

The Objective Situation and the Struggle Between Two Roads in the International Communist Movement:

Some remarks on the history of world proletarian revolution and the tasks which the present situation sets us

—Pour l'Internationale Prolétarienne [For the Proletarian International], France

INTRODUCTION

The present political reality faces us with a burning question: how to rebuild the International Communist Movement?

The importance of this question lies in two basic facts. First, the International Communist Movement is riven by the most profound crisis of its history, and the origins of this crisis go back beyond the coup d'état in China.

Second, the crisis of the imperialist system opens up a period of war and of revolution, for which the proletariat must have a correct ideological, political, and organisational line in order to be able to transform the crisis of imperialism and the inter-imperialist war into revolutionary war and proletarian revolution.

Thus, we find ourselves in a period which presents certain similarities with the situation which the Bolshevik party faced before the First World War. Synthesising this experience, Stalin said: "Meanwhile, a new period of imperialist wars and of revolutionary battles of the proletariat was approaching. The old methods of fighting were proving obviously inadequate and impotent in face of the omnipotence of finance capital... It became necessary to overhaul the entire activity of the Second International, its entire method of work... It became necessary to examine the entire arsenal of the Second International, to throw out all that was rusty and antiquated, to forge new weapons. Without this preliminary work, it was useless embarking on war against capitalism. Without this work, the proletariat ran the risk of finding itself inadequately armed, or even completely unarmed, in the future revolutionary battles." (Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*).

We cannot replace concrete analysis with the imitation of a past attitude. There are important differences both in the objective situation and in the form and development of opportunism. Nonetheless, we should pay full attention to the attitude adopted by the Bolsheviks.

In fact, the problems which are at the heart of the crisis and of the rebuilding of the International Communist Movement crystallise around two questions:

—What situation is the proletariat facing? Where is the crisis of imperialism leading: to inter-imperialist war? to revolutionary civil war? to world revolution? In other words, what are the conditions of the class struggle and of the historical movement which is concretely taking place before our eyes?

—What ideological and political weapons does the proletariat have at its disposal in order to be able to face this situation? What parts of past experience must be developed, what transcended, what rejected? What was incorrect or on the other hand, what has a universal value? What new questions must be resolved in order

to go forward? A correct answer to these two questions is the essential condition for the effective reconstruction of the International Communist Movement.

Here and now, the struggle between Marxism and opportunism has begun to develop around these two points. This is manifested through the struggle over Mao Tsetung Thought and the Chinese revolution. It has also been manifested around the positions taken on the international situation, notably in respect to the three worlds theory. However, this struggle has not yet grown to its full extent.

In this context, the signing of a joint communique by thirteen organisations and parties represents a qualitative step forward. For four years, an intense ideological struggle has been waged by a sacred union of the reactionary bourgeoisie, the humanists and the false Marxists of the left or the right. However, this was not able to impede the development of a revolutionary counter-current. The signing of the joint communique as well as its implications (in particular this journal) are the concrete act by which our current manifests itself, and a first step in creating conditions favourable to the resolution of the essential questions.

Although the communique takes into account the two essential questions mentioned above, it does not provide a solution to them. However, it is a preliminary basis on which to engage in struggle for the rebuilding of the International Communist Movement.

It is from this point of view that we have chosen our article for this international journal. The first version has already been published in our journal "Etude et Critique". The second, below, has been revised and ends with a new conclusion.

A—SOME REMARKS ON THE PARIS COMMUNE

Proletarian revolution began in 1871 with the Paris Commune. (Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, emphasised the fact that the Paris Commune was the first proletarian revolution and the first attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Chinese people, and in particular the proletariat of Shanghai, restored this first revolutionary experiment to its position of honour.)

The value of the Paris Commune results from the greatness of its aims and from the spontaneous forms of power that were set up.

This revolution showed in practice that an important revolutionary class existed, which had at its disposal what Marx called "revolutionary spontaneity". It showed that the proletariat was much more than the wretched class which the utopians thought they could help by means of their doctrines.

When Marx said of the communards that they were attacking the very heavens, this should not be seen as just a poetic image.

The commune was the first experience of the destruction of the bourgeois state by the proletariat. The bourgeois state was replaced by what Lenin called a semi-state, i.e. a State apparatus which emanated from the majority, in the service of and controlled by the majority.

Through this experience, a great aim took shape: communism, the radical destruction of capitalist relations of production. The aim of proletarian revolution is to achieve a society based on conscious co-operation between men; a society where the domination of a minority class, owners of the means of production, has disappeared, where the division of labour, counterpart of the private ownership of the means of production, has disappeared.

Speaking of proletarian revolution, Marx said that it would be the end of natural society, the end of prehistory.

In fact, it is only with the proletarian revolution that men begin to become masters of their own historical destiny, while up till then society has developed independently of men's will. And the key to this transformation is the correct consciousness of which the proletariat is the bearer, and which has as its condition the material base of capitalism.

The communards themselves were not able fully to express this aim, for only a theoretical understanding enables such an aim to be clearly defined. However, the objective situation which made proletarian revolution come to a head also created the conditions for the birth of this theoretical understanding.

Also, the first proletarian revolution coincided with the appearance of Marxism. This unity between the objective (the real revolutionary movement) and the subjective (the birth and development of proletarian theory), would continue throughout the course of revolutionary history.

Each qualitative step in this history was preceded by a qualitative leap in the theoretical domain. This was the case with the October Revolution and Leninism, and with the two Chinese Revolutions and Mao Tsetung Thought. These qualitative steps in the actual movement created the conditions for the corresponding theoretical leaps.

It would have been mistaken to believe that following the Commune or even in a few years thereafter, the proletariat would be able to achieve communism or to establish a base which would create an irreversible situation. The belief that the proletarian revolution can bring about decisive and irreversible victories in a few decades stems either from a naive and idealistic conception of history, or from a very narrow conception of the aims of the proletarian revolution, as being confined to the legal forms of ownership. Besides, the Paris Commune itself provides an illustration of the necessarily limited nature of the first revolution. In fact, while this revolution attacked the heavens and laid down the practical foundations for the proletarian revolution and for the radical transformation of the world which results from it, it had its limitations. We shall emphasise two of these limitations which are fundamental.

—The first lies in the origin of the Commune. The Parisian workers initially mobilised around aims of national defence, and it was in the course of the struggle for the defence of Paris that, progressively, proletarian aspirations grew and the defence of Paris was transformed into proletarian revolution.

—The second limitation lay in the objective class situation. The Commune was very rapidly encircled by peasant and bourgeois forces united. Also, the communes which grew up in other towns under the influence of the Parisian revolution had nothing like the same influence as in the capital. So the conditions were not united for a proletarian revolution to be able to develop in a durable way.

B—THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Forty-seven years later, the objective situation was profoundly changed. The appearance of the world imperialist system had created the objective conditions which were indispensable for world proletarian revolution.

—The first characteristic of the October Revolution was that it

was the practical demonstration of the proletariat's ability to create a vanguard political organisation to prepare for revolution. It was also the demonstration of the proletariat's ability to build up a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Of course, this is relative. The Russian Revolution had its weak points and the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat had great imperfections. Finally, the policy which was used to keep the revolution in power has been the object of numerous criticisms which cannot just be rejected out of hand. But in the necessary critical analysis, we must not forget an aspect which is fundamental from the point of view of historical materialism. Proletarian power in Russia was the first experience in the defence and building of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and it took place under very difficult objective conditions (isolation, civil war, weakness of the proletariat, etc. . . .). Despite the inherent limitations of the objective situation, the practical demonstration remains.

The Commune had demonstrated the existence of a revolutionary class, but this class had not been able to hold on to power and consolidate it over a relatively long period.

The October Revolution practically demonstrated the opportunity and the road to be taken in order to create a political line and a vanguard organisation so as to prepare for revolution by continuous work, and to defend that revolution.

—The second characteristic of the October Revolution relates to its international nature. The fact that revolution broke out in Russia was due to the place occupied by Russian society and the Russian State within the totality of the world imperialist system; it was not a strictly national phenomenon.

Russia was the weak link of the imperialist chain. It was the country where all the contradictions of the world imperialist system of that time were most strongly concentrated.

This is the first aspect of the international character of this revolution.

This relates to the *causes* of the revolution, but the international character would also be shown by the extent of the wave of revolution.

After October 1917, other European countries would be affected: Germany, Hungary, and to a lesser extent Italy. Asia, and China in particular, would also be affected by this revolutionary shockwave. So the revolutionary movement was essentially an international movement.

This fact was well understood by the Bolsheviks, who wanted to make the Russian Revolution the starting-point for world revolution. They considered that the victory of the revolution in one or two other European countries would be essential for the future. But the revolutionary wave did not maintain its momentum long enough to achieve such a triumph.

Once this tide had receded, how do we sum up the situation? We are faced with the following situation:

On the one hand, the proletariat succeeded in establishing its power in an immense country and it maintained a State of the dictatorship of the proletariat despite the armed aggression and the blockade to which Soviet Russia was subjected. Moreover, the victory of the revolution went far beyond the context of Russia because the proletariat built a world vanguard organisation in the Communist International. This second achievement was extremely important because it would allow communist forces to grow throughout the whole world, and so cause a great qualitative leap forward by the world proletariat.

But on the other hand, opposed to the achievements, are the limitations of the victory of the proletariat. The international bourgeoisie was certainly defeated in Russia, but on the world scale it managed to maintain a balance of power which was favourable to counter-revolution. In particular, it succeeded in preserving intact the heart of the imperialist system: the citadels. The Russian proletariat also came up against its own limitations. Though the country which it led was vast, it was also economically backward and drained by the imperialist war.

The vanguard class was quantitatively weak and bled dry by the civil war. These limitations were very great, given the enormi-

ty of the tasks facing Soviet Russia, and they were to weigh heavily on the development of this proletarian revolution.

Finally, the Communist International came up against its own limitations, in particular in Germany and China. The lead had been taken in building the world proletarian vanguard, but in order for this effectively and correctly to carry out its role, a very large number of questions still had to be resolved.

And to this day, these questions have not been resolved.

C—THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The limitations which the Russian Revolution met with were the same as those which were to be met by the proletarian revolution as a whole, including in China. If we look at the period from the First World War, to the beginning of the 60s, we can establish the following facts:

a—Although we had entered the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution, *the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution was unfavorable to the proletariat.*

This stems from two basic reasons: firstly, as has already been said, imperialism was able to keep intact a vital part of its system (the citadels). Secondly, it was able to confront its enemies on several fronts at once. So it always had at its disposal a stable rearguard, either by relying on colonial domination between the two world wars (with the exception of a few countries like China), or by relying on the citadels when national liberation struggles broke out after the Second World War.

This balance of power had obviously evolved under the thrusts of the October Revolution, the revolutionary movements linked to the Second World War, and national liberation struggles, each new wave of revolutionary struggles reducing the advantage held by world reaction. But it had not undergone a qualitative transformation and, globally, the principal tendency remained that of reaction.

b—We note that proletarian revolution *develops in waves*. The surging of these waves corresponds to the periods when imperialism is weakened.

We have seen two main waves: that of October 1917, which has been discussed above, and that which developed after the Second World War.

Proletarian revolution grows when imperialism is undergoing profound crises which lead it into imperialist world war. In these periods the imperialist system is brutally shaken; the crisis seizes up the ideological, political, and economic works of the mode of domination and reduces its effectiveness. This temporarily creates a balance of power which is much more favourable to revolution.

For imperialism, and for each imperialist power taken separately, the aim then is to get out of the crisis, through generalised war, while preserving its bases in order to reestablish a balance of power which is favourable to imperialism, i.e. preserving the essentials of the imperialist system. This is what imperialism succeeded in doing in 1918 despite the jolts which shook it right up to the beginning of the 1920s; this is also what happened at the outcome of the Second World War.

The long development of the Chinese Revolution from 1919 to 1949 only seems to contradict this reality. In fact, leaving aside the fluctuations in the Chinese Revolution, inter-imperialist war never ceased in China throughout this period; the struggles between warlords were precisely the specific internal forms of this war. The Japanese invasion did no more than to anticipate the Pacific conflict of the Second World War.

c—The third characteristic of the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution is the problem of *weak links*. The imperialist system consists essentially of two parts: the imperialist citadels and the dominated countries. Of course, there is a whole series of intermediate cases: secondary imperialist powers, or dominated countries with an industry, or which have territorial ambitions over weaker countries, etc; these intermediate cases develop with imperialism. But mainly, the imperialist system consists of these two parts, of two poles.

A very special importance is accorded to the citadels, which are the very heart of imperialism. That is to say that a maximum of wealth is concentrated there, and social and political stability have developed there thanks to the superexploitation which the dominated countries are subjected to.

As a counterpart of this, the dominated countries are subjected to very severe oppression and exploitation.

So in some ways the conditions are riper for revolution in these regions of the world because mass revolt is continually simmering, because imperialist domination is much less subtle, much more brutal, and therefore much weaker than in the citadels. But the possibility of victory on the periphery of the imperialist system comes up against the inherent weaknesses of these countries: the remnants of pre-capitalist relations, a small proletariat, weak economic development, etc. . . These victories on the periphery restrict the proletariat to building socialism in one country with a double handicap: firstly, an internal handicap, linked to the weakness of the proletariat and pre-capitalist or neo-colonial remnants, secondly an external handicap: a revolutionary country is subjected to the economic, political, ideological and military pressure of the whole imperialist system.

If we consider the experience of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, we note that these two countries were in fact on the periphery of the imperialist system and occupied a pivotal position which made them particularly vulnerable. Russia was pivotal between Europe and Asia, between militarist feudal reaction and imperialist capitalism. China was pivotal to inter-imperialist contradictions, because it was the last part of the world to be shared between all the imperialists.

It was this situation, linked to the vast size of the territory (human resources and the opportunity for manoeuvre on the military front), which permitted the victory of socialism in these countries.

So, for nearly 60 years, the general context of proletarian revolution was marked by an unfavourable balance of power. Only conditions peculiar to certain times or places allowed geographically limited victories.

But during this long period, the world proletariat acquired a wealth of experience which would allow it correctly to resolve the problems posed by revolution when the balance of power swings in its favour.

D—THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND REVISIONISM

Taking into account these characteristics and the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution on the world scale, the victory of revisionism does not seem out of the ordinary: if you look at objective reality from a materialist point of view, it can even be said that the victory of revisionism after the Second World War was logical.

What happened after the seizure of power by the proletariat in the USSR?

—*Internally*, the victory of the 1917 revolution did not abolish capitalist relations of production. Of course, private ownership of the means of production was abolished, but two other aspects of bourgeois relations of production remained intact: the division of labour and the relations of distribution. Because of this, the essentials of bourgeois relations of production were maintained. It was on this basis that a new bourgeoisie developed, which, far from being defeated, wore the label of communist.

—*Externally*, the encirclement of revolution by imperialism had an influence on the socialist countries. This influence was not only economic, but also ideological and political. In these three aspects there was a corruption of the revolution which was made manifest through international affairs. The example of the policy of the Allies towards the USSR during the Second World War is particularly significant, and a similar tactic is found in the policy of the western countries towards China from 1976 onwards.

The failure of the Chinese Revolution also has its fundamental source in the isolation of the revolution. But this phenomenon

did not happen in an identical way.

Many people say: "The result is the same in China and the USSR because capitalism has been restored in both countries." This is an ahistorical view of things which fails to take into account the fact that the development of the situation in China was based on a summing-up of the Soviet experience, and that the basic difference lies in the fact that the capitalist road was struggled against in China. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a revolution whose aim was precisely to defeat the new bourgeoisie which inevitably appears under socialism.

—This revolution aimed to seize *power* from the bourgeoisie in the sectors in which it dominates, to extend and make more thorough-going the power of the proletariat in all domains and particularly in the superstructure. In fact, even under the dictatorship of the proletariat, because of the division of labour, a part of the old bourgeoisie remains intact in teaching and in the arts and sciences, and a new bourgeoisie is constantly forming in the State administration and in the Party.

—This revolution also developed the ideological and political *consciousness* of the proletariat through struggle against bourgeois relations of production and attempting progressively to reduce the objective bases of these relations such as bourgeois right and the division of labour.

In this way, the Cultural Revolution showed the reality of the struggle for communism. This revolution showed that class consciousness is the key factor in strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat and struggling against bourgeois relations of production, particularly the division of labour.

It showed in practice the ability of the proletariat to struggle against the new bourgeoisie even when it is hiding under the banner of Marxism, to struggle against bourgeois ideology, against bourgeois right, against the division of labour, especially that between mental and manual labour.

So the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution provided the practical proof of the proletariat's ability radically to transform the world, *a transformation which goes far beyond the taking of central power, of State power.*

What remains for the world proletariat today?

All the objective results of decades of revolutionary struggle have been destroyed, there is no socialist State left, nor any sizeable military strength. As for the vanguard forces, they are sparse indeed.

But through all these failures, the world proletariat has acquired indispensable political, military, and ideological experience.

In fact, taking into account the enormity of the revolutionary tasks, the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution, and the limitations of the victories of revolution, it would have been impossible for the world proletariat to triumph irreversibly in just a few years.

The historical task of the proletariat is to make the most profound revolution that humanity has ever known.

Now in order to transform the world, this class must transform itself, for the proletariat is also a product of bourgeois society, and carries within itself remnants of this society which act as limitations to its revolutionary ability.

Through the Paris Commune, the October Revolution, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the totality of these different revolutionary experiences, the proletariat has blazed a revolutionary trail, tested its own limitations, criticised its own errors. It has thus begun to transform itself through all these attempts to transform the world. In parallel with this, throughout the period when the balance of power was globally unfavourable to revolution, the proletariat has been able to profit from all the weaknesses of the bourgeoisie, all the opportunities to advance the revolution.

In this way, the proletariat has acquired the necessary bases on which to found a conception of the world, a theory and a politics which are necessary in order effectively to transform the world.

E—THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE TWO ROADS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Thus it can be said that proletarian revolution has come up against great limitations resulting from the objective situation, and revisionism has drawn its strength from these limitations. But this statement of fact should not be used to justify all past errors. At a given epoch, men act within a specific objective context, and in no case can they go beyond this objective context. However, within this context, their actions can have a positive effect, a heroic action, or play a very negative role. In order to understand the evolution of the International Communist Movement, we must examine the objective context within which proletarian revolution has developed. But once that has been done, we must analyse another aspect of the problem: that of the struggle between the two roads in the International Communist Movement. The concept of the struggle between the two roads was elaborated by the Chinese communists on the basis of their concrete experience within the CPC, but also in their struggle against the CPSU and other parties rotten with revisionism.

What is the struggle between the two roads? It is the reflection of class struggle, within the heart of the communist forces. The class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is the basic contradiction of our societies, and so this class struggle develops in every domain of social life. It is manifested in different ways according to the different sectors and different concrete conditions, but it is manifest everywhere, including inside a communist party and in the International Communist Movement.

In the communist party, it is the expression of the contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat within a country. As far as the International Communist Movement is concerned, the struggle between the two roads is the expression of the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat on the world scale.

The bourgeois road has its source and its foundations in the influence of bourgeois ideology; this influence is inevitable when one takes into account the historical importance of bourgeois society and the still-present importance of capitalist relations of production. This bourgeois road also finds support and encouragement from outside. The international bourgeoisie uses, more or less consciously, a thousand ways to strengthen the road which seems least dangerous and most acceptable to it.

Throughout the course of the development of the International Communist Movement, we have always had a struggle between two roads. It appeared at the First Congress of the International, and grew throughout the whole life of the Communist International, then after its dissolution. This struggle crystallised in particular around the opposition between the CPSU and CPC.

This struggle has been marked by a certain number of decisive stages, such as the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, the dissolution of the Communist International, the Sino-Soviet split, etc. . . . and in order to understand the history of the International Communist Movement, we must fully understand the whole development of this struggle.

Obviously, we are not going to present such an analysis here; we are far from having made it. But a preliminary study of the history of the International Communist Movement enables us to note that the struggle between the two roads always crystallises around a certain number of questions. So, without claiming to give a complete inventory of these, we would like briefly to point out a certain number of them which seem basic to us.

1—*The opposition between nationalism and internationalism*

The bourgeois line always relies at one time or another on nationalism, while the revolutionary line always keeps to an internationalist point of view. By that, we do not mean the rejection of every national struggle. What we call nationalism here is the subordination of the interests of world revolution to the interests of a particular state or group of countries. This "nationalism" has historically played a very negative role. The most important manifestations of this appeared in regard to the priority given to the defence of the Soviet Union over other revolutionary tasks,

and in regard to the dissolution of the Communist International in 1943.

It is a similar point of view which has triumphed in China with the three worlds theory.

This nationalism is to be found at many times in history and in many parties. The PCF [Communist Party of France], for example, has always been riddled with this point of view. At the present time, the two roads are opposed on the concept of internationalism: whether there is a need for an International to lead the struggles of the world proletariat and the oppressed peoples, or merely for the reciprocal support of each force within its national context.

2—*What is the genuine creative force of history?*

Throughout the history of the International Communist Movement, and latterly in relation to the positions taken on the Chinese Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in particular, we still find an opposition between two theories:

The first is bourgeois, and goes in the direction of the constitution of a new bourgeoisie which dominates the masses. It consists of saying that it is the party which makes history; according to this concept, when the masses participate in history in a positive way, it is because they are guided by the party. Linked to this concept are more or less clearly-formulated ideas about infallibility. The revolutionary conception considers that it is the masses who make history, and while the party is a necessity, and plays an important role, this is because it is the emanation of the masses, because it is capable of making a theoretical and political synthesis of the ideas and revolutionary will of the masses. A party which no longer satisfies these criteria should be criticised, or even destroyed by the masses.

These two concepts are at the heart of the evolution of the USSR and of the concept of the party as it was developed by Stalin from the beginning of the 1930s.

They are also at the heart of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the struggle between the two roads in China.

Finally, the revelations of Hoxha about his feelings on the Chinese Revolution since the Sino-Soviet split clearly show that this question was at the heart of the struggle between the PLA and the CPC led by Mao, and Hoxha's betrayal has its roots in this struggle.

3—*The building of socialism*

—Here also, two theories confront each other:

The first considers that the essential thing to do is to acquire a socialist economic base, even without the consent of the masses. This concept, by allowing the productive forces to develop within the context of bourgeois relations of production, is a line which allows the new bourgeoisie to develop in the name of "socialist relations of production". The revolutionary line considers that *the essential thing is that the masses constantly raise their ideological and political consciousness*. It is on this basis that they become able to extend the dictatorship of the proletariat and reduce bourgeois relations of production, especially by reducing the division between mental and manual labour.

While this opposition concerns the class struggle under socialism, there is an analogous opposition when the bourgeoisie is in power: this is the opposition between economism, a more or less openly avowed reformism, and the revolutionary point of view, which is based on the raising of the level of consciousness of the masses and on confidence in the masses.

Here, then, are three basic oppositions which demarcate the struggle between the two roads in the International Communist Movement. Of course, the struggle between the two roads cannot be reduced to these oppositions alone; it affects all aspects of the politics of the International Communist Movement and the underlying concepts. But when struggle between the two roads develops, opposition on these three points is always found; it is here that the essence of the struggle between the two roads is crystallised.

In this respect, the importance of Mao's contribution concerning the development of the revolutionary line is important, par-

ticularly in respect to the second and third points. In the ideological struggle concerning the place of Mao Tsetung Thought, opposition is centred precisely around these points.

F—THE PRESENT SITUATION

In a little over ten years, the world situation has been radically transformed, in very many domains. One of the fundamental aspects of this upheaval is the transformation of the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution.

1—Firstly, let us examine the *objective situation*. The imperialist system is sinking into the most profound crisis which has ever hit it. This is not the place to describe all the aspects of this, but the situation can be summed up in a few sentences.

—The crisis has a more pronounced international character than any of the preceding crises and it affects every part of the globe. This is the result of the internationalisation of the imperialist system, linked to the growth of the world market and to the existence of imperialist powers capable of extending their domination over the whole earth.

A consequence of this crisis is the imperialist countries' loss of control of the situation. Their manoeuvres fail, their lackeys will only do what they want to do, the governments of the different dominated countries are trying to profit from this situation. This crisis, like the previous ones, can only be resolved by the imperialists by means of the outbreak of inter-imperialist war. But apart from the fact that its worldwide character will be more pronounced than the previous ones, this war threatens to be transformed very rapidly in very many countries into revolutionary civil war. This is particularly true in the countries dominated by imperialism.

Finally, with this crisis, a period of revolutionary upsurge has begun, which has affected numerous countries in the world and will inevitably affect others. This phenomenon is special in that it has extended over a long period and world reaction has not found the strength to crush revolutionary movements in a lasting way, and in many cases has only been able to fend them off. Even in cases like China, the situation of counter-revolution remains uncertain, even fragile.

These different aspects of the world situation show that the thesis put forward by Mao in 1970, to the effect that the principal tendency is towards revolution, remains objectively entirely correct. The balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution is being transformed, because the revolutionary upsurge affects many regions of the world, because the imperialists do not have sufficient strength to resist this, because now more than ever reactionary war contains the embryo of revolutionary civil war.

This tendency to revolution does not mean that imperialist war is impossible. On the contrary, faced with the strengthening of this tendency, imperialism may see war as a last hope. But this does not alter the balance of power between revolution and counter-revolution.

2—*Subjectively*, the situation has also changed. The imperialist system has, to start with, been affected by an unprecedented ideological and political crisis, the structure of bourgeois values is collapsing and a very important element of this collapse was the revolt of the youth at the end of the 60s, brought about by the effects of colonial wars. This revolt coincided with the revolt of the Chinese youth during the Cultural Revolution.

This crisis is a determining factor at a time when the imperialist bourgeoisie is trying to prepare public opinion for war.

The political crisis of imperialism is also obvious, in that the forces of reaction in the world need a firm leadership in order to resolve their crisis. All these are important factors in the weakening of imperialism; all the more so because this ideological crisis is directly attacking the citadels of imperialism.

On the other side, the world proletariat appears to be equally weakened. The last socialist countries, and China in particular, have been transformed into counter-revolutionary countries, and

the International Communist Movement is put to rout. But things must be looked at in depth. The problems which are at the root of this collapse do not date from October 1976; they have to do rather with the fundamental weaknesses of the world proletariat. The tactical limitations of the proletariat cannot be denied. It takes more than 60 years of struggle for the proletariat to become a class capable of radically changing the world, all the more so since during that period the very heart of imperialism has remained on the whole stable.

In fact, the crisis in the International Communist Movement, the failure of the Russian and then the Chinese Revolutions, the turnaround of the PLA, have had the effect of revealing a latent opportunism which has grown up based on the weaknesses of the proletariat. This crisis has exposed the two roads which have been opposed to each other within the International Communist Movement since its origin.

In parallel to this, the world proletariat has not lost its fundamental subjective gains. The different revolutions which have been made under an unfavourable balance of power are so many vanguard experiments, which can be generalised. And the condition for this generalisation is that the proletariat first synthesises these experiences in order to be able to forge its weapons. It is after this has been done that the world balance of power will be favourable to revolution; as we have seen this second condition has been fulfilled.

This then is the exceptional situation in which the proletariat finds itself.

CONCLUSION

This exceptional situation is also extremely contradictory. On the one hand we have the imperialists whose material force (economic, technological, military) has proliferated in the last forty years; on the other hand, we can see that never have they been so poorly in control of the situation in the world.

For the proletariat also we find a major contradiction: the world proletariat has at its disposal a wealth of revolutionary experience and a balance of power which was never so favourable; on the other hand the International Communist Movement is going through the most serious crisis of its history and no revolutionary force is in a position to play the role of a pole as the Bolshevik party did during the First World War.

This situation sets great tasks for us. One of the most urgent is the building of an International. The growth of class struggle and the sharpening of all the contradictions of the imperialist system demand a *single leadership* of the world proletariat in order to face a period of upheaval on a world scale.

Because of past errors, particularly the bureaucratic leadership of the Communist International at certain periods, the Marxist-

Leninist forces are hesitant about the idea of an International. These forces refuse to see it as a single leadership of the world proletariat and only accept the idea of an association of national parties. According to their concept, the building of strong national parties is the precondition for the building of an International. This point of view leads directly to polycentrist, indeed nationalist, concepts: according to this, the national context takes precedence for party-building over the international character of the proletariat and of the imperialist system.

On the contrary, the International should be seen as the vanguard party of the world proletariat; this is the most accomplished form and the most complete concept of the party. And it was in basing themselves on this point of view that Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, defined internationalist tasks.

Another argument in favour of the building of an International is our current weakness. Of course, no one would defend the idea of immediately building a powerful International which could lead effectively, with our present forces. But our weakness implies precisely that we would struggle more fiercely for the building of an International. Uniting the Marxist-Leninists into a single force cannot but compensate for this weakness; mutual support, the exchange of experiences, the joint resolution of ideological, political, and organisational problems would hasten our development. Moreover, given the objective situation, it is necessary to work to build Marxist-Leninist forces or to strengthen them in regions or countries which occupy a strategic position; there too an International organisation can provide decisive support.

This then is what necessitates the creation of an International. But the essential condition for such an organisation is the establishing of a correct ideological, political, and organisational line. This condition has still to be created.

Today, we have achieved a preliminary regrouping of the left within what was the International Communist Movement. Taking into account that which unites us, we cannot say that the left has been rallied, in so far as a sufficient ideological and political base does not exist. It is on this that it is therefore necessary to concentrate. The rallying of the left, as well as the future development of an International, takes place through ideological struggle.

We must conduct this struggle in two aspects: demarcation and unity, that is to say, demarcating ourselves from the different opportunist currents and ideas, and uniting the left more profoundly by mutual criticism in a spirit of unity.

In conducting these struggles, we must be able to expose the two roads which inevitably oppose one another, their ideological and historical roots as well as their concrete objective basis, notably in respect to the three points raised in part E.