demoralization among the US conscript army, and mass antiwar sentiment in the USA itself. The most ruthless and sophisticated military methods—saturation bombing, defoliation, napalm attacks, helicopter gunships, antipersonnel weaponry—all proved to be no match for a tenacious liberation struggle with massive popular support.

But the counterrevolutionary nature of the Stalinist leadership (the National Liberation Front [NLF] and the North Vietnamese regime) was clearly exposed by the Paris "peace" agreements in 1973, which laid the basis for a government of "national unity" composed of the NLF, reactionary imperialist puppets, and the "pacifist bourgeoisie" (a so-called *third force*). This deal would have meant the betrayal of the ten-year anti-imperialist struggle of the Vietnamese masses. Only the reactionary stupidity of the Thieu regime prevented this agreement from actually being implemented. And even as the Saigon regime crumbled after the withdrawal of US forces, the Hanoi regime took care to ensure that it was not independent mass struggles or the NLF forces that carried through the final assault but Stalinist regular troops from the North. These troops immediately imposed authoritarian control over the liberated South and ensured that no moves towards workers' councils or factory committees got under way.

And not until 1978, three years after the conquest of power in the South, were controlled moves made to carry through the decisive expropriation of capitalist holdings—a process which triggered the first flow of emigration by dispossessed bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements.

The victory of the Khmer Rouge Stalinist forces over the Lon Nol puppet regime in Cambodia also avoided any independent mobilizations of the small working class or of the peasantry.

One lesson Trotskyists must draw from each of these postwar Stalinist-led overturns of capitalist property relations is that the struggle for the organized political independence of the working class, through organs of workers' control and workers' defense, is essential if the stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy is to be broken. Only through such a fight can the defeat of imperialism be taken forward to the establishment of a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship and a socialist planned economy under the control of the working class.

There could scarcely be a clearer example than the emergence of the savage Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia to demonstrate vividly in practice the contradictory process whereby counterrevolutionary workers' states have been formed in the postwar period. In each case the expropriation of capitalist property and the smashing of the capitalist state have been carried through from above, in such a bureaucratic-military fashion as to exclude any political development by the toiling masses.

b. Splits in the "Monolith"

The emergence of national-based antagonisms between sections of Stalinist bureaucrats began with the 1948 Stalin-Tito "break." But the process has continued and gathered pace

following the death of Stalin in 1953 and the growing tensions created by bureaucratic mismanagement of diverse national economies.

Pressures which center on how to control the working class and defend their *own* privileges have acted on the national Stalinist bureaucracies. This led in East Germany, Poland, and Hungary in 1953 and 1956 to splits which created the possibility of political revolution. However, the lack of any conscious political break from Stalinism and the failure to build an independent political organization of the proletariat, together with a combination of political maneuver and outright military repression by the Kremlin, enabled the revolts to be contained.

But further cracks and sharper conflicts have emerged since 1960, with the complex and increasingly open rivalry between the Moscow and Peking Stalinists, each seeking to buttress the basis of its own bureaucratic privileges through diplomatic/military blocs and maneuvers on a world scale.

Because of the particular way that the Chinese revolution took place and the less lengthy period over which its bureaucracy has exercised its Stalinist international policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism, forces, particularly amongst colonial liberation struggles and amongst youth in certain industrialized countries and during revolutionary upheavals, have been attracted to Maoism.

The various shifts in the Maoist bureaucracy's positions have, however, thrown up numerous warring factions on a world scale, each claiming to "orthodoxy" and calling itself revolutionary.

The reality, of course, is that *none* of them is capable of breaking from the reactionary politics of "socialism in one country" developed by Stalin in the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union. Maoism is indeed simply a particular *variety* of Stalinism, reflecting the particular national requirements of the Peking bureaucrats. This accounts for the curious combination of ultraleft phraseology with right-wing opportunist positions, and for Maoism's "Third Period" sectarian denunciations of Communist Parties as "social fascists" (Portugal!).

These various groupings can only be fought in the context of a consistent struggle to develop Trotskyist parties within the working class, capable of understanding and demonstrating the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism in action.

In this way, we can offer the colonial masses and youth a genuinely revolutionary alternative.

More recently, these developing splits between rival Stalinist bureaucrats have been driven on by the impact on the deformed and degenerated workers' states of the capitalist economic crisis.

In the workers' states the heavy weight of the bureaucracy combines with the effects of the capitalist crisis to produce new economic problems which threaten the very continuation of socialist property and the planned economy. Decades of bureaucratic planning and the suppression of the creative economic power of the working class have meant that the economies of the workers' states have become less able to meet the demands placed upon them.

As the 1976 events in Poland showed, the bureaucracies find it increasingly difficult to resolve these problems by imposing further austerity on the working class. As a short-term solution, therefore, they have imported increasing amounts of goods from the capitalist countries and have encouraged the participation of imperialist corporations in the "socialist" economies.

As a result, large balance-of-trade deficits with the imperialist countries have grown up, and these have been bridged by bank and government loans to the bureaucracies. Not only does this astonishing growth of indebtedness produce immediate problems of repayment for some of the workers' states, but it also leads to and reflects greater dependence of these states on the imperialist economies.

This is expanding the avenues through which the capitalist economic crisis penetrates into the planned economies. And it greatly increases the amount of political leverage which the imperialist bourgeoisie is gaining within the workers' states.

These pressures are reflected in important shifts in economic policy in many of the workers' states: the market mechanism is being fortified, plans are unfulfilled and abandoned (USSR), and in one case (Bulgaria) the bureaucracy is abandoning long-term planning altogether; imperialist capital is being given greater freedom of operation (Hungary, Poland, China); and there are even moves to restore private property (Poland, China).

The consequences of the bureaucracies' policies in attempting to balance between imperialism and the working class are particularly clear in the case of China. Under Mao, the Great Leap Forward of the fifties was an attempt at rapid industrialization that would avoid the growth of the urban proletariat.

After its failure, the bureaucracy split over how the exploitation of the Chinese workers and peasants could best be increased to finance industrialization. The faction around Teng Hsiao-ping pushed for an increase of material incentives and management authority in the factories and the encouragement of private peasant production. The faction around Mao tried to turn the antibureaucratic pressure of the masses into a movement for self-sacrifice and self-discipline. Although Mao's policy contained great dangers to the bureaucracy because of the forces it unleashed, it must be seen as part of the overall struggle of the bureaucracy to maintain its control of the masses.

With Mao's death, many of the bureaucratic elements that were defeated or demoted during the Cultural Revolution have regained controlling positions. But industrialization, ever more necessary for being postponed, is not being pursued by releasing the energies and organizational capacities of the working class but by massive direct imports of imperialist capital—and on capitalist terms.

This policy carries a double threat to the bureaucracy. The effect of such large amounts of capital operating on the basis of profit must inevitably distort the planned economy, threatening the wholesale restoration of capitalist production relations. While certain sections of the bureaucracy may see a future role for themselves in this, it cannot be in the interests of the bureaucracy as a whole. Both for the Chinese working class and the oppressed masses of the world it would be a disaster.

The second linked threat to the bureaucracy affords a way forward. Rapid urban industrialization, by whatever means, must serve to strengthen the position of the working class in China. The response of the urban masses to the depredations of capital will take forms, as during the Cultural Revolution, that go beyond the control of the bureaucracy and increasingly put the political revolution on the agenda.

The forward movement of the working class that has characterized the period in the capitalist states is also a material factor within the deformed workers' states of Eastern Europe, Asia, and Cuba. The growing demands of the working class are the ever-present factor underlying the splits and divisions between the different national Stalinist bureaucracies.

Romania provides the clearest example of this contradiction and of the reactionary manner in which the Stalinist bureaucracies seek to resolve it. Romanian leader Ceaucescu, fearing a repetition or extension of the recent mass strike by Romanian miners, has allocated an increased portion of the state budget to increase working-class living standards—hoping in this way to buy off the working class with concessions while retaining the political power in the hands of the bureaucracy. But this course has driven him into conflict with the Kremlin's demands for an immediate increase in defense spending from all the Warsaw Pact countries.

Fear of repetition of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak events has therefore also persuaded Ceaucescu to refuse to place Romanian troops at the complete disposal of the Warsaw Pact, whose chiefs of staff are Soviet officers.

Meanwhile, unable within the confines of the bureaucratically deformed Romanian economy to find the resources for the expansion required to placate the working class, Ceaucescu has set out to further his opportunist links with the capitalist nations. "Socialism in one country" and the failure of Comecon to attempt any overall planning of the economies of the workers' states, save in the interests of the Kremlin leaders, have thus drawn the Romanian leaders onto the path of increasing reliance on capitalist loans and technology. In doing so, they render the Romanian economy increasingly liable to disruption as a result of the capitalist economic crisis. Similar pressures can be seen at work in the Yugoslav economy. Tito's flirtation with Eurocommunism is little more than a reflection of the Yugoslav bureaucracy's increasing dependence upon investment from the capitalist states and its search for a measure of independence from the demands of the Kremlin.

Given the interdependence of the Stalinist bureaucracy and imperialism in the face of the forward movement of the world working class, the penetration of imperialist investment into the noncapitalist economies is the major form which imperialist aggression against the gains of 1917 takes at present.

The emergence of differences between Romania and the Kremlin over military spending will intensify the pressures on other national-based Stalinist bureaucracies to place as a priority the placating of their own working class and to resist efforts by the Kremlin leaders to buttress the Soviet economy at their expense.

The emergence of *territorial* rivalries and actual wars between deformed workers' states (Vietnam and Cambodia; Vietnam and China) also demonstrates the utterly reactionary, nationalist basis on which each Stalinist leadership attempts to resolve its problems. Such splits and conflicts offer imperialism a real chance of making inroads into the gains represented by the nationalized property relations in those countries. In these struggles, it is completely wrong for Trotskyists to take "sides" between rival Stalinist bureaucrats. We oppose the invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnam and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam and focus on the need for political revolution in every deformed workers' state.

The developing antagonisms between the bureaucracy and the working class which lie at the root of these upheavals offer the prospect of developing in the direction of political revolution for the overthrow of the parasitic Stalinist ruling caste and the establishment of a government based on workers' councils.

Ten years after the "Prague Spring," the crisis of Chinese Stalinism is producing a "thaw" in this much vaster nation. The Central Committee has already made desperate attempts to close ranks. But there can be no Soviet tanks coming to the rescue of Chinese Stalinism.

For this reason, all factions of the bureaucracy will tend to be drawn towards the protection of the army chiefs. If the masses are to find a way forward, the struggle for the building of workers' councils as the focus of organized power independent of the bureaucracy is crucial.

In each of the workers' states, therefore, the reflection of the capitalist crisis and the movement of the masses raise the necessity for the construction of Trotskyist parties to lead the political overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The continuing campaigns against Trotskyism conducted by these bureaucracies, including the Cuban bureaucracy, and the persistent repression of opponents who might turn in the direction of Trotsky's analysis and program for the political revolution, all indicate that this point is not lost on the bureaucracy itself.

c. Peaceful Coexistence

The growing internal instability and unease of the Stalinist bureaucracies, and particularly the Kremlin bureaucracy, are reinforced by the movements of the working class internationally.

The Transitional Program correctly stresses that, because of the extent of Stalinist police repression within the USSR:

As in fascist countries, the impetus to the Soviet workers' revolutionary upsurge will probably be given by events outside the country.

The efforts of Stalinist parties to head off such revolutionary events have included the extreme class collaboration of the Eurocommunists. While this counterrevolutionary political strategy does everything to hold back the working class and stabilize the international balance of forces, it has raised a major question mark over the mass Communist Parties' readiness to mobilize in support of the Soviet Union in the case of a war with imperialism.

At the same time, the puppet regimes of imperialism in Africa are crumbling, as the oppressed masses move forward. In this situation, the Kremlin Stalinists have been forced to move dramatically beyond their everyday methods of counterrevolution.

They continue to supply arms on a restricted basis to the liberation movements, so as to exercise political control over their development. On this basis, the Stalinists can bring maximum pressure to bear to force the African nationalist movements to make compromise deals with imperialism. But this well-worn method of preserving the balance of world forces in relation to imperialism has come against new problems. After the defeat of the US imperialists in Vietnam, the weakness of imperialism—evident to all—has placed the Kremlin leaders in an embarrassing dilemma, since imperialist forces were clearly in no position to withstand the advancing struggles in Angola, Mozambique, and elsewhere, for any prolonged period.

But this period for Stalinism coincided with a new turn in its own internal crisis. As the split between the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies grew deeper and more bitter, the Kremlin leaders were also faced with the increasingly open willingness of the leaders of the mass European Communist Parties to collaborate with NATO and their own bourgeoisies, perhaps even in the event of war with the USSR, and with a growing confrontation within the Warsaw Pact with Romania and other sections of the Stalinist national bureaucracies.

These divisions dangerously weakened the ability of the Kremlin bureaucracy to defend itself against any offensive by imperialism on the nationalized property relations of the Soviet Union. To restore the balance, the Brezhnev clique was forced to look for new allies and bases of support.

It is a combination of all these factors that accounts for the entirely new level of Soviet involvement in Africa. The tool for these operations has been the armed forces of puppet Stalinist Fidel Castro (now completely absorbed into the Stalinist economic and military orbit). Cuban troops, combined with Soviet and East German advisors and judicious supplies of arms and material aid, have been used to secure Stalinist bridgeheads in the wake of imperialist defeats in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia.

This intervention has had a contradictory character. In order to preserve their own bureaucratic interests, the Kremlin Stalinists have actually assisted in the victory of anti-imperialist struggles. But at the same time, the Cuban troops sent to Angola and Ethiopia have given all-important backing to the reactionary policies of the Neto and Mengistu regimes against their internal opponents. In this way the Soviet bureaucrats sought both to forestall any deeper radicalization of the masses that might result from a more prolonged struggle and also to exercise immediate control over the leadership of the newly independent states or new regimes.

In each instance Stalinist *opposition* to the independent struggles of the masses has been demonstrated vividly—most blatantly of all in the assistance given by both Cuban and Soviet troops to Mengistu's genocidal attack on the Eritrean people in their fight for national self-determination and the crucial role of the Cuban troops in the suppression of the uprising against Neto in Angola in 1977.

The position of Trotskyists on such military involvement must underline these dangers, while seeking to strengthen the fight of those forces now in struggle against imperialism. We focus on the question of revolutionary leadership and independent struggle and do not ourselves raise the demand for the sending of Soviet or Cuban troops—though we do demand that a maximum of arms, finance, and material aid is provided to every anti-imperialist struggle by the workers' states. On the other hand, where those actually involved in liberation struggles themselves issue an appeal for Cuban or Soviet troops to assist them against imperialism, we should support such a demand, while at the same time spelling out the necessity for every possible linkup between the liberation forces and the troops concerned, to ensure the expropriation of landlords and capitalists in the liberated areas and the creation of soviets and committees of workers and peasants, which must strive for the involvement of rank-and-file soldiers.

Only such an approach offers any independent road for the masses in the struggle against their own petty-bourgeois leadership and against the bureaucratic hold of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Indeed, the various moves by Stalinism in Africa and elsewhere must be viewed in the context of the consistent global counterrevolutionary policy of "peaceful coexistence" on which basis the Kremlin clique still retain parasitic power over the socialized property relations that flow from the 1917 October Revolution.

Certainly in Angola the imperialists have scented the willingness of the Stalinists to honour an unwritten "spheres of influence" arrangement. They have therefore pulled back from the kind of economic and political measures that forced Castro's Cuba completely into the willing embrace of the Kremlin bureaucracy. They have instead agreed with Neto on terms under which they will continue the multimillion-dollar oil operation in Cabinda and the Benguela railway. And Neto—himself reluctant to see any extension of the Angolan struggles into Southern Africa—has willingly collaborated in the moves to block guerrilla struggles in Zaire, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

d. Resistance and Repression

The inherent *instability* of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which runs completely counter to its superficial, cultivated appearance of impregnable strength, has been demonstrated again and again in the postwar period by its need to preserve the most rigorous repression of the working class, its political and trade union organizations, and its freedom to discuss. Wherever the mounting tensions and conflict of interest between the working class and the bureaucracy have reached the level of open struggle, the Stalinist leaders have responded by a varying combination of tactical economic concessions and vigorous police-military repression designed to safeguard the bureaucracy's political hegemony over the production process which remains the sole basis of its power and privilege.

Major flashpoints have included the military crackdown against the East Berlin workers' uprising of 1953; the revolt by prisoners in the Vorkhuta labor camps in the USSR in the same year; the brutal suppression of the Hungarian uprising, which in 1956 had reached the stage of the formation of workers' councils outside the control and in opposition to the bureaucracy; the suppression of a less developed movement in Poland the same year; the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968; and the subsequent repression of massive riots and strikes against proposed price rises in Poland in 1970 and 1976.

The Soviet bureaucracy itself, as shown by the recent spate of show trials and punitive sentences handed out to intellectual "dissidents," isolated supporters of imperialism, and other opponents, feels the kind of unease which suggests that it is concerned not so much to punish the individuals involved as to intimidate more substantial forces likely to move into opposition to the bureaucracy—the working class. Such nervousness must also underlie the vicious sentences meted out to Polish strikers in the aftermath of the 1976 events, as well as the police crackdown in East Germany against intellectual "dissident" Rudolf Bahro and in Czechoslovakia against the "Charter 77" grouping, which has the audacity to demand that the bureaucracy implement the rights written into the Czech constitution.

But more than this is involved in the struggle for democratic rights in the degenerated and deformed workers' states. The bureaucracy knows that one crack in the armor formed by its repressive apparatus will be enough to unleash mass struggles. We fight, therefore, *alongside* the "dissidents" for democratic rights, without in any way extending that support for the generally confused and even right-wing views many of them advocate. We aim to develop the struggle for democratic rights *away* from any notion of a united front with "democrat" Carter and the imperialists and *towards* the resurgence of a genuine dictatorship of the class organs of the proletariat.

The guarded "human rights" crusade by US imperialism does not extend to serious support for dissidents within the Stalinist states. The imperialists, themselves posed with the problem of tackling militant mass struggles, know full well the effects of a genuine struggle for democratic rights against the bureaucracy. They are not ready as yet to organize open parties fighting for capitalist restoration.

The Trotskyist program for political revolution must take into account the rich lessons and experiences of the postwar period and develop on the foundations laid down by the 1938 Transitional Program. In particular, the experience of the workers' councils thrown up in the Hungarian uprising makes it quite clear that it is no longer adequate simply to put forward the call to "drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets" (Transitional Program). The soviets, insofar as they exist in the Soviet Union or the deformed workers' states, have been transformed under Stalinist domination into absolutely reactionary bodies, which stand fundamentally *opposed* to the political independence of the working class.

The struggle for political revolution poses before the workers the task of constructing *new* organs of workers' power, whose independent class content must be protected by ensuring that they are bodies based firmly on delegates from workplaces, farms, and the ranks of the Red Army.

In elaborating a program of demands which can lead in this direction, first and foremost will come demands for the eradication of material privileges and the parasitism of the bureaucracy and for workers' management of production and distribution. Such demands lead on to the struggle for the restoration of democratic rights for workers' organizations—political parties, trade unions, etc.—the abolition of the political police, and the formation of a popular militia and courts.

Demands challenging the oppression of women and gays by the bureaucracy must also be brought forward—remembering Trotsky's analysis of the reasons why the conservative Stalinist clique had moved to restore the family unit, which the hard-pressed Bolsheviks had fought so hard to transcend in the period following the October Revolution.

And the scandalous international diplomacy and class collaboration of the Kremlin bureaucracy must be exposed and play a role in the mobilization of the working class for the political revolution. Similarly, demands for the rights of national minorities are particularly important after the repressive reactions of the bureaucracy, both in Stalin's time and since. These demands can be connected with the struggle to overthrow the bureaucracy and thus give a lead to oppressed nationalities within capitalist states—directing them towards the rights embodied in the genuine dictatorship of the proletariat.

e. Against "State Capitalist" and Pabloite Revisionism

Such a program for political revolution of course starts from a rejection of the various motley impressionist theories that have multiplied in the postwar period and which argue that the USSR and the deformed workers' states are in fact "state-capitalist" or "bureaucratic-collectivist" regimes in which the Stalinist bureaucracy represents a new type of ruling *class*.

Whether this view is interpreted in one way—with calls to defend these "state-capitalist" or "bureaucratic-collectivist" regimes against imperialism, since they represent a more progressive form of capitalism—or in another—effectively dismissing the gains of the October Revolution and equating Stalinist dictatorship with capitalist dictatorship—the outcome must in either case challenge Lenin's theory of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. And it must also disorientate the workers' movement, both in the deformed and degenerated workers' states (where the task is wrongly posed as *social*, not political revolution and the bureaucracy's power and stability are overestimated) and in the capitalist countries (where the continued power and influence of mass Communist Parties become inexplicable).

But, equally, Trotskyists must repudiate the view spelled out in the postwar years by Michel Pablo and wrongly adopted by the Fourth International at its Third World Congress: that sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy can be pressured by mass revolutionary movements into breaking from the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalinism into the camp of *centrism* or even to "project a revolutionary orientation." Such an analysis leads only to the most illusory hopes of a possible progressive evolution of Stalinist formations, when the task of Trotskyists is to offer an *independent* lead and program to any revolutionary movement that develops.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, though now extending its power over one-third of the globe, remains a *crisis-ridden* and *unstable* bonapartist bureaucracy, feeding off nationalized property relations and balancing cynically and precariously between the power of the workers' movement in their own countries and the power of imperialism internationally.

Trotskyists *defend* the progressive economic base of the workers' states—the nationalized property relations—against *all* forms of attack by imperialism. But at *no* point do we relent in the struggle for the political program and practical actions that can enable the workers within these deformed states to consolidate their independent strength and mount the necessary armed overthrow of their bureaucratic gangster rulers.

For this reason we spell out the necessity for the construction of independent Trotskyist parties to give conscious leadership to such struggles in *every one* of the deformed workers' states—the USSR, the Eastern European regimes, including Yugoslavia, China, Korea, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Cuba.

Though at first the work of such parties will be restricted to the most elementary and covert propaganda, the unfolding class battles on the world arena will undoubtedly present fresh opportunities in the coming period for revolutionary work based on the method and principles of the Transitional Program. The working class must be politically armed to settle accounts with the usurpers of the October revolution.

13. Turn to the Woman Worker!

The decay of capitalism...deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife.

These words in the 1938 Transitional Program have been amply confirmed by events and have particular relevance in explaining the mounting resistance from women to the attacks which flow from the breakup of the postwar capitalist "boom."

The "austerity plans" of capitalist governments throughout the world have thrown countless thousands of women out of employment altogether; wage controls have slashed the value of already depressed rates of pay for working women; and the worldwide capitalist offensive against social services, education, and health has forced a massive additional burden onto women, who, within the oppressive confines of the individual bourgeois family unit traditionally carry the full weight of domestic labor in the home.

The antiabortion and anticontraception propaganda of reactionary bourgeois politicians and religious bigots remains a barrier to these fundamental rights for women in countless semicolonial and even advanced capitalist countries. Elsewhere the ability to exercise these rights in practice is threatened by cuts in health-service provision and even attempts to reverse existing laws permitting abortion.

And hand-in-hand with the state preparations for major class battles which go under the heading of "law and order," reformist and capitalist politicians unite in stressing the reactionary bourgeois values of the individual family unit, whose limitations impose daily oppression on women, on youth, and on the male workforce.

Trotsky's explanation of the deliberate revival of the cult of the family by Stalin in the USSR in the 1930s applies with equal correctness to those forces—from James Callaghan to Anita Bryant—now attempting to buttress these values in crisis-ridden capitalist society:

The most compelling motive of the present cult of the family is undoubtedly the need of the bureaucracy for a stable hierarchy of relations and for the disciplining of youth by means of 40 million points of support for authority and power. ("Thermidor in the Family," *The Revolution Betrayed*, 1936)

The economic crisis of capitalism now forces the ruling class to attack even existing reforms and rights. This means that the material gains that would be necessary to liberate women from the drudgery of domestic labor and free them to play a full, active role in the labor force—full and

free childcare facilities; communal catering and laundry facilities; equality of opportunity in full employment—are *unachievable* outside of the struggle for the socialist overthrow of capitalism.

It is from this political understanding that Trotskyists must approach the substantial radicalized women's movement that has emerged in the recent period, as well as the hundreds of thousands of women workers that now stand in the front ranks of trade union struggles on jobs, wages, and conditions in wide areas of industry.

While recognizing that many of the issues at stake in the fight for women's liberation involve democratic rights and affect *all* women, regardless of class—although to different degrees and with varying intensity—it is nevertheless essential that Trotskyists recognize that, as in any struggle for democratic rights, only *under the leadership of the proletariat* and through the mobilization of its class strength can these demands be fully achieved. This means fighting for the maximum unionization of women and directing them to the essential struggle against the existing reformist and Stalinist leaders of the labor movement.

In contrast to those bourgeois feminists and their reformist and Stalinist hangers-on who seek to build a cross-class “sisterhood” alliance modelled on the Popular Front, we fight above all for the mobilization of working-class women behind a program combining democratic and transitional demands. These demands must be raised and fought for in such a way as to lead women workers to the recognition of the need to construct a party capable of leading the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

Only the establishment of socialist property relations can create the necessary material conditions in which sexual inequality and oppression can be finally ended.

Within specific campaigns and under certain defined conditions, the broadest possible unity of women in action can be fought for; but revolutionaries must in no way adapt or subordinate their own program in the face of the confused and often reactionary ideas peddled by the various currents of bourgeois feminism. There must be no blurring of the class issues involved. Rather, the task of Trotskyists is to struggle within such “broad” movements to *win* the most advanced petty-bourgeois forces to an understanding of the necessity for a turn to the *working class* and a revolutionary program.

Only in this way can revolutionaries develop the potential strength of working-class women and train the most advanced elements for leading positions within the class struggle and the revolutionary party itself.

At the same time, revolutionaries must declare themselves and show themselves in practice to be fundamentally opposed to *all* forms of sexual discrimination and oppression—including the state repression of homosexual men and women. Their sexuality is seen as a challenge to the “norms” of the bourgeois family unit and to the reactionary attempts by the Stalinist bureaucracies to preserve and strengthen these “norms.”

In taking up this basic democratic issue, we stress the link between sexual oppression and the desperate measures by crisis-ridden capitalism to divide the working class along racial and sexual lines and to reassert its crumbling, reactionary, imperialist moral values. Marxists must challenge and expose all of the pseudo-“scientific” rationalizations devised by bourgeois ideologists to reinforce racist and sexist notions.

The championship of the struggle for gay rights, as for democratic rights in general, must be taken up boldly by the only consistently revolutionary class in society—the proletariat. For this to take place, revolutionaries must expose, discredit, and remove the reactionary labor

bureaucracy, whose backwardness is the major barrier to the advance of the working class. This is the task of the Fourth International.

14. Forward with the Youth!

It is no accident that every one of the major postwar struggles has seen the leading role of youth. Whether they be the young workers of East Berlin and Hungary who in 1953 and 1956 came onto the streets and fought the reactionary might of the Stalinist bureaucracy; the young freedom fighters in the vanguard of colonial revolutions, the Cuban revolution, and the military defeat of imperialism in Vietnam; the students and young workers who emerged at the forefront of the massive General Strike movement in France in 1968; the heroic black school youth and students of Soweto who in 1976 shook the savage apartheid regime of South Africa and showed unmistakably the revolutionary explosion welling up beneath the superficial calm and stability of police-military repression; or the countless thousands of students and young workers that time and again defied the bullets and clubs of the Shah's massive armed forces in the street demonstrations and strikes that preceded and led into the armed overthrow of that twenty-five-year CIA-backed tyranny; and in the foremost ranks of the Sandinista guerrillas that ousted Nicaraguan dictator Somoza; youth have been in the front rank of struggle.

The militancy and volatility of the youth will undoubtedly be increased in the coming period as the weight of the capitalist crisis bears down upon them, depriving them of education, culture, hope of employment, leisure facilities, and the most basic democratic rights.

But their militancy and volatility, which offer such potential in the struggle against oppression and exploitation can, in the absence of principled revolutionary leadership, also be exploited by reactionary and even fascist forces.

The building of revolutionary youth movements is therefore an urgent priority facing the Trotskyist movement. In each country such movements must map out an appropriate program of transitional and democratic demands. Only such a program can combat any tendency among the youth to passivity or pacifism and direct youth to the essential political struggle against the reactionary old routinist bureaucrats who currently lead the labor movement.

15. Against Unprincipled Revisionism

The 1938 Transitional Program spelled out the fundamental orientation of the Fourth International towards winning the leadership of the organized working class. In sections entitled "Against Opportunism and Unprincipled Revisionism" and "Against Sectarianism," the Program pointed to the fight to mobilize workers in practical struggles in *conflict* with their reformist, Stalinist, and centrist leaders on the basis of the transitional demands.

Only such conflict with the labor bureaucracy can create the conditions for the establishment of Trotskyists in the political leadership of mass struggles. Yet the acute objective problems confronted by the postwar Fourth International and the inadequacies of the leadership thrust forward in the aftermath of the murder of Trotsky and the wartime loss of cadres, have meant that leaders and whole sections of the Trotskyist movement have fallen prey to the very same political errors attacked in the Program and its method has been effectively abandoned.

Scarcely rooted in the working masses and confronted with a wholly new situation internationally resulting from the development of the buffer zone in Eastern Europe and the consequent change in the balance of forces between imperialism and the Soviet Union on a global scale, the International leadership began in the postwar period to lose its political bearings. Some

leading members began to respond in empirical fashion to the surface appearances of the postwar period. One example of this was Cannon's "Theses on the American Revolution," 1946, which based its conclusions on the assumed impossibility of a new organic era of capitalist stabilization and a continuation of the immediate postwar upsurge of militancy in the American working class. The contradictory developments which followed 1946 served to change both of these factors, leaving Cannon's "Theses" as a classic statement of revolutionary conviction but an inadequate preparation for future developments.

Under different conditions, these positions and this method were essentially shared by the International Secretariat, which, on the one hand, did not succeed in grasping the unpredicted qualitative postwar changes and, on the other, tended to conceive of the development of the International as an unstoppable objective process, so falling into a form of optimistic fatalism. These positions, in their intrinsic weakness, combined to bring about the first serious opportunist deviations, opening the road to further adaptations and a growing abdication of the role of the Fourth International.

Trotskyists today—with the experience of another twenty-five years of the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalinism and the vital experience of having witnessed the working out in practice of the political method embraced by the leadership of the Fourth International, against the background of deepening world economic crisis—are much better placed to analyze the main features of that period. But this demands, at the same time, that we should remain constantly vigilant against precisely the same dangers of the empirical method which, under the Fourth International's Secretary, Michel Pablo, led the Trotskyist movement into a revision of basic principles and an abandonment of Marxist analysis.

Pablo took as his starting point merely the superficial *appearance* at a particular point of time and not the social and historical *process* that must provide the key to understanding the essence—which lies *behind* surface appearance. Thus, when Tito in Yugoslavia "broke" with Stalin in 1948 and used "left" rhetoric to consolidate the position of his own Stalinist bureaucratic caste in relation to the opposed plans of the Kremlin, Pablo could only see the cosmetic appearance of the public "left" face. He drew from this false impression a whole series of conclusions which challenge the fundamentals of Trotskyism and which were, initially, virtually unchallenged within the world Trotskyist movement.

This incapacity constituted the premise for a qualitative leap into abandoning the programmatic foundations of Trotskyism, as represented by the "imminent Third World War" prospect and "left-centrist" concepts of Stalinism, which developed to a high pitch among the International Secretariat under the leadership of Pablo and which became a revision of the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism, attributing to it a new historical role and anticipating that the "pressure" of events would transform the mass Stalinist parties into centrist parties.

Each of these empirical formulations represented a tendency to adapt to the surface appearance of events rather than a struggle to grasp the real, complex movement of material forces on a global scale which these events reflected. Similarly, in terms of political content but not in its form, there was also the tendency—later to be more and more marked in the development of the International Committee—to hold idealistically to "norms" and schemas drawn from prewar analysis, completely inadequate to understand the new situation. Unable to comprehend postwar developments, some leading members satisfied themselves with repeating truisms and generalizations from the past or simply turning their backs on new political problems.

Neither of these methods—on the one hand, empirical adaptation and, on the other, dogmatic orthodoxy—could develop a consistent analysis of the new situation confronting the Trotskyist movement. Incapable of understanding the movement of class forces underlying the events unfolding before them, they represented, in practice, the contradictory sides of the same

non-Marxist coin. This political failure must, however, be understood in the context of the concrete tasks and problems facing the Fourth International immediately following the war.

The difficulties faced by the Fourth International were made almost insuperable in the postwar years by the generally small forces available and the *isolation* of the European Secretariat (which took over the main direction of the Fourth International after the war) from the life of parties with any real roots in the working class itself. The resulting inability of these leaders to test and enrich theory in the struggle for revolutionary practice within the party, combined with the intricacies of postwar developments to disorientate both the sections of the Fourth International and the Secretariat itself.

In these conditions the International leadership that arose was unable to apply in practice Trotsky's description of dialectical materialism as a science which "always takes experience as its point of departure and always returns to it." Instead, the leadership showed a readiness sharply to alter and even lightly to abandon established orthodox positions in response to simply the appearance of new developments.

From this standpoint, the leadership of the Fourth International was unable to establish a consistent line when confronted with the contradictory and long-drawn-out postwar processes, which had resulted by the early 1950s in the establishment of deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe and China.

Theoretical inconsistency and disrespect for established positions have since characterized all such tendencies. Thus, the Healy leadership of the International Committee (IC), whilst maintaining a dogmatic orthodoxy against the European Secretariat's capitulation to Stalinism in 1953, embraced opportunism just as spectacularly when it concluded that, since the Stalinist leadership in Vietnam had succeeded in ousting imperialism (April 1975), it was, consequently, revolutionary and... "therefore"...not Stalinist!

Similarly, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the other main protagonist of "orthodoxy" in 1953, demonstrated over Cuba and again over the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, their capacity to adopt precisely those formulations which they so tenaciously opposed at an earlier period. Inherent in this is the problem of political method, and central to an understanding of this the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism as counterrevolutionary.

Analysis of the postwar processes which have involved the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe and Asia shows that it is *not* necessary to revise (as Pablo and his followers did) the Trotskyist analysis that Stalinism and Stalinist parties are *counterrevolutionary*, acting to *hold back* the international struggle of the working class lest it dislodge the bureaucracy itself. Rather, it is essential that this analysis be defended and extended as the basis for the struggle for the building of *Trotskyist* parties for political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states. Each of the East European overturns (for example) was so conducted as to *prevent* the development of revolutionary consciousness in the masses, keep the power at all stages out of the hands of the masses, and to ensure that the end result was in line with the postwar settlement with imperialism.

It is entirely wrong also, on the basis of later events, to attempt to falsify the process of transformation which brought them about, as did the leadership of the Fourth International when it *retrospectively* gave the Stalinist Yugoslav Communist Party bogus credentials as a "centrist" party in 1951 at the Third World Congress of the Fourth International. Even worse, the wrong conclusion Pablo drew from Yugoslavia was *generalized*, to suggest that "mass pressure" could force the Stalinist parties elsewhere to become centrist parties; that centrist parties can lead successful revolutions; and that the task of Trotskyists was merely to "fuse" with this "process." From the crucial significance attached by Lenin and Trotsky to the development of the *subjective*

factor—conscious revolutionary leadership for the working class—Pablo and the leaders of the Fourth International who supported him turned all their attention to the workings of an imagined “objective process” towards revolution.

It was then an extension of this wrong position to see the perspective of Trotskyists undertaking “deep entry” (“*sui generis*”) into the ranks of the mass Stalinist parties, particularly in France. This remained the line of Pablo’s followers for nearly two decades.

In this context Pablo’s concept (widely accepted by leaders of the Fourth International) of an impending “Third World War,” which was envisaged as a “war-revolution” because of the role anticipated for the Soviet Union, played an important part in covering over the contradiction between the obviously reactionary, counterrevolutionary politics of the Stalinist leaders of the mass Communist Parties and the prospect Pablo saw of a revolutionary tendency arising within these parties:

...this movement will develop revolutionary tendencies, not through the conscious will of its leadership but through the pressure of the situation evolving toward war. (“For a Decisive Turn in France,” 1952)

The analysis which anticipated the Third World War was, in fact, based on a drastically wrong estimate of the balance of class forces and a revisionist conception of the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy—a false picture which reflected the pressure of bourgeois ideology upon the postwar Trotskyist movement.

Such a disastrous course opened up the danger of a complete political liquidation of the Trotskyist cadre into Stalinism.

In 1953 the full significance of Pablo’s line came home to the American SWP and the British when factions within their national organizations, fostered by Pablo, began to agitate for a parallel liquidationist course to that enforced upon the French. At the same time the first wave of political revolution made itself felt in East Germany. It found the International—formed to give conscious leadership in the struggle against Stalinism—without any independent policy or program for the East German workers. And, in the same year, mass strikes broke out in France—exposing the acute dangers of holding the slightest conciliatory line towards Stalinism or illusions that it would swing to the left under “mass pressure.”

Reacting to these developments, the SWP leaders moved in belated defense of Trotskyist orthodoxy and, through the Open Letter of November 1953, declared an “open faction” against the line of the Pabloite Secretariat. In this stand they were supported by the British and by the expelled French majority. These forces, together with a number of other, smaller organizations, formed the International Committee (IC).

While the IC held “orthodox” positions (particularly on the nature of Stalinism, the vital role of the subjective factor in the form of the struggle to construct Trotskyist parties, and the analysis of the period against the empirical waverings and opportunism of the Pabloites during the 1953–1963 period), it never adopted any kind of democratic-centralist structure, which, of course, is essential for a Trotskyist international center. And the inadequate political grasp within the IC of the differences in method and program posed by the 1953 split, left *all* sections of the Fourth International disorientated. This was exposed sharply in the Cuban revolution.

While there was and is nothing unprincipled in seeking to reunify the world Trotskyist movement via a thorough discussion of differences, the SWP moved instead to embrace in 1963 the method and logic of the Pabloites.

Proceeding *backwards* from their characterization of Cuba as a "workers' state" (as Pablo had done with Yugoslavia), the SWP went on to draw the same formal conclusions: that, if Cuba is a workers' state, capitalism must have been overthrown by revolutionary means; that a revolution must be consciously led; and "*therefore*" the Castro leadership—despite its petty-bourgeois origins and bureaucratic control and despite its obvious separation from Marxism—must have been moved towards Marxism by some "objective process," becoming "unconscious Trotskyists."

As did Pablo with Yugoslavia, the SWP proceeded to draw from this mistaken analysis a *reactionary* conclusion: that it is *not* in fact necessary in every country to build Trotskyist parties to lead a successful struggle for proletarian revolution and ensure the political independence of the working class in the fight against bureaucracy. And this in the case of Cuba is linked to an effective abandonment of the fight for political revolution in a deformed workers' state.

But from the fact that the course of the SWP leadership in 1961–1963 was an unprincipled one, it does not, of course, follow that the opposition to them was necessarily principled. The Socialist Labour League-led remainder of the International Committee adopted—opportunistically—a position on Cuba which was, formally speaking, the polar opposite of the SWP's: that Cuba remained a *capitalist* state. While the SWP leadership denied the social transformation of Cuba had been carried out bureaucratically, the Socialist Labour League defended "orthodoxy" by *denying it had taken place at all!* Either way lay the road to political bankruptcy.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI)—formed in 1963 by the unprincipled reunification of the SWP and the forces of the Pabloite International Secretariat—soon lost both the Lanka Sama Samaja Party of Ceylon (LSSP: Lanka Socialist Party), which had gone over to reformism (and been expelled by the United Secretariat only after its entry into the popular-front government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike) and the personal faction of Michel Pablo. The USFI majority, now led by Ernest Mandel, developed its adaptation to petty-bourgeois movements and ideology to the point of fully accepting and promoting the strategy of guerrilla warfare in Latin America and identifying the European student movement as the "provisional" substitute for the revolutionary proletariat. Meanwhile the SWP, for its part, more and more accentuated the elements of pacifist and gradualist legalism in its politics, under cover of a formal orthodoxy.

After 1969 these differences in the USFI took the form of an open struggle by the SWP minority against the Mandelite majority. The SWP was supported by the PST of Argentina, headed by Nahuel Moreno, which had also come out of the experience of the International Committee and tended towards opportunist politics in Argentina. After the total failure of the guerrilla experience, the majority moved to a perspective of "imminent confrontations," based on the impulse to liquidate Trotskyism into centrist formations ("new mass vanguards"), making no real qualitative change in the essential character of its politics.

The *reactionary* nature of all the components of the USFI was demonstrated in the Portuguese events. The majority formed a bloc with centrist forces in order to provide critical support to the popular-front government of Goncalves and the bonapartist plans of the petty-bourgeois left wing of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). The Lenin-Trotsky Faction tailed the course of the Party.

incapacity to wage a struggle to break the working class from reformist leaderships. And Healy's International Committee, forever combining the worst opportunism with the craziest sectarianism, has succeeded in surpassing Pabloism in complete tailism towards both nationalist leaderships (Libya, Iran, Iraq, and the Palestine Liberation Organization) and Stalinist leaderships (Vietnam).

Nor does the current left posturing of Moreno's Bolshevik Faction, primarily in the wake of the Nicaraguan events, erase its opportunist past or bring an end to its political eclecticism.

But while opportunism has been a consistent danger to the postwar International, so too has sectarian abandonment of the fight for transitional demands. Whether these have been jettisoned in favor of minimal demands ("35-hour week" in place of "sliding scale of working hours," etc.) or supplanted by reiteration of the *maximum* program of socialist revolution ("nationalization without compensation under workers' control of all major industry," etc.), the end result is in each case a combination of sectarian ultimatism and opportunist flip-flops. The only gainers from such revisions of the Program are the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies, who continue their betrayals undisturbed by principled opposition.

It is essential that the role of the transitional demands—which is spelled out in the Transitional Program—is understood. They form the vital *bridge* between today's problems and today's existing consciousness of the working class and the tasks of the socialist revolution. Without being offered this bridge by revolutionaries, workers are effectively abandoned to their existing levels of consciousness and their existing leaders. And in taking such a sectarian stance, would-be revolutionaries inevitably wind up either as isolated, ranting groups of ultimatism or, in a desperate search for "mass" support, liquidating the program in an adaptation to spontaneous struggles and "progressive" currents of reformism, Stalinism, or bourgeois nationalism.

It is with these points in view that we must analyze the lessons of the experiences of the postwar Trotskyist movement. We critically defend those forces—initially in the International Committee—that took, however partially and inadequately, a stand in defense of the primacy of the task of constructing *independent Trotskyist parties* as the sole guarantor of the political independence of the working class.

At the same time, we stress the refusal of *any* of the main currents of postwar Trotskyism objectively to examine the roots of the crises that have split and confused the world movement and reduced it to its present anarchic state. This refusal to discuss the experiences of the fight for the program means that *none* of the existing international tendencies is equipped to lay claim to represent the political continuity of the Fourth International or to lead the fight for its reconstruction.

It is for this reason that the signatories of this document agree to undertake the task of fighting on a world scale for the necessary principled discussion of the program and historical experiences of the Fourth International, which alone can lay the basis for it to be reconstructed as a disciplined, democratic-centralist, united, world party adequate to the task of leading the world's proletariat in the fight for its emancipation.

In this context, *principled discussion* means the restoration and development of the entirety of the principles, strategy, and tactics of Trotskyism, applied and enriched on the basis of analysis of the postwar events. This obviously implies the rejection and refutation of the various forms of revisionism, with the related tendencies towards empiricism and adaptation. Such a discussion can be useful only insofar as it counterposes (with constant reference to concrete reality) the living unity of Marxism to opportunist and sectarian distortions. This naturally raises the question of an organizational "vehicle" for our principles, that is, an international tendency for the regroupment of those who stand and act in practice on correct, Trotskyist principles.

16. Reconstruct the Fourth International

Since the death of Trotsky, the Fourth International has faced major objective difficulties and a continuing crisis of leadership. Under massive pressure from imperialism and from Stalinism, with the isolation of revolutionary forces that prevailed throughout the "boom" period, the principles and method of the Transitional Program have been questioned and even thrown aside by leaders who laid claim to carry forward the struggle for Trotskyism.

But despite these open and covert attacks and despite the new and complex developments in the postwar period that posed Trotskyists with the task of extending and deepening its main lines of approach, the Transitional Program *retains* its validity as a line of march for the reconstruction of Marxist parties in every country independent of the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies and of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Those who in the postwar movement have set out to adapt opportunistically to those forces have first had to set their faces *against* the principles and the method of the Transitional Program, which stands as the political continuity from the revolutionary heritage of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, the Russian Revolution, the first four Congresses of the Communist International, and the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinist degeneration in the USSR and in the Comintern.

In the last forty years—a period of acute difficulty for revolutionists and internationalists—it has been *only* forces adhering to the Fourth International that have consciously attempted—however inadequately—to combat the counterrevolutionary strategy of Stalinism and reformism. Only these forces have held out the necessity for the construction of the Fourth International as the only world party of socialist revolution.

We are convinced that this tradition, though jeopardized by opportunism, sectarianism, and mounting confusion of the various currents pretending to the title of "Fourth International," is *not* dead. The positive and negative experiences of the postwar period, if reexamined objectively from the standpoint of building revolutionary parties in every country today, offer the theoretical and practical lessons necessary for the enrichment and development of the Transitional Program.

Such development can only take place under conditions where theory is consciously and consistently submitted to the test of practice and objective assessment within the context of a democratic-centralist world party.

Every attempt to short-cut the fight for genuine programmatic agreement through opportunist "moratoria" and "fusions"—which effectively outlaw serious discussion of differences and merely pave the way for future splits—has proved disastrous for the clarification of the world movement and has contributed to the profound crisis and confusion that now dominate the main tendencies that regard themselves as Trotskyist.

Only a fundamental political *break* from the opportunist organizational and political compromises of the past can open the door to real unity in action. This is why the signatories to this program insist that, in the ideological arming of the working class and the intervention of Marxists into the labor movement, there must be agreement on the need for parties and a reconstructed International constructed on the Bolshevik pattern, based on the political and organizational principle of *democratic centralism*. This means complete democracy within the movement in arriving at decisions, combined with strict adherence by all members to centralized discipline in carrying out the decisions of the majority.

The fight for this internal regime brings to a high point the fight against the petty-bourgeois tendencies to individualism, propagandism, opportunism, and careerism which beset the bankrupt ranks and leading echelon of the reformist, Stalinist, and centrist movements. At the same time, it challenges syndicalist positions brought into the movement by trade union comrades.

And by bringing the practice of the movement into open discussion, enabling the theoretically established perspectives and the daily developing practice of the party to be brought into sharp conflict, democratic centralism plays a crucial role in the fight against schematism and dogmatism, together with all forms of idealist retreat from the Marxist method of dialectical materialism.

Similarly, on an international level, democratic centralism must be upheld as the essential organizational principle of the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

We are fundamentally opposed to the concept of an "International" in which the discipline is so loose and the programmatic agreement so weak that public warfare can take place between its factions in different countries around the world. We insist on the fullest international discussion and examination of the practice of the sections, combined with a strict adherence by *all* sections to the line of the majority.

Above all, it is clearly impossible to resolve the historical problems of the International and the prevailing programmatic confusion simply by voting on or by signing correct programmatic statements.

Our Tendency insists that the test of the political line of a national or international movement must rest, not solely on its more or less orthodox theoretical positions on paper, but on the assessment of the strategy and tactics through which that movement fights to draw out the conclusion from these positions in its *practical* struggle for leadership within the workers' movement.

The construction and development of the Fourth International must be the conscious expression of the larger process of which it is a part—that of the international working class redigesting its own experiences and facing up to the tasks posed by the greatest social crisis in the history of imperialism.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Declaration Adopted by the Founding Conference of the
Trotskyist International Liaison Committee,
Held 28–31 December 1979

Introduction Adopted by a Meeting of the
Trotskyist International Liaison Committee
8 April 1980

Introduction: The World Trotskyist Movement

The Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC) declares its view that:

1. The postwar history of the Trotskyist Fourth International has been marked by a succession of splits and fusions in which at each point the political and programmatic issues at stake have been inadequately discussed on each side. The TILC analysis and balance sheet of that history are well known and extensively documented.

2. Underlying these splits and fusions has been a political crisis in the Trotskyist movement itself, reflecting the continuous material and ideological pressures on its forces from imperialism, Stalinism, the reformist bureaucracy, and petty-bourgeois nationalist and other radical currents. Such pressures have resulted in adaptationist political positions which abandon or revise basic elements of the programmatic struggle for leadership in the working class, compromise the independence of the class from alien political formations, and thus depart from the methods and principles elaborated in the 1938 Transitional Program.

3. The fragmentation of the postwar movement—though a product of profound political disagreement—has served in practice to further restrict the ability of orthodox Trotskyism to combat and defeat such revisionist tendencies. It has walled off whole sections of the postwar movement from practical experiences in other countries and continents. It has entrenched the various factional groupings in a factional and subjective defense of their positions, linked to a steadfast refusal to examine the political lessons of the postwar struggle for the Fourth International. And, since 1953, it has effectively destroyed the Fourth International as a single authoritative organizing center of the world party of revolution—thus jeopardizing any prospect of establishing a single, agreed programmatic response to the crisis of leadership facing the international working class in the 1980s.

4. We emphasize our view that *none* of the international groupings now proclaiming themselves Trotskyist can lay any exclusive claim to represent the political continuity of Trotskyism. Yet there remains quite clearly a “world Trotskyist movement”—in the form of a wide range of organizations which see themselves as based on the 1938 Transitional Program and which are composed of militants who aspire to be and regard themselves as revolutionary Marxists, continuators of the struggle of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky.

5. This world movement, while oscillating around the Trotskyist program, is politically heterogeneous and diverse, internally divided and confused, in a constant process of change and adaptation, and, above all, handicapped by a refusal to examine the lessons not only of more distant past events but even of recent past fiascoes—such as the role of Trotskyist forces in the Portuguese events of 1974–1976.

The movement thus has many weaknesses, but it also has important strengths. Only within the forces that have struggled to develop as Trotskyists is there to be found—however imperfect—an attempt consciously to combat the counterrevolutionary betrayals of Stalinism or to further the strategy—however ill-comprehended—of permanent revolution.

In some countries, such struggles—even if colored at times by opportunist deviations—have been taken deep into sections of the proletariat; in others, even limited and hard-pressed forces, sometimes tainted with sectarian methods, have at least taken steps to provide translations of basic Marxist and Trotskyist literature to lay the basis for future revolutionary propaganda. Numerically, these scattered and diverse forces of Trotskyism have expanded in the postwar period, as a reflection of the crisis of Stalinism and reformism and the increasing self-confidence and political development of the working class.

6. The TILC fights for the *reconstruction* of the Fourth International. In this formula we sum up:

a. Our *rejection* of any notion that we alone as an organization can proclaim ourselves to be the sole continuity of the Trotskyist program and thus to constitute “the” Fourth International; indeed, we do not accept that any such direct political continuity has existed since the uncompleted struggle against Pablo split and effectively destroyed the postwar Fourth International in 1953.

b. Our *insistence* that what is required to lay a firm basis for unity and common discipline among Trotskyist forces is not organizational juggling and negotiations between the existing fragmented organizations, but a thoroughgoing political discussion on the programmatic conclusions to be drawn for today’s struggles from the postwar experiences of the sections, and on the operation of democratic centralism on an international scale. We *insist* that the Fourth International must be more than simply an assembly of people who have not (yet!) betrayed the working class—it must be the living and conscious organized form through which revolutionaries hammer out and fight for a program adequate to the tasks of today’s class struggle.

7. We direct our struggle in fighting to reconstruct the Fourth International, therefore, both to the working class of the world—whom we fight to mobilize in independent struggle and to draw to the banner of Trotskyism in the building of national parties of the TILC—and to the forces of the world Trotskyist movement.

8. We declare in this light that we regard the world Trotskyist movement as a category composed of a number of widely divergent political currents—with many of whom we have fundamental and unresolved political disagreements which we are anxious to discuss. In its ranks, along with our own members and sympathizers, we would recognize the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and its sympathizing sections, the forces of the Parity Commission (Bolshevik Faction [BF], Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency [LTT], Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International [OCRFI]), the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), the International Committee (IC) and International Spartacist Tendency (IST) and a number of smaller international groupings and national-based groups which base themselves on their understanding of the 1938 Transitional Program.

9. It is our declared objective to create—through the independent work of the TILC in the class struggle, through our press and our propaganda, through every possible opening for intervention with other organizations of the world Trotskyist movement—conditions whereby the necessary political discussion and clarification can take place to lay a principled basis of agreement

to *unite* the most principled class fighters, the most conscientious political leaders, in a common, democratic-centralist, reconstructed Fourth International.

10. We declare ourselves therefore fundamentally *opposed* to *all* those forces—empty sectarian ultimatists on the one hand, barren opportunist charlatans on the other—who attempt to erect organizational or spurious political barriers to such a struggle. We call on the membership and the leadership of the organizations of the world Trotskyist movement to participate in the long overdue process of clarification and programmatic development that alone can open the way to the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

11. We have already tabled for discussion the document, “The Transitional Program in Today’s Class Struggle,” founding document of the TILC. We remain open to alternative suggestions as to the form and method of discussion. Our one clear and inflexible precondition is that we will in no way commit ourselves to recognition of *any* grouping as an exclusive continuity of Trotskyism or as “the” Fourth International. In today’s manifest crisis within the world Trotskyist movement, for any grouping to take such a stance is a clear symptom of sectarian arrogance.

Declaration

1. More than forty years after the founding of the Fourth International, the historical crisis of humanity still remains reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

In its deepening economic and political crisis, imperialism is challenged at every turn by the proletariat and the other oppressed layers of humanity in their struggle for an end to exploitation, oppression, and the abolition of universal want.

Mass struggles against despotism and military dictatorship have rocked the allies of imperialism throughout the world.

Struggles for national liberation have ousted colonial rulers from vast tracts of Asia and Africa and continue to this day despite all the concerted military power of US imperialism and its fellow oppressors.

As the bourgeoisie toys with its last card of fascism (most obviously in Turkey) or military dictatorship, workers have surged forward to confront this threat of renewed barbarism.

Even while they seek in vain to resolve their crisis, the capitalists meet militant resistance from the organized strength of workers acting with strikes and occupations to defend jobs, wages, conditions, and social services against attacks from the employers, the state, and the International Monetary Fund.

Even in their metropolitan homelands, the imperialists cannot rest easy.

New layers are constantly thrown forward into these struggles, and women workers in particular have fought to lift the dual burden they bear as wage laborers and the object of sexual oppression.

At the same time, young workers, school and college students have been in the vanguard of struggles against imperialism and oppression (South Africa, Iran, Nicaragua), and across the world the militancy and revolutionary enthusiasm of the youth have played a vital part in igniting action against the attacks of the bourgeoisie.

Over the last thirty years, the international proletariat has made powerful gains but also suffered serious defeats and setbacks.

Yet its enormous objective strength remains chained by the historic crisis of proletarian leadership.

2. The contradiction between the needs of the proletariat and the actions of its leaders is as massive today as it was at the time of the struggles to found the Fourth International.

Workers have fought in heroic struggles towards political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states (above all, Hungary in 1956), yet these independent movements of the revolutionary proletariat have been crushed by the political tyranny of the Stalinist bureaucracies.

To fulfill their revolutionary aspirations these workers need a new, conscious leadership from the forces of Trotskyism.

Workers in struggle against imperialism confront not only the forces of capital and the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state but also their own leaders—the reformists, Stalinists, and petty-bourgeois nationalists.

The mass forces in struggle against imperialism and against the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies objectively need a new, revolutionary leadership to replace the counterrevolutionary betrayals of the old leaders.

The best elements in these struggles are actively searching for that leadership.

Yet most of them can discover only the constantly shifting varieties of centrism and degenerate fragments of the Fourth International.

For a new element has now compounded the crisis of proletarian leadership: that is, the crisis of the Fourth International itself.

3. Today the Fourth International no longer exists as the world party of socialist revolution founded by Trotsky and the forces of the International Left Opposition in 1938. Revisionist tendencies have been responsible for its political degeneration and organizational disintegration.

We have come together because its banner has been dragged through the swamps of opportunism and/or sectarianism by the leaders of the USFI, OCRFI, and IC, which have abandoned the principles and the method of the Transitional Program. In reacting to these problems, groups such as the IST have plunged into the extremes of sterile sectarianism.

But the Fourth International will not be reconstructed as the world party of socialist revolution through the formation of another international organization which puts itself forward with sectarian arrogance as the entire body of world Trotskyism.

We recognize the urgent need to develop, with both the leadership and the membership of these groupings, the fullest possible discussion on the continuing postwar crisis of the Fourth International and on the lessons which this holds for the struggles for revolutionary program in today's class struggle.

The recent split in the USFI over Nicaragua has led to the formation of a joint Parity Commission by the Bolshevik Faction, Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, and OCRFI—with the declared objective of convening an open conference of the world Trotskyist movement on the crisis in the Fourth International. Only if such a conference is genuinely open and devoted to thorough

debate on the key questions Trotskyists have faced or are facing can it constitute a step forward on the path towards the political clarification necessary for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Confined for the most part to national isolation until now, some of these groupings will play the key part in the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

But alongside them, the most developed militants from workers' struggles must be drawn centrally into this battle, together with those forces prepared to break politically from the bankrupt leaderships of the USFI, OCRFI, IST, and IC, or ready to develop beyond a history of centrism, petty-bourgeois nationalism, or feminism.

4. On the basis of agreement with the programmatic report, "The Transitional Program in Today's Class Struggle," and with the general lines of the "Programmatic Bases," we now declare our intention to build a democratic-centralist international tendency, committed to the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

This tendency will work to develop and expand the political fight for the reconstruction of the Fourth International to lead the struggles of the proletariat and its potential allies towards the revolutionary seizure of power and the world dictatorship of the proletariat.

From this conference our organizations have established an international liaison committee to act as the focus of our political discussions prior to the founding conference and to draw up a document stating the conditions of membership of the tendency, as well as to plan and commence coordinated intervention by consistent Trotskyists in the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

This document will bring together the tendency's programmatic positions and the fundamental tasks confronting a Trotskyist leadership in today's class struggle.

The tendency itself will be formed only after principled agreement has been reached both on these conditions of membership and on national perspectives and tasks for the member organizations, together with a full commitment to enter into international discipline.

5. We issue the following call to all those forces engaged in the revolutionary struggle for international socialism.

The crisis of the Fourth International has added a new dimension to the historic crisis of proletarian leadership in the epoch of imperialist decay.

That crisis can be resolved only through the reconstruction of the Fourth International, to raise once again the banner of revolutionary communism and unite the workers of the world behind the leadership of one world revolutionary party.

Opportunism and sectarianism offer no way forward to the international proletariat, and they can play no part in advancing its struggles.

We take our stand on the traditions and experiences of the communist movement, as embodied in the decisions of the first four congresses of the Communist International and in the founding documents of the Fourth International, and we declare our resolve to struggle relentlessly against all attempts to dilute or distort these principles.

Being in no way sectarian, we do not oppose our own interests to the independent class interests of the revolutionary proletariat and set as our task the building of independent Trotskyist parties as national sections of a reconstructed Fourth International.

Today our forces are small—but they will grow through the consistent and determined orientation we give to workers in their struggles against imperialist oppression, against the political dictatorship of the Stalinist bureaucracies and the betrayals of their existing leaders.

History offers no alternative to humanity but a relapse into barbarism or the reconstruction of the Fourth International to lead the proletariat to achieve its historic tasks.

The same stark alternative lies before all those forces who are prepared to struggle for socialist revolution and the world dictatorship of the proletariat.

Unite with us now in the revolutionary unity of programmatic agreement, or stand on the sidelines, as the courage, strength, and determination of the proletariat are betrayed by today's leaders to a future of poverty, misery, fascism, and war.

**FORWARD TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL,
WORLD PARTY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!**