

5) Major differences continue to distinguish the situation in the USSR and that in other East European countries (socio-economic weight of the proletariat, the historical roots of the October revolution, decades of autarchy and the size of resources, the depth and duration of bureaucratic crystallization, with its criminal ramifications incarnated by the mafia, etc.). But the characteristics of the overall crisis also affect the USSR and deflect the dynamic of the reforms in a capitalist direction. At the same time, the difficulty of restoration — and therefore the polarizations inside the bureaucratic apparatus — are bigger in the USSR than elsewhere. This is what gives Gorbachev's "centralist" role a margin for pragmatic expression, but he appears increasingly paralyzed between the only coherent alternatives: capitalist restoration or socialist democracy.

We are now in a stage of chaotic decomposition of the old power structures which could last because capitalist restoration in the USSR will be even more difficult than elsewhere, and those who put forward socialist answers are marginal for the time being. In relation to the growing chaos the major question marks concern workers' reactions on the one hand, and, on the other, all the possible variants of an intervention by the army (in a neo-Stalinist sense, or on the other hand with a Pinochet-type logic).

6) The Gorbachevite offensive has most rapidly overturned the image of the USSR inherited from the Stalin and Brezhnev periods on the international scene. Internal difficulties have led to challenges to the arms race, to a systematic application of "peaceful coexistence" policy, to Soviet "disengagement" accompanied by an ideology of social compromise on a planetary scale. This has facilitated an historic rapprochement with social democracy and produced contrasting effects in the world.

But a new era has been entered with the deepening of the crisis. Within it, the USSR has been reduced to the remains of its former self. The Kremlin's pretensions can no longer even be for peaceful coexistence between two systems, but a simple alignment with imperialist interests in order to obtain credits.

The popularity of Gorbachev's new policy rested on the illusion that entente between governments of the existing systems can resolve the problems of peace, pollution and human rights. But the Gulf crisis shows that the inverse is true — it makes a policy of imperialist military intervention in so-called regional conflicts easier.

As for credits, in turn they become a formidable means for the world bourgeoisie to intervene in the internal changes in the USSR, as in other East

European and third world countries.

The realization by the world bourgeoisie of the weakness of Gorbachev's power and of the growing chaos unfavourable to a rapid profitability for foreign investments made the Kremlin's relations with world capitalism more fragile. Governments and investors began to develop direct relations with the Republics (particularly the Baltic republics) bypassing a weak and contested centre, while assuring for themselves the possibility to continue or suspend their conditional support for Gorbachev. The conservative currents in the USSR exploit and will exploit all the negative social effects and all the uncertainties of the opening to capitalism in order to at the same time challenge the ideology of the universal compromise at the international level. But the possible internal and external twists and turns of the Kremlin (with or without Gorbachev at the head) in a neo-conservative direction will be of the same bureaucratic nature as "Brezhnevian internationalism" without having any longer the base of a stable great power in the USSR.

#### IV. Our programmatic positions

##### 1) To overcome this crisis, socialist democracy is necessary

a) It is crucial not to leave the defence of "formal liberties" to supporters of capitalism. The idea that "the dictatorship of the proletariat" can do without such liberties is a Stalinist and reactionary caricature of Marxism. Socialism will be built consciously, and this demands the broadest possibilities for self-organization and expression. No organization can pretend to incarnate alone the "historical interests of the working class", in so doing eliminating all internal and external "deviations". The Fourth International is thus deeply attached to the democracy of its own internal functioning (notably tendency rights), in respect for the democracy of mass organizations and in its project for society. In the framework of its programme for Socialist Democracy, the FI fights for the right to strike and the broadest democratic freedoms: political pluralism; freedom of the press, religion, association, of demonstration, of expression, of independent trade-union and political organization; and against censorship and crimes of opinion.

We therefore support all the struggles which go in this direction in the USSR, and which denounce the electoral manipulation de facto perpetuating the party's monopoly of power.

But society is not undifferentiated, nationally and socially. Socialist democracy should be broader than bourgeois democracy and allow democratic choices about all the essential aspects of daily life and the future. By

penetrating productive activity, socialist democracy should make it possible to reunify the citizen and the worker. This is why we are for pluralist and generalized social control over all planning mechanisms, from production to distribution; decisions after a pluralist discussion and by referendum of the main priorities and criteria for distribution; and the development of self-organization of producers and consumers at local, sector and republic level. We therefore defend the need for a socialist transitional economy, combining democratic planning which ensure the carrying out in practice of the priorities for development and the overall balance, with the use of market and contractual mechanisms. The development of technology and work reorganization should make it possible to create a new logic of production subordinate to human needs. Social control and self-management should then become the essential sources of a new economic efficiency subordinated to the richest social needs. Overcoming the former division of labour, work alienation because of the market and the state should make it possible to organize the life of society on the basis of communities of freely-associated producers/consumers.

Therefore those who are most directly threatened by a decision concerning them must have a power of veto in the framework of the functioning of the soviets. This should also be true for the republics (if they feel threatened by a federal choice) on the one hand, and for the workers on the other hand (where their working conditions are concerned, for example). Alongside territorial forms of representation through direct and universal suffrage, we are therefore also in favour of the nations and nationalities on the one hand and the workers on the other having specific forms of representation that they must decide. In any case, we support systematic plurality of candidates and the right of recall. After the traumatic experience of Stalinism, it is correct to attach particular importance to the elaboration and exercise of coherent legal rules and rights, protecting citizens against those in power, whoever they may be.

Achieving these goals implies a real revolution which combines democratic and socialist tasks, national emancipation and social emancipation of the men and women concerned. Such a revolution aims for the overthrow of bureaucratic power and at the same time will have the essential social dimension because it will be a challenge to all forms of exploitation and oppression on which the bureaucracy based its privileges.

b) Faced with the gravity of the situation, we are for emergency measures of control and protection:

- That really free health services, childcare and schools be protected by the

establishment of workers' and users' committees of these services — particularly women; they should control their quality and determine at the level of each Soviet the necessary increases.

- For job security and job creation in publicly-useful works: rejection of all reduction in employment without guaranteed reconversion at the same level of qualification and wages — with income maintained during the period of reconversion and compensation made in case of change of workplace. This cannot be imposed, and must imply taking into account all the effects on the family. Effective establishment of a network of placement and retraining, with the formation of specific committees of workers' control over reconversions and adequate means allocated to the soviets. Protection of women's employment, against the fake free choice of return to the home, priority for investment in home-care services and products, re-evaluation of women's wages, more skilled work for women.

- Elimination of prestige spending, of special shops for the nomenklatura and of bureaucratic privileges. Drastic reduction of military and administrative spending. These resources to be allocated to an increase of the lowest wages, pensions and allowances — indexed to price rises.

- Sliding scale of wages against inflation.

- A vast campaign to make an inventory of all available resources and proposals for reducing useless investments and wastage.

## 2) The national question

### a) *Stalinism and the national question*

In the USSR, a multi-national state, national oppression is one of the aspects of bureaucratic oppression, provoking the biggest mobilizations. Over and above its cultural dimension, it poses the question of the level at which power is exercised: police, choice of investments, pollution, etc.

Stalinism was accompanied by a national domination whose Great Russian chauvinism was already denounced by Lenin shortly before his death. It grew stronger during World War II with the consequences of the German-Soviet pact, and then with the repression and the deportation of entire peoples accused collectively of collaboration. The Russian component of the Soviet bureaucracy, seconded by the indigenous bureaucrats of the different republics of the USSR, constantly flouted the internationalist egalitarian principles of the October Revolution, favouring the guardianship of a "Russian bully". Of course, this national oppression is only a specific aspect of the general stifling of soviet democracy by the bureaucracy, from which the Russian toiling masses also suffer. Moreover, and particularly since the death of Stalin, the

upswing in peripheral nationalisms in the USSR, in reaction to oppression, has been exploited by factions of the regional bureaucracies, no less corrupt than the Great Russian bureaucracy. Stalinism is not Russian in essence.

Nevertheless, the de facto privileges accorded to Russian language and culture, and the arrogant and chauvinist behaviour of the Great Russian bureaucracy on the basis of great power nationalism, are the fundamental cause of the current crisis in relations between the nationalities in the Soviet Union. Together with the ideological, socio-economic and ecological misdeeds of the bureaucratic dictatorship, they explain the explosive dynamic of this crisis.

#### *b) The present dynamic of the national struggles*

The Fourth International considers the rise of movements of the oppressed nationalities of the USSR as an essential factor in the general process of development of the self-activity of the Soviet masses. The national mass movements, which often started out by organizing around ecological questions, have been boosted by the calls for *glasnost* and autonomy launched by the reformers. They have sometimes found (at least to start with) support from a section of the reforming apparatus — itself evolving tactically on the basis of the popular strength of the movements and their dynamics.

The big mass movements of the non-Russian people have in the main expressed powerful democratic and anti-bureaucratic aspirations. The progressive demands that have been advanced can be classified into three main types: i) linguistic and cultural everywhere where the national language has been smothered; ii) socio-economic and ecological, challenging the bureaucratic choices of industries imposed from the centre; iii) political, denouncing Stalinist crimes against entire peoples after the war and, more generally, struggles in favour of the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities, for their sovereignty including the right to separation.

But also developing are: i) pressures for capitalist restoration, particularly in the rich republics; ii) inter-bureaucratic conflicts likely to exploit the different nationalisms for reasons of local power; iii) fundamentalist currents, racist currents, as well as real pogroms sometimes practised by oppressed non-Russian nationalities themselves against their own minorities; iv) the Pamyat movement, the extreme wing of old Slav, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, Great Russian nationalism.

The political (socialist) revolution will see the break up of the USSR as the "prisonhouse of nations", and therefore the intransigent defence of national rights. Understanding this is not to have any rose-tinted view of the national-

ist movements: they are, like the social movements, necessarily marked by all the current crises and trends (and not only a progressive trend, even concerning minority nationalities).

#### *c) Our positions*

Revolutionary Marxists fight for a world without frontiers, for the abolition of privileges of all sorts, and for the integration of all nations into a world socialist democracy, where a common universal culture and all national and ethnic cultures will flourish hand in hand. But achieving this supreme goal does not only demand the abolition of all national or linguistic privileges, and of all forms of tutelage exercised over any national or ethnic group, but also compensation for all the centuries-old wrongs of national or racial oppression by positive action in favour of oppressed nations and minorities, so as to facilitate their emancipation in every sphere. Only then can there be strict equality between all nations, languages and ethnic groups.

Socialist planning itself has to be carried in a form that is controllable by those concerned. In reality, it is much more compatible with the respect of national rights and identities than the invisible and totalitarian dictatorship of the market. In particular, it can take into account differences in regional and cultural development in the choices of techniques and priorities. While we are convinced of the economic and cultural benefits of going beyond national frontiers, it is more obvious than ever that such a process has to be controlled in order to be egalitarian and non-oppressive, both economically and culturally. The establishment of relations of mutual confidence between nationalities requires that they be based on openness, reciprocal advantages and control over the jointly-made decisions. Membership of a multi-national state must be freely and democratically decided and freely reversible in order to be viable, because socialism can only be built voluntarily. We therefore reject any bureaucratic dictatorship or economic pseudo-rationality (of the plan or the market) which would be imposed over the conscious choice of the populations.

We are therefore unconditional supporters of the right to self-determination, and therefore the right to a separate state while developing our own point of view that takes account of national, social and political questions, their interaction and their context. We are opposed to any logic limiting workers' self-organization: the anti-bureaucratic and democratic scope of the national movements will be measured by their capacity to stimulate and support the self-organization of workers and citizens. We systematically reject the fake proletarian internationalism in whose name the bureaucracy

impedes this right to self-determination and represses national rights. We believe that the only way working people throughout the USSR can unite is by supporting the rights of oppressed nations and nationalities, particularly their right to independence. At the same time we fight against the illusion of an independence which could exist in the framework of subordination to foreign capital. We understand this combined nature of the national and anti-bureaucratic revolutions, and act to advance both aspects simultaneously. This orientation distinguishes revolutionary Marxists from all other currents, whether of the left or the right, which invariably see the national struggle as in some way counterposed to the proletarian revolution.

● The diversity of national questions in the USSR means that there is no single answer — beyond sovereignty — to the question of the most suitable forms for defending the rights of each one. Furthermore, the perception of those concerned of what is the best framework evolves a great deal, depending on overall political conditions and historical differences. The deepening of the overall crisis of the economy and of Soviet power — not simply in the periphery but also in its Russian centre — are producing different effects: on the one hand it encourages abandoning the sinking ship and the oppressor state; on the other hand it offers new possibilities of redefining the links on the basis of new agreements between the governments of the newly-proclaimed sovereign republics. It is normal that in this context the choices are different even if the overall dynamic is that of challenging the powers of the centre. It is also clear that real antagonisms exist in the “rights” over the given territories, where history has meant that over time several nationalities have coexisted or succeeded each other. Socio-cultural problems that feed chauvinism have to be confronted, and the idea has to be accepted that many cases cannot be “simply” resolved by formulas. Their solution will involve finding compromises freely negotiated by those concerned, rejecting the oppression of one nationality by another. Finally, resistance to the negative effects of relations with world capitalism mean seeking different forms of non-capitalist economic union between the Republics and independent states which break in the USSR and elsewhere with the past “socialist model” and at the same time are threatened by the dictates of the IMF.

In any case, the new links to be built between nations and nationalities could only be the foundation of a new internationalism if they were based on national rights. Socialism itself will remain a discredited project in the eyes of the populations of the USSR and the world as long as it remains identified with an oppressing power which imposes its decisions.

That is why the FI unconditionally supports the right of self-determination

for all oppressed nations, nationalities, and oppressed ethnic minorities in the USSR — that is, their right to freely choose what links each will have with other nations and nationalities. It is for rooting out any vestige of oppressive Stalinist power. With this goal we fight for the full political and social development of democracy. This implies the self-organization of the workers in a context of opposition to all bureaucratic manipulation, any form of Great Russian chauvinism and racism, for the respect for national rights — especially for minorities against any dynamic toward an “ethnically pure” state. Opposing the maintenance of a compulsory union and of bureaucratic centralism, we favour the full assertion of sovereignty — that is the possibility of either separation or free association as they choose — for all the nations and nationalities of the USSR. This is so even if the desire for separation is combined with pressure for capitalist restoration. This question is just as unclear for the populations of the USSR as of Eastern Europe, who are open to pragmatically changing positions when they see the effects of an unprotected opening up to world market forces.

In practice, faced with the intervention of the Soviet armed forces in the Baltic Republics, the Fourth International unconditionally supports the desire of the populations of these Republics — already confirmed by referendum — to separate from the Soviet Union and their declaration of independence. We oppose any attempt to prevent the exercise of that right, whatever disagreement we might have with the existing nationalist movements or their governments in power. Military intervention by the Kremlin against the national movements blocks the essential clarification in each of the republics of the relevant social, economic and political questions. It is also an attempt to block the first development of multinational resistance by the populations in the face of price increases. There will be no free choice without the withdrawal of all troops from the Baltics and respect for the right of all the nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union to freely determine their own future and their relations with *other* nations. This right of self-determination will be only a formality if the nations and nationalities concerned continue to be subject to repression, to the pressure and control of military and police forces or of oppressive administrative state apparatuses. This goes for the Baltic Republics and for all other similar cases, faced with the central state of the USSR, and, at another level, for the minorities oppressed by the new republican powers, such as the Ossetians in Georgia.

### 3) A struggle on two fronts

Free-market liberalism, which supposedly embodies the democratic strug-

gle against the bureaucracy, is ready to ally itself with the mafias and will accept all kinds of foreign interference to impose the market. Its rule in the framework of privatization will mean big cultural and social setbacks. But such regressions cannot be fought by defending the old system. The right to work, education and free healthcare, housing for all and for the guarantee that society will satisfy all basic needs can only be defended by frontally attacking bureaucratic management in all its domains.

So there already is and will be two fronts of struggle: against regression linked to capitalist restoration (extolled by a section of the bureaucracy and world capitalism) and against whatever forms the old bureaucratic order takes refuge behind. The divisions between rich and poor regions risk confirming these two sorts of tendencies. Mixed up with this are national divisions exploited by different wings of the bureaucracy. "Left" and "right" labels are confused due to the very existence of these two axes of judgement: anti-bureaucratic (for pluralism, against all kinds of chauvinism) on the one hand; and anti-capitalist on the other. Reactionary components meet up along these two axes (pro-capitalist on the first; conservative bureaucratic and chauvinist on the second). The socialist left cannot fight on only one front without losing its progressive substance.

This is why the discussion has to be shifted: looking at what lies behind the market or the plan, cooperative or state-owned private property and foreign investments to see who decides, who controls what and to satisfy whose needs, which interests? This is why it is essential that there is the development of democratic mass self-organization for intellectual and manual, industrial and agricultural workers, men and women of all nationalities, in the workplaces and neighbourhoods, locally and regionally, on each autonomous territory and in each republic.

This is also the condition for the workers' interests not to be identified with the narrowminded and backward workerism used demagogically by neo-Stalinist currents: we want the values intrinsic to the working class — solidarity and egalitarianism — to grow from the anti-bureaucratic aspirations of all the oppressed (women, nationalities), ecological struggles, the highest possible cultural demands for qualifications, responsibilities and creativity that are not subordinated to mercenary interests.

If the fronts centred around fighting Stalinist institutions initially had a raison d'être, very rapidly it was the content and scope of democracy — that is, questions of democracy in the workplace and socio-economic choices — which came to the fore. Current developments reveal ever more clearly the naivety of identifying the market with democracy. There is therefore the

beginnings of a dissociation between those for whom the market is essential and who are ready to impose it with an iron fist, and those for whom democracy is essential, and who thought that the market was necessary to achieve it.

The development of political pluralism will be essential for clarifying these choices.

#### **4) Building the Fourth International to help build real workers' parties**

Today, in the USSR as in Eastern Europe we are seeing a proliferation of experiences of trial and error and provisional regroupments. The CPSU remains a composite organization which must certainly explode and disappear as an instrument of the bureaucracy so that a real workers' party can be built. Such a party will have to struggle both against the bureaucracy and against a privatization that will be carried out on the backs of the labouring masses, for the unity of workers of all nationalities and for the intransigent defence of national rights. It has to be capable of welcoming into its ranks all the currents that are ready to share these objectives in a democratic framework.

The existence in distinct currents of a socialist, pro-self-management intelligentsia — even if marginal and diversified — is a decisive potential for the future, although we cannot predict their real capacity for influence. We must underline the importance for the future of any beginnings of unity of these currents in a democratic and self-management front against the alliance of liberals, mafia and international capital, despite their currently marginal character. Their demand for full powers for the Workers' Collectives, local soviets and sovereign or independent republics puts the accent on the essential question: who decides?

Socialism has to emerge from this crisis rehabilitated, redefined and rethought out. It is possible and necessary, because it is the only emancipatory project capable of responding to the crisis of the two really existing systems. But this will take time.

This will go through the struggle for the whole truth about Trotsky, the Left Opposition and its fight, because it concerns the very history of the USSR, the interpretation of Stalinism and, finally, the possibility of fighting it as a socialist. Those very same people who made Trotsky disappear from history or who yesterday reproached him for being opposed to Stalin by defending capitalism, have reintroduced him in a new official history by presenting him as the same as Stalin, if not that he would have been a worse dictator. Finally, in an ultimate variant, his merit in carrying out an intransigent and continuous struggle both against Stalin and capitalism has been recognized, but he is



then reproached for having wanted a world revolution.... It is the same tirade that is aimed increasingly at Lenin, while reducing the October revolution from "Bolshevik voluntarism" to bloody excesses.

It will not be possible to resist falsifications without at the same time carrying out all the debates on the old and new questions posed. Alongside socialists from the USSR and Eastern Europe it is necessary to reconstitute the thread and the memory of history, to assess all the moments when choices were posed, where reorientations took place, where errors were committed. It is necessary to assess the scope of the global changes taking place and the stakes they imply. Finally, the socialist project has to be rethought by integrating into it all the richness of the debates of the 1920s in the USSR, all the experiences accumulated on a world scale and all the sensitivities of Stalinism's victims and the whole humanist scope of the fight for socialism.

The Fourth International has already taken, and will take, a full part in these discussions. In the perspective of building sections in the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, it wants to organize in its ranks all those who are ready to defend its programme and orientation. At the same time, they should be the animators of broad political or socio-political and trade-union regroupments, carrying out the struggle for the workers' and Soviet peoples' self-organization, against all oppression and for a society of democracy, justice and solidarity: for a socialist society.

## RESOLUTION ON LATIN AMERICA

# The strategic challenge for the revolutionary left

## I. The economic crisis in Latin America

1. THE ECONOMIC situation in most Latin American countries has deteriorated since 1981, as shown by the fall in average annual growth of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP): from 5.6 in 1975-80 to 1.47 in 1981-87.

In many ways former high economic growth rates were explained by the policy of import substitution, which laid the objective basis for the emergence of populist nationalist currents — sources of corruption and waste, which at times prioritized political stability and control of the working class over productivity. This began to generate a series of problems for the economy and its role in the world market. The deterioration of the Latin American economy became clearer at the beginning of the 1970s, but governments decided to alleviate the situation by contracting foreign debts far greater than those of other areas of the so-called third world.

2. In some countries, economic policies aiming to respond to this crisis situation have been implemented, linked to bourgeois political projects.

a) Attacks on the old populist state. The policy of import substitution accompanied the development of strong states (Bonapartist or military dictatorships) with a strong intervention in the economy. The weakness of the