

Nahuel Moreno

***On the Polish
Political Revolution
(1981–1982)***



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1981/1982

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Foreword

Editorial CEHuS are pleased to present four papers written by Nahuel Moreno on the development of the political revolution in Poland, its connexion with the workers' revolution in Europe, and the slogans and tasks to be put forth by the revolutionaries.

As soon as it was established, the Fourth International (International Committee) had to tackle the accelerated course of the political revolution in Poland. This provoked differences which were also sharpening quickly since Pierre Lambert and the leaders of the *Organisation Communiste Internationaliste* (International Communist Organisation, OCI) thought of Solidarity as a simple union organization and had no concern to specifically address the problem of the struggle for power. At the meeting of the General Council of the Fourth International (International Committee) held between 23 and 29 May 1981, a general document presented by Lambert was approved, but in that same meeting Nahuel Moreno began to raise, with the utmost prudence, his concern about the inadequacies of the developed orientation.

The "Memorandum on the present tasks of the political revolution in Poland", that we reproduce in Part I, was presented by Moreno at the meeting of the General Council and it was approved as "Complement to the draft resolution on Poland". Regrettably, the following months would show that Lambert and the OCI adapted to the pressures of the social democracy and the bureaucrats of the *Force Ouvrière* union also in relation to Poland.

Although the triggering factor for the breaking of the Fourth International – International Committee (FI-IC) was the total capitulation of Lambert and the OCI to the imperialist government of Mitterrand and the social democracy, and the bureaucratic methods used to prevent debate within the French section and throughout the FI-IC, the concern for Poland was present at all times. This is proved by the fragment of the letter that Moreno addressed to Lambert on 18 August 1981, published in the first issue of *Correo Internacional* (Colombian edition, January 1982) and reproduced here in Part II.

In March 1982, Nahuel Moreno published in the pages of *Correo Internacional*, the organ of the newly formed International Workers' League (Fourth International), "Some reflections on the Polish political revolution", which we reproduce in Part III. This was a synthetic but profound account of the reasons for the defeat suffered by the Polish proletariat, underlining the lessons of principle and policies that the Trotskyist movement should draw from the Polish revolution.

On 31 March 1982, French newspaper *Le Monde* published an extensive article by Jacek Kuron entitled "Proposals to get out of a situation with no way out". Nahuel Moreno criticized the positions of the former Marxist anti-bureaucratic militant turned close adviser of Walesa, in the April 1982 issue of *Correo Internacional* in an article entitled "Kuron's program, who does it serve?" which is Part IV of this work.

The Editors

September 2018

PART I

Memorandum on the present tasks of the political revolution in Poland

1. Meaning and prospects of the general strike

The document¹ insists on the fact the general strike raises the problem of power and, in this way, the political problem of the leadership; consequently, the problem of the need for a new political party. We agree. But, for me, there are other fundamental elements in the analysis and perspectives of the general strike: I will point them out schematically.

First, one of the fundamental reasons for the general strike is the colossal advance of the process of organization of the masses in the struggle against the bureaucracy, mainly the organization of the rural union of Solidarity, something that cannot be accepted by the Polish bureaucracy or much less by the Kremlin.

Second, this process of organization materialises the alliance of the workers and the peasants against the bureaucracy (without forgetting the students and the intellectuals).

Third, the general strike raises, immediately and fundamentally, the more or less immediate prospect of the link between the soldiers and the working masses, with its inevitable consequence: the organization of the soldiers. When the political revolution reaches this level of organization, expression of the workers-peasants alliance within the armed forces, the political revolution will have begun its decisive stage.

2. Dual power

On three or four occasions, the situation is defined as a situation of dual power. It is too little. It is necessary to specify, make concrete the character of the dual power and its different stages.

Therefore, we must specify:

First, the dual power is institutional and centralized (which represents a great historical step) between the government of the single party, of the bureaucracy, and Solidarity. There are two powers in Poland: one in crisis, almost in ruins, which is the government; the other is the power of the working masses, expressed in Solidarity. Between the two appears an institution that underpins the vacillating power of the bureaucracy: it is the Church, with Walesa in the leadership of Solidarity. Within the dual power, the Church is part of the bureaucratic power, waiting for the possibility of developing as a directly bourgeois power through the defeat of the masses (in this way a new dual power would emerge — bourgeoisie/workers' State). Workers' and people's power undermines all institutions, including the Church and the party that holds power.

Second, apparently, there is no significant manifestation of dual power within the armed forces.

¹ It refers to the document "Draft resolution on Poland" submitted by Pierre Lambert to the General Council of the Fourth International (International Committee) meeting in May 1981. [Editor]

Third, the Church tries by all means to formalize the dual power within the dominant bureaucratic institutions, i.e., to transform Solidarity into a legal union organization and a close collaborator of the ruling bureaucracy.

Fourth, this political plan to officialise the institutions of workers' and people's power in the apparatus of the dominant state, which has so greatly benefited the bourgeoisie in other revolutionary situations, has no chance of succeeding in Poland because the totalitarian political regime is intrinsic to the bureaucratic domination and privileges. Without the totalitarian domination of the state apparatus, the bureaucracy could not be a privileged caste, unlike the bourgeoisie, whose privileged life comes from its location as a ruling class in production. Therefore, the bourgeoisie has a margin of manoeuvre that the bureaucracy does not possess. For the bourgeoisie, the essential thing is to be the master of the means of production; for the Stalinist bureaucracy, the essential thing is to dominate the totalitarian apparatus of government.

3. Historical bases and goals of the political revolution in Poland

The document emphasizes and insists on the three objective and historical factors: the economic crisis without solution due to the bureaucratic administration, the bureaucratic oppression of the mass movement, and the national oppression by the Kremlin bureaucracy. It is necessary to add two other reasons to these three.

First, the regime, the state apparatus is also bourgeois, totalitarian. It is a tragic remnant of the fascist era, whose twin brother is Stalinism; that is, in a diametrically opposed economic-social framework, they have built a political regime with many points of similarity: it is totalitarian and uses ruthless methods of civil war against its adversaries, especially against the working class and the peasants.

Second, due to the economic crisis, its criminal inability, and its terror in the face of the workers' movement, the bureaucracy has not hesitated for an instant to submit to imperialism, thus facilitating the deep penetration of imperialist capital into the economy of the workers' state. In the face of the economic and political crisis, we can see how the bureaucracy is, ultimately, an agent of imperialism. Faced with a mortal danger and without a way out, it resorts to imperialism as a saviour; it did so in the face of the economic crisis.

4. The imperialist counterrevolution against the political revolution

In its revolutionary mobilization against the Polish and Russian bureaucracy, the Polish working masses will confront imperialism. Although many sectors of the mass movement do not understand, because of their hopes, that their struggle ultimately faces the imperialist counterrevolution, this is the deepest reality of what is happening.

Currently, the bureaucracy is not just a hysterical agent of imperialism. In Poland, it is the only one that guarantees the payment of debts and interests to imperialism. The fight against poverty and low wages is already a fight against the gradual surrender of the Polish economy to imperialism by the bureaucracy. The economic sufferings of the masses are an immediate product not only of bureaucratic privileges but also of indebtedness to imperialism.

Only the triumphant political revolution will stop the bureaucratic course of the increasing surrender of the social foundations of the Polish economy to imperialism.

5. The program

When building a program from there, we must be very prudent from the political point of view. I think the document is a good example of how we should act.

There are two elements we must take into account: if, for now, there are no traces of a revolutionary party, the more time we gain, avoiding the decisive confrontations, the better. In view of our weakness, we must avoid positions that become “ultraleft”, however fair they may seem; for example, immediately to overthrow the government, or to build soviets now.

We must also consider and see how we adapt, on the ground, our positions to the actual conditions and to the hopes of the masses with all their contradictions. I leave aside this formal but decisive problem in the formulation of the program. Once we have discussed whether or not we are right, we will move on to the formal problem.

Schematically, I think we should emphasize the following:

I. To develop and consolidate popular power, today Solidarity

This is the most important task and slogan of this stage. Within this, there is another decisive task: a Solidarity of the soldiers; for the right of soldiers to organize themselves same as workers, peasants and students.

This task also includes the slogan for a democratic and representative congress of workers’, rural, students’, and soldiers’ Solidarity, to discuss the economic crisis and approve a program to resolve it. This congress must be prepared in advance, with the right of tendency and the publication of the draft resolutions in the Solidarity organ.

Solidarity’s organ must publish the correspondence of its sections.

To pose the problem of Solidarity’s pickets.

The axis of our activity, our place and our program is Solidarity. Starting from there, our goal is to liquidate the government of the bureaucracy. But that goal cannot be immediate.

We must be very prudent to propose new organizational forms, such as soviets, if there are no immediate conditions for this.

II. Educate

To patiently educate the mass movement, without ultimatums or transforming the need to overthrow the government in an immediate task. Down the government of the single party, the PZPR [Polish United Workers’ Party]. That is the central political task.

III. For the constituent assembly

In the current, democratic, stage of the political revolution, this is the only slogan that can allow us to win the whole mass movement for two other fundamental tasks. They are the mediating task and slogan; without them, there is no possibility of strengthening the workers’ and people’s power, or of preparing it to overthrow the government. Logically, at this stage of the political revolution, we cannot fight for freedom of the press, politics, and trade unions if we do not group all those slogans into one that summarizes, by posing in an algebraic manner adapted to the hopes and aspirations of the workers in the current stage, the problem of power.

This slogan, this task, more than necessary it is indispensable. It is the logical conclusion of Trotsky’s analysis of the new totalitarian regimes, fascism and Stalinism (which we obviously differentiate between themselves as social regimes). The entire position of Trotsky after Hitler’s victory following Stalin’s victory consists in developing the democratic slogans — “Defence of the Reichstag” that chose Hitler and “self-determination of Ukraine” — but not within the framework of a rebirth of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the more advanced capitalist countries and in the bureaucratic USSR. On the contrary, as a consequence of the putrefaction of capitalism and the barbarism of Stalinism, we are forced to raise, against capitalism and the bureaucracy, the great democratic tasks, which have ceased to be bourgeois due to the new historical context in which they are posed.

What is important is the point of reference through which the socialist revolution passes. Today, in Poland — and thus it will be at the beginning of every political revolution — the point of reference for the mass movement, and also ours, is the power of the bureaucratic State. Exaggerating a bit, we can say everything that goes against that State is positive. Right now, in all the workers' states, the main enemy of the workers is that power and that bureaucratic caste. From the totalitarian character of the regime, in principle, the democratic character of most of the tasks set out is inferred. Down with the bureaucratic regime. Long live democracy. These are the two great slogans, raised not by us but by reality. What we do is to draw the conclusion of this mobilization, raising the appropriate institutional-political slogan: Constituent Assembly is the only positive synthesis of Down with the totalitarian regime and Long live democracy.

This general way of posing problems on the part of the mass movement entails many dangers. When the time comes for the Constituent, the hopes of the masses can break our policy. This danger is much greater in Poland, due to the existence of the Catholic Church, agent of the bourgeois counterrevolution. But every higher stage of the mobilization of the masses poses new dangers. The Constituent Assembly is the best way to unmask the Church in Poland and in general in all the workers' states where the restorationist currents lean on the masses, taking advantage of their democratic hopes.

It would be much worse if, in the absence of the Constituent Assembly, we could not face the Church before all the people and, therefore, if the workers would see it as an alternative government directly, without the mediation of the Constituent Assembly.

I could add some questions, such as the problem of the workers' party and the crisis of the CP and the KOR [Workers' Defence Committee]. I could also try to specify the activity of our comrades.

Among these issues, there is a fundamental one: we situate ourselves in the traditional framework of the political revolution as Trotsky put it. We continue to defend that program, enriched by the mass movement itself.

The true aim of this memorandum is, I insist, to clarify my own doubts.

PART II

Letter on Poland

Your letter to Polish comrades¹ seems to me an advance on the right path. I consider it a success to launch the slogan of Soviets. However, I still believe that the centre of the political scene and of the workers' and people's power continues to be Solidarity and it is not guaranteed the soviets will take that place. Maybe they do, but they still do not make a reality as vigorous as Solidarity. For now, the creation of soviets and their coordination among themselves is a very important slogan; only time will tell if this organizational form becomes dominant, displacing Solidarity, or if Solidarity continues to be determinant, although combined with an embryonic Soviet form.

In my opinion, everything you raise regarding the problem of power, to the true workers' and people's power (which you pass it off as the soviet), is intimately combined with Solidarity. I believe the need to directly oppose Solidarity as a workers' and people's power to the government of the single party of the bureaucracy is becoming increasingly concrete as an institutional expression of the political revolution: that Solidarity remove the totalitarian government of the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party] to establish workers' democracy in the country.

We have to fight for the Solidarity Congress at the beginning of September to be also of the workers', peasants', and people's councils, and to discuss — having Solidarity as an organizing axis — what is to be done regarding the government, the Constituent, and fundamentally what to do in face of the economic crisis. In other words, it is essential to raise the problem of the economic crisis — hunger, the high cost of living, rationing, etc. — to demand in the National Congress of Solidarity and all the soviets and workers' and popular organizations, the discussion of what answer is given to the economic crisis and all other national problems.

And we have to raise — avoiding any kind of provocation, through an explanation and not through a slogan that can appear as provoking — that we consider indispensable that Solidarity, together with all workers' and people's organizations, take the power to call a Constituent Assembly. I believe if we do not pose like this, we run the present danger of dissolving Poland's political reality, which has Solidarity as the axis of workers' and people's power, in the soviets, which for the moment are an abstraction, or in the best of cases, an embryonic reality.

I believe we should continue exchanging ideas about this combination of soviets, Solidarity, and Constituent Assembly, in the great historical task of making the political revolution. What we do have to emphasize is that the need for the revolutionary party with mass influence is becoming increasingly categorical. On this issue, I consider your letter to the Polish comrades weak. Because, besides what you propose in your letter, the other great problem we must raise is: what is the method to achieve a party whose objective is the political revolution, that is, to dismiss the single-party government with violent insurrectionary methods. This means we must specify which political currents point to the formation of this party, and by what means. Because I still do not believe in a linear process of building that revolutionary party. On the contrary, it is my firm opinion that the Polish reality, like that of future political revolutions, will cause very strong Trotskyist-like centrist currents, which will start from the living, objective reality of the political revolution.

¹ It refers to "Letter to a Polish worker", signed AB, and published in *Correspondencia Internacional* No 12. [Editor]

From another point of view, the great task of our comrades is to make, helped by us, an exhaustive analysis that specifies which currents of the workers' movement, of Solidarity, etc., point towards the constitution of a centrist mass party whose objective is the political revolution. I believe these currents will inevitably arise and that "the first link in the chain" leading to the political revolution passes through there. This must be the decisive point of our political orientation: to discover those currents to work on them with the aim of building, or helping to build, the mass party of the political revolution. In Nicaragua, the FSLN proposed overthrowing Somoza through armed struggle. Despite this statement, it was kilometres away from the Trotskyist program since it was for the collaboration of classes. But in Poland, any mass or vanguard current that proposes, in front of the Polish Somozas, of the bureaucratic government, to overthrow it by violent means, is leaning towards Trotskyism, although it may not know it. These are the currents we have to unite or on which we have to work on to build the great party of the political revolution.

PART III

Some reflections on the Polish political revolution

With some urgency due to the closing of this edition, without major corrections, I thought it necessary to publish these reflections on the Polish events that have shocked us all. It is imperative to analyse these events and draw conclusions. The results will only be positive if they result from a fruitful discussion. This article only intends to open it. What happened in Poland is part of the greatest revolutionary upsurge of this postwar period and a generalized crisis of imperialism and Stalinism. Our reflections have not only the goal of drawing scientific conclusions from the Polish workers' revolution but also that these conclusions accelerate the revolutionary rise and serve us to finish building the Trotskyist parties with mass influence, the only guarantee that revolutions such as the Polish or the Nicaraguan do not stop.

I. A law of all revolutions

Trotsky said every great revolution reopens the analysis of the previous ones. Doing so makes it easier for revolutionaries to solve the problems the subsequent revolutions will pose. This law takes its greatest importance in a case such as the Polish one since it is an unprecedented revolution, a political revolution against the ruling bureaucracy in a country where the bourgeoisie has been expropriated

The military coup of Jaruzelski and the more or less pronounced ebbing of the workers' movement since then demand from us an exhaustive balance sheet of the colossal revolutionary mobilization, of its initial successes and its current failure. A failure we do not consider definitive since the workers' movement has not suffered a historic defeat. In any case, the Polish bureaucracy, its Kremlin masters, and imperialism have achieved a victory; revolutionists must reflect on its causes because this is the only way to prepare for the future rise and final victory of the revolution.

Let us take an example from the history of the world workers' movement: the defeat of the Russian Revolution in 1905 and its subsequent victory in 1917. From the defeat of 1905 two Russian wings, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks emerged in the Russian Social Democracy as antagonistic currents that drew diametrically opposite conclusions from the same fact. The Mensheviks considered the workers' movement had hurried too much and made the mistake of being excessively intransigent towards the liberal bourgeoisie. Instead, the Bolsheviks concluded the opposite mistake had been made: the workers' movement should have hit much harder, becoming completely independent of all sectors of the bourgeoisie, including the most "anti-tsarist", and it did not do so because of the lack of a revolutionary organization with sufficient mass influence to take the workers' and peasants' insurrection to its final victory.

The victory of the October Revolution of 1917 provoked the definitive division of the world Marxist movement between the reformists and the revolutionaries, organized respectively in the Second and Third Internationals. The Social Democrats clung to imperialist bourgeois democracy

and became furious enemies of the Russian Revolution and the power of the Soviets, considering them premature.

The communists, the revolutionists, organized the Third International under the banner of the world proletarian revolution.

The Polish revolutionary rise and its transitory defeat have provoked a similar phenomenon, both nationally and globally. The workers and student vanguard, in Poland and the entire world, reflect on this experience to draw conclusions that, today like in 1905 and 1917, provoke strong discussions and divisions in the workers' movement.

Thus, the Castroist leadership of the Cuban workers' state and the Sandinista leadership of the Nicaraguan bourgeois state agree to enthusiastically support Jaruzelski's military coup. *Granma*, organ of the Cuban Communist Party, qualifies Solidarity as an "enemy force of socialism" (27 December 1981). They show their true counterrevolutionary face by supporting the Polish Pinochet against the working class. History repeats itself: in 1917, the counterrevolutionary Mensheviks supported Denikin's White Guards against the Bolshevik power; in 1982, Castroist and Sandinista traitors support Jaruzelski's modern white guard.

Not only do we have differences with the counterrevolutionary leaders who support Jaruzelski but also with those who fight the bureaucracy and support the Polish workers. Among the latter, there are positions that allow us to classify them as reformists, centrists, and revolutionaries.

The reformists say, like Kuron and Lech Walesa, that the aim of the struggle is to reform the bureaucracy, without breaking the frames imposed by the Kremlin and that the Polish proletariat made the mistake of rushing and "demanding too much".

The intransigent revolutionaries, we consider, on the contrary, the current victory of the bureaucracy is due to the inexistence of a leadership that would take advantage of the rise of the masses to prepare an insurrection to wrest power from the bureaucracy forever. We argue, as revolutionaries, that the only leadership the Polish masses had, that of Solidarity, applied a single policy, one of conciliating and negotiating with the bureaucracy, instead of confronting it with enough force and violence to wrest away from it, once and for all, power. The centrists oscillate between these two positions.

Also, the current division of the Trotskyist movement into three wings is manifested in their respective policies and in the conclusions they are drawing from the Polish experience.

II. Eight problems

Every great revolution, every great rise of the masses, as we have said, solves a series of problems and poses others. We believe the Polish revolution has raised and largely resolved eight vital problems, decisive for the course of the political revolution, from now on. Let's review them briefly, and then analyse them in depth.

First: it forced us to concretise and specify the axis of Trotskyist politics and propaganda when a stage of a revolutionary rise in a bureaucratized workers' state is opened. Is there an essential axis of Trotskyist politics at this stage? We think so.

Second: we must analyse the stages of the political revolution and draw the indispensable theoretical conclusions. For this, it is necessary to take into account not only the Polish revolution but also the other attempts of political revolution that have taken place, as well as the workers' revolutions against capitalism in this century. In other words, what analogies do we find between Jaruzelski's putsch and the invasions of the Red Army to East Berlin, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia against the political revolution in the bureaucratized workers' states, on the one hand, and the fascist, Kornilovian and Pinochetist coups against the social revolution in the capitalist countries, on the other?

Third: from the common characteristics of the coup and government of Jaruzelski with other counterrevolutionary anti-worker coups, it is imperative to define the specific character of the former. Is it exactly the same as the governments of the communist parties, direct agents of the bureaucracy? We hasten to point out that both the government of the communist party and, in this case, the government of the armed forces of the bureaucratized workers' state, are governments of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But Jaruzelski's government possesses, besides this common feature, specific characteristics that differentiate it from the previous governments of the bureaucracy.

Fourth: the issue of the bourgeois counterrevolution. Is there currently a concrete struggle in Poland between the bourgeois counterrevolution and the proletarian revolution? Is there a danger of bourgeois counterrevolution? If so, what are its characteristics? In the mechanics of the bourgeois counterrevolutionary process, what is the role of the bureaucracy and what is the role of imperialism?

Fifth: the theoretical problem of the characterization of Solidarity. Nothing more than a union, as some argue? Or rather, the only institutionalized form of workers' and people power, that is, the only organization of the revolutionary masses, even if it had the form of a union?

Sixth: we must specify how the political revolution was approached immediately in Poland. What organization should we promote to make the revolution and conquer power? Solidarity, a Constituent Assembly, the factory committees, the soviet embryos?

Seventh: How was and is the current division of the world Trotskyist movement expressed in the face of the Polish revolution and whether it has served to overcome it or, on the contrary, to deepen it.

Eighth: the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the masses has once again revealed itself as a fatal problem for the revolution. Its only solution lies in the construction of a Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like revolutionary party with mass influence. How do we build it?

III. The axis of a true Marxist policy

The key to Trotskyist politics in a revolutionary process such as the Polish one is to clearly show the working class, the peasants, the students, the urban workers that no problem can be solved outside a workers' and people's revolution that overthrows the ruling bureaucracy. This is the decisive problem, to which our tactics are subordinated. Even if we do not raise the slogans "overturn the government now" or "let's make the insurrection now", we must point out with absolute clarity before the proletariat and the masses that it is necessary to take the concrete steps in their policy, leadership, organization, and preparation to make an insurrection against the military apparatus of the bureaucracy. Therefore, Trotskyism must point out minute by minute, in its propaganda and agitation, that the nodal, decisive point of the revolutionary process is the state power. And the resolution of this problem goes through the political and organizational preparation of the workers' and the masses movement to confront and defeat the armed forces of the bureaucracy.

When a revolutionary stage is opened, the fundamental axis of our policy is to weaken and destroy the armed forces of the regime, opposing other armed forces. Every workers' revolution, either in a capitalist or a bureaucratized workers' country, faces the same fundamental enemy: the State apparatus, whose fundamental pillar is the armed and coercion force; army, police, jails, et cetera. These apparatuses are identical in both a capitalist and a bureaucratized workers' country and this is why the first task of every proletarian revolution is the same: to destroy the armed force of the regime and to oppose it another, the workers' picket or militia, the only and true expression of workers' and people power.

Destroyed the military force of the State and power conquered, the tasks change depending on whether they are bureaucratic workers' states where the bourgeoisie is expropriated or a capitalist

country where the new power must do it. But the first task, we insist, is the same: to pulverize the apparatus of repression and coercion.

Against this apparatus, the workers' and popular movement must create its own armed bodies: pickets, militias, etc. (they can take different forms, according to the process and the traditions of the country). Lacking this, one cannot speak of a true workers' power confronting the power of the State, that is to say, of a situation of dual power. At most, as it happened in Poland in the heyday of Solidarity, an "institutionalized" dual power can take place, which, if not extended to the armed force (as shown by a resolution of the former FI (IC) drafted by us), it cannot lead to the victory of workers' power.

This does not imply the adventurist position of calling a working class lacking leadership and revolutionary organization to make the insurrection spontaneously. Quite the contrary: we want to highlight the enormous objective and subjective difficulties that arise to make the insurrection. This is why we denounce adventurism, the danger of any premature confrontation leading to a defeat due to lack of political, military, and organizational preparation and leadership.

The civil war against the bureaucracy or the bourgeoisie and their armed forces must be essentially political and not an end in itself. Limiting yourself to propaganda about the need to destroy the army is not enough. It will only be full of content if we combine it with a policy of confrontation between the workers' and people's movement and the regime, developing a transitional program to orient the workers' and people's organizations to the conquest of power. In the Russian Revolution these were the slogans of peace, land, and all power to the Soviets, which allowed the disorganization of the Tsarist army and the support of the Soviets of soldiers to the Bolshevik insurrection. In Poland, it should have been a formal democratic program, fundamentally of workers' democracy.

The reason for the partial defeat and retreat of the Polish revolution is precisely because the leadership of Solidarity did not prepare, alert, or politically organize the masses for the inevitable armed confrontation with the army.

IV. Workers' insurrection or a Kornilovian coup: an inescapable alternative

In all the political revolution processes that have taken place to date, except for the one in Poland in 1956, within a few weeks or months of initiation, the masses have faced an iron dilemma: a victory of the armed counterrevolution of the bureaucracy or a triumphant workers' revolution.

In East Berlin, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia the tanks of the Red Army crushed the masses. They were direct military coups by the Kremlin against the revolution, applied as quickly as possible.

We Trotskyists must draw conclusions from these experiences. Why does the military alternative of workers' and people's insurrection or victory of the armed counterrevolution arise so quickly? Because of the totalitarian character of bureaucratic domination and, ultimately, its extreme weakness.

Bureaucratic totalitarianism atomizes the workers' movement and stifles the political and social life of the country. This prevents the emergence of mediating counterrevolutionary organisms between the workers' movement and the repressive government. Under the bourgeois regime, however, there are "free" trade unions, social democratic or Stalinist parties, etc., which allow the regime to divert or curb the revolutionary rise of the masses, as happened in Germany in 1918 and in Portugal in 1974.

The bureaucracy is consubstantiated with totalitarianism, cannot dominate society in a "democratic" way, through trade union or political mediations between the mass movement and power, as many bourgeois regimes can. The bureaucracy gets all its privileges from the control of the state apparatus. Any distribution of this control with non-state organisms implies a reduction of the direct oppression of the masses by the state bureaucracy and the consequent diminution of the privileges they derive therefrom.

The bureaucracy needs and tends to the totalitarian control, practically absolute, of the social, political, and cultural life as the only way to dominate the mass movement and not to share its privileges.

To this lack of mediating organisms is added the extreme weakness of the bureaucracy, because it is not a social class but a caste, whose members are united solely by their counterrevolutionary political interests, in defence of their privileges. The bourgeois has a class consciousness; they are unified before a revolutionary rise. Instead, because of its lack of consciousness based on class interests, the bureaucracy is divided and weakened by the rise, much more than the bourgeoisie and imperialism. This is why it is forced to appeal with all urgency, almost immediately, to the armed forces, be they central to the Kremlin, or, as in this case, those of the Polish State itself. All the processes of political revolution (with the exception we will see right away) were crushed by the Red Army or, now in Poland, by the local army.

In all cases there have been military coups similar to those of Videla or Pinochet regarding the relationship between the revolution and the counterrevolution: they are counterrevolutionary military coups destined to crush the revolutionary rise.

Despite being coups from the bureaucracy and not from the bourgeoisie, we qualify them as Kornilovian. We apply the same method as Trotsky did when he defined the Stalin government as Bonapartist, not because of its class base but because of its counterrevolutionary political characteristics.

If we call the unconscious revolutionary processes that are opened in the bureaucratized workers' states "February revolutions", we also call Kornilovian the attempt of the counterrevolution to stop them and crush them through the military coup. We also call it that way because, unlike the Fascist or semi-fascist putsch, it lacks the slightest popular support. The intervention of the Polish Army in the last case and the Red Army in the others had no other support than that of the bureaucracy, isolated and harassed by the mass movement.

The exception was the Polish revolution of 1956. We believe three factors worked so that the Kremlin did not invade Poland on that occasion: Gomulka was a guarantee for Moscow and at the same time enjoyed the support of the workers for having been persecuted by Stalin; the Kremlin did not dare to face simultaneously Hungary and Poland and opted to militarily repress the more immediate Hungarian danger (the influence of the Catholic Church on the Polish mass movement acted as the last counterrevolutionary safeguard of the bureaucracy itself).

The exception ceased to be the case when the Gdansk shipyards rose in the early 1970s. The armed forces struck quickly and violently to prevent the extension. In that case the repression was enough, the coup was unnecessary.

In the last Polish process the alternative insurrection or Kornilovian coup was raised with full strength from the beginning of the revolutionary stage. The difference with previous cases was, as we said, the coup was given by the Polish Army and not by the Kremlin.

The military struggle against the regime cannot be done in the abstract but with a transitional program, which starts from minimal democratic, worker, and general slogans. But from the analysis we have made about the inevitability of the Kornilovian coup, a fundamental political conclusion emerges that our program needs. If the Kornilovian coup was almost immediate and practically inevitable, its denunciation and the call to address it or to confront it should have been the axis of our policy. The content should have been: "Let's avoid the counterrevolutionary coup of the bureaucracy by organizing the soldiers in Solidarity! Let us avoid the coup by promoting the democratic rights of soldiers, including the election of officers! Let us organize the fraternization among the workers, peasants, and soldiers so they point their rifles against the bureaucracy and the officers who are preparing the military coup against the workers! Let us organize thousands and thousands of armed pickets of the workers' and peasants' movement to face the military putsch the bureaucracy prepares!" And we also had to add the Red Army's invasion as a possible immediate danger.

Of course, it is not about this or that slogan. The fundamental thing is whether or not the preparation of the putsch or the Russian invasion is denounced and whether a Trotskyist program was developed to face these dangers. Whoever has not lifted that revolutionary program against this danger has been a conscious or unconscious traitor of the Polish revolution and an ally of the armed counterrevolution of the bureaucracy. None of the historical and structured currents of the workers' movement, except those that today make up the IWL (FI) (and possibly some another that we do not know), focused its analysis, its denunciations, and its policy in the revolutionary confrontation to the inevitable bureaucratic military coup. They were, therefore, traitors to the Polish proletariat and direct or indirect allies of the bureaucracy.

V. The Jaruzelski government

The military putsch displaced the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party] from the government and left it in the hands of the military leadership. This should not mislead us. Both the governments imposed by the Red Army and now by the Polish army, as the "normal" governments of the Stalinist parties, are all of the bureaucracy.

Within this identity, however, there are differences. The military putschs and the governments they establish are the result of a sudden change in the relations between the bureaucracy and the masses. All the Kornilovian coups have been the response of the bureaucracy to the revolutionary rise. The goal of the coup is to violently defeat the workers and the armed forces — whether those of the Kremlin before or of the Poles in this case — appear as the last counterrevolutionary bastion against the revolutionary rise.

Then, the governments of the bureaucracy are the product of an acute confrontation between the workers' revolution and the bureaucratic counterrevolution. The putsch acts on the revolutionary process itself when it manages to defeat the proletariat for a long time. The German political revolution of 1953 was crushed by the Soviet tanks and since then, almost three decades ago, the East German workers have not risen again. The same happened with Hungary and Czechoslovakia after 1956 and 1968, respectively. In none of these countries has the revolutionary rise been repeated.

Once the bureaucratic "normalization" has been achieved, the totalitarian regime is re-stabilized as the danger of revolution is removed. A stage of relative equilibrium of the bureaucratic domination is then opened and the Stalinist parties return to exercise the government instead of the armed forces. This is due to the same phenomenon mentioned above, that the privileges of the bureaucracy arise from its monopoly of the state apparatus, owner of the means of production.

The bureaucracy controls this productive apparatus through the State. For social and economic reasons, the civil bureaucracy, that is, government and party bureaucracy, normally mediates and arbitrates between the different bureaucratic sectors for the benefit of all of them.

The passivity of the workers' movement allows maintaining this stability. But when workers' movement enters a process of revolutionary rise this normality and legality are broken, the bureaucratic counterrevolution is on the defensive and appeals to the armed forces to restore them. It is then that the military coup is on the agenda.

As for the dynamics leading to the putsch and the military government, the Jaruzelski phenomenon is not different from its predecessors. A revolutionary rise broke the bureaucracy-masses equilibrium based on the passivity and defeat of the masses and forced the armed forces to take power to crush it. Jaruzelski's coup resembles, in this sense, like a drop of water to another the interventions of the Red Army in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

However, there are fundamental differences between it and these. The first, which is obvious, is that the coup was carried out by the national armed forces, not by the Kremlin. This obeys to deep causes.

Due to the worldwide revolutionary rise, the Moscow bureaucracy, which dominates and directly supports all of Eastern Europe and Cuba, was terrified at the prospect of the European mass movement reacting immediately to the intervention of its army in Poland. Its vacillations, doubts and the final non-intervention indirectly constitute a victory of the world revolutionary rise.

Combined with the above, the Russian bureaucracy was greatly discredited before the European and world proletariat and its army was weakened by the military intervention in Afghanistan. In this sense, the Kremlin is afraid to intervene militarily in Poland for the same reasons that imperialism fears to do so in El Salvador, Nicaragua, or Cuba. In both cases there is a weakening of the army (Vietnam, Afghanistan) and fundamentally the terror that the world revolutionary rise will react against a counterrevolutionary military invasion. For Yankee imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy the invasion remains a resource *in extremis*, preferring both to entrust the task of crushing the masses to the local armed forces.

Finally, the Kremlin has trembled at the mere thought the invasion of its army would have to face the resistance of the Polish proletariat and people in the midst of their colossal rise. This would have given the revolutionary struggle against the bureaucracy a national character, which would have fortified it in the confrontation against the bureaucratic regime.

Leaving aside the reasons for the Kremlin's non-intervention, the fundamental thing is that the Polish putsch takes place amidst the extreme aggravation of the chronic crisis of all bureaucratic regimes. This crisis is total and expressed in all areas: economic, political, social, and cultural. The culminating case is the Polish economy, which is indebted to the core with imperialism, has no way out of its crisis which extends to all other orders.

Because of this, the Jaruzelski government finds it almost impossible to inflict a historical defeat on the Polish proletariat; and it is not feasible for him to isolate it from the political revolution in the other workers' states and from the workers' revolution in the rest of Europe. This, added to its economic subjection to imperialism, makes of Jaruzelski a relatively weak and unstable government, unlike what the Red Army installed.

The imperialist penetration, combined with the defeat of the workers' movement, forces the bureaucracy to try to impose a Bonapartist regime to the square: it must impose an austerity plan that guarantees imperialism its colossal investments and at the same time be the arbiter between the imperialist penetration and the survival of the bureaucratized workers' state.

These contradictions are the *raison d'être* of the current Polish government, its weakness, and its crisis with no way out at the moment.

The most interesting thing is that the Polish process will almost certainly be repeated, corrected, and increased in the USSR and China. By the end of this century we will see attempts of military putschs as last counterrevolutionary resources in those two bureaucratized workers' states.

VI. Workers' revolution and imperialist counterrevolution

In fact, in Poland the proletarian revolution is confronted with the imperialist bourgeois counterrevolution, the latter acting through the bureaucracy. There are no two counterrevolutions — one bureaucratic and one imperialist — but a single world counterrevolution, led by imperialism. In Central America it acts directly, in Poland it does so through the bureaucracy that holds state power. This means that, in general terms, the Jaruzelski government works for the imperialist counterrevolution to a much greater degree than its predecessors.

Faced with the deepening of the proletarian revolution, the counterrevolutionary united front of the bureaucracy and imperialism is tightening, and this is true even if the imperialist demagoguery and its press organs try to mask it or hide it. The role of indirect agent of the imperialism of the Polish bureaucracy is thus increasing, day by day.

The imperialist counterrevolution in the capitalist states is expressed through a direct economic agent, the national bourgeoisie. In the workers' states it does so through an indirect agent, the state bureaucracy. Imperialism has not managed to change ownership relations and transform the workers' states into capitalist states, but it does tend to convert them, through their bureaucratic agent, into their semi-colonies. The moment may come when the government transforms itself from an indirect into a direct agent of imperialist investments. This is not the current case of Poland or of any workers' state, because this qualitative change, which would transform the workers' state into a semi-colonial bourgeois state, can only be carried out through a bloody restorationist counterrevolution, which defeats the workers. It can never take place as a consequence of the revolutionary rise, although this, due to the low level of consciousness of the workers' movement and the tradition of its leaderships, can raise or approve for a moment restorationist programs, such as self-management by companies or the autonomy of these against the state monopoly.

Only the bureaucratic-imperialist counterrevolution can be restorationist; never the revolutionary masses in their rise and with their organizations confronting the bureaucracy. On the contrary, the revolutionary rise aims objectively, despite the programs and policies of their leaderships or their contradictions, to the defence, consolidation, and development of the workers' state. The mobilization and revolutionary organization are the best and only defence of the workers' state against imperialist restoration. Instead, the bureaucratic counterrevolution is the only possibility of the final victory of the imperialist counterrevolution.

VII. Union of the revolutionary masses, pro-bourgeois leadership

For us, Solidarity is not just another union but of a specific, exceptional type. It is a union of the revolutionary masses, ultra-democratic, as it was at the time the Bolivian Workers' Centre (COB), with a clearly counterrevolutionary, pro-bourgeois leadership, transmission belt of the Catholic Church.

In comparison with the various trade union organizations that have emerged in the history of the workers' movement, Solidarity is a very different union. What is characteristic of trade unions is that they cover a minimum sector of the proletariat, often the labour aristocracy, and they gain their maximum importance in normal times of negotiations between classes and not of revolutionary confrontations. Solidarity, although a union, is directly the opposite: it embraces the entire proletariat and is an expression of the revolutionary rise.

Traditionally, the revolutionary mass organizations of the proletariat have been strike committees, factory committees, and soviets. But both Solidarity and the COB were mass organizations in their revolutionary rise, which grouped almost 100 percent of workers from their countries. This is a new phenomenon in this postwar period, which requires an explanation.

The counterrevolutionary apparatuses that direct the workers' movement — social democracy and Stalinism — are terrified of the revolutionary mass organizations, mainly the soviets, the most democratic and flexible to the will of the masses. This is why they have fought together, by all means, to prevent the emergence of these mass organizations superior to the unions.

Hence, in this postwar period the organization that has developed the most is, contradictorily, the most primary, the union, since it is the most useful for the bureaucracy to control the working class. Iran is one of the few countries that experienced a great development of Soviet-type forms of organization and it is no coincidence: the great rise of the masses combined with the extreme weakness of the Stalinist party. In countries where they have strength, Stalinism and Social Democracy have managed to stifle the emergence of soviets or divert them to lower forms.

Any sustained revolutionary rise of the masses is inevitably channelled into organisms. In Poland, it did so through the union Solidarity. At its side, other forms emerged, such as factory

committees and embryonic soviets. But Solidarity was the only mass organization that fully reflected the colossal revolutionary workers', peasants' and popular rise.

As important or decisive as this is the workers' democracy with which it was ruled. In Solidarity, all of its members have expressed themselves freely, including at the leadership level and in their congresses and meetings strong tendencies could be expressed that denounced the conciliationism of Walesa, voting against him. This workers' democracy and its massive character provided the basis for a vivid clash of programs between different currents, which would inevitably accelerate the emergence and development of revolutionary currents with mass-influence. It was what was happening.

Another characteristic of Solidarity was its clearly counterrevolutionary leadership, which reflected the backwardness caused in the consciousness of the workers by the Stalinist counterrevolution and the presence of the Church as the only legal organization independent of the state apparatus. Thanks to this, through its agents such as Walesa, the Church was able to seize the leadership of the movement and the union organization.

Here is expressed, in a particularly severe way, a characteristic of all the beginnings of revolutionary rise: the contradiction between the revolutionary mobilization of the masses and the organizational forms and their leaderships. The Russian and German soviets, for example, were initially led by the Mensheviks and Social Democrats, agents of imperialism in the workers' movement, although this fact did not deprive them of their character as privileged organizations of the revolutionary masses.

This is the most severe contradiction we see in Poland: a bourgeois and imperialist organization, such as the Catholic Church, directs through its intermediaries the organization of the revolutionary masses, Solidarity.

We clarify that, for us, because of its content, Solidarity is an organization of the revolutionary masses despite its union form. It is not a soviet in the strict sense but it has the necessary characteristics, of massiveness and of reflecting the revolutionary rise, which Trotsky pointed out, for example, of the factory committees of the late 1920s in Germany.

In short, Solidarity has three fundamental characteristics: formally it is a union; it is the only democratic organization that groups together the totality of the revolutionary masses; and at the same time it is indirectly led by a great counterrevolutionary apparatus, the Church. We must study how these three factors are combined, which one is the determinant, and what role the secondary factors play.

This is a fundamental problem because, just as in the Russian revolutions of 1917 the Soviets of 1905 resurfaced, in the next rise of the Polish masses it is almost certain that a trade union organism like Solidarity will reappear. And it would not be surprising if — given the prestige that the Polish revolution has won — “solidarities” spring up in other workers' states. So, it is nothing less than foreseeing the probable organizational forms the revolutionary rise in Poland and the other bureaucratized workers' states will take.

Of the three factors, the dominant one is that Solidarity was the only national organization of the Polish revolutionary masses. Its union form and its leadership have a great importance but not a determining one.

As an organized reflection of workers' and people's power, Solidarity was the only institution that opposed the power of the bureaucracy and its armed forces. It cannot be denied that a process in which the masses are mobilized revolutionarily and organized could give rise — in fact, very embryonically, it gave rise — to the formation of higher organizations.

But what is decisive is that the only national organization of the revolutionary masses power, recognized as much by them as by their enemies, the bureaucracy and imperialism, was Solidarity.

VIII. All power to Solidarity

The comparison of Solidarity with the Bolivian COB should not lead us to extend this comparison to the two revolutionary situations. The COB, like the Soviets in 1917, like the dual power, took place after the victory of the workers' revolution of 1952 and February, respectively. They come after the workers' and people's insurrection that destroyed the dominant state apparatus: oligarchic in one case, tsarism in the other.

The situation that Poland experienced was similar to the revolution of 1905 in Russia and not to that of February 1917. In 1905, the dual power, the Soviets, appeared in the face of the possible workers' insurrection against the Tsar and without his state apparatus and armed forces having been defeated in a workers' and people's insurrection. Although weakened, the Tsar kept his state apparatus.

The dual power, that is, the emergence of a revolutionary workers' power in Poland, took place, as in 1905, before a necessary insurrection which finally did not happen. It was on the march towards it and not afterwards, as in Bolivia or in 1917, that the trade union of the Polish revolutionary masses appeared. The workers' and people's power of the soviets in the 1905 revolution had as its fundamental task to defeat and destroy the state apparatus of the tsar and the bourgeoisie. The same as Solidarity.

We have seen in this century, then, two types of workers-bourgeois dual power. One in which real power, although completely weakened, remains in the hands of the state apparatus of the exploiters. Schematically, the armed power of these is much more powerful than the power of the workers' movement because it has neither been anarchized nor pulverized by the revolutionary rise yet. The other type, instead, occurs when the state and military-repressive apparatus has already been defeated and the dominant or almost dominant armed power is the power of the workers' and people's organizations.

In Poland, Solidarity arose before there was a triumphant revolution against the state apparatus of the bureaucracy, that is, before the workers' and people's insurrection against the state apparatus of the bureaucracy and against its armed forces. This was the main task: Solidarity had to wrest power from the bureaucracy, destroying its armed forces and its ruling apparatus, to impose its own and a State based on the massive organization of the proletariat and the workers.

The counterrevolutionary leadership of Solidarity, in its eagerness to reconcile with the bureaucracy, refused to fight to evict it from power and to impose the workers' power of Solidarity itself. Consequently, all tendencies of the workers' movement that refused to raise Solidarity as the only valid alternative for workers' power, as the only historical subject that could, at that moment, make the political revolution, were in fact in a united front with the leadership of Solidarity, helping the bureaucratic counterrevolution.

The masses cannot understand the need to take power. It is our obligation, of the Trotskyists, to do so; pointing out this is the possible struggle of the organizations they themselves have built in the revolutionary struggle. In Poland, this meant the fundamental slogan, the axis for the whole stage, should have been "All power to Solidarity", or a variation of the kind, which took into account that the bureaucracy had not yet been defeated, there had not been a triumphant revolution like the one of February in Russia or the one in 1952 in Bolivia. The alternative could have been: "that Solidarity throw out the bureaucracy from government".

Why do we say that the fundamental thing for the proposal that Solidarity take power or make the revolution against the bureaucracy is the massive nature of it and not its leadership? It is true that counterrevolutionary elements predominated in this leadership, such as Walesa, but it is necessary to specify the contradictions and the direction of the historical process. All the masses who wanted to defeat the bureaucratic regime, i.e., all the masses of Poland, were organized in Solidarity. In its bosom there was workers' democracy, with tendencies and currents. The conquest of power by Solidarity meant the conquest of power by the revolutionary masses. Not for the Catholic Church but for the masses, through revolutionary mobilization and workers' democracy,

expressed in that massive union. The military defeat of the apparatus and the overthrow of the bureaucracy by the working class, with all its contradictions and the new problems it poses, were much more important at that moment for the historical process and the world class struggle than a hypothetical and abstract defence of the economic bases of the workers' state.

Needless to say, we do not deny the fundamental importance of this last task nor do we abandon it, even if it is not posed immediately. It is defensive in nature, while the first one is offensive. The taking of power by Solidarity would be a great current conquest of the proletariat; the defence of the workers' state, its name says it, was the defence of a great previous conquest and not a new conquest.

In Poland there was the possibility of reaching a colossal achievement: that organizations based on workers' democracy would take power. It was as important as the conquest of power by the Soviets led by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries would have been, as the Bolshevik Party demanded at certain times after February.

It did not matter that Solidarity was led by the Church, that they wanted to restore capitalism. The decisive thing was that the masses, through Solidarity, would have conquered power, the only way to combat and defeat the counterrevolution and the counterrevolutionary leaders of Solidarity. It is no coincidence that the latter — as the cunning agents of the counterrevolution they are — would use their weight in the leadership of Solidarity to curb any attempt to advance towards the taking of power. Its conquest by Solidarity would have meant the transformation of the bureaucratic proletarian dictatorship into a proletarian non-bureaucratic, transitional dictatorship, headed by an opportunist and counterrevolutionary leadership, like that of Walesa. It would have been highly contradictory, dynamic, unstable, and progressive in relation to the bureaucratic dictatorship: a dictatorship of the democratic and revolutionary workers' organizations, with a false workers' consciousness and a counterrevolutionary leadership.

This hypothetical, revolutionary, and progressive nature of the seizure of power by Solidarity has confused some comrades of the IWL-FI leadership. The article in *Correo Internacional* that says Solidarity could have established a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is wrong, in our opinion. It confuses the dictatorship of the democratic organizations of the revolutionary masses, therefore non-bureaucratic, with the revolutionary dictatorship, led by a revolutionary party.

The Polish process and the existence of Solidarity again raise the hypothetical possibility formulated by the Bolsheviks of a workers' and peasants' government based on the power of the soviets, led in turn by the opportunists, as a peaceful and evolutionary way of reaching the dictatorship of the proletariat. Peaceful because in the Russia of 1917, when this alternative was raised, the February Revolution had already happened, which had given the true power to the Soviets, which dominated everything. This hypothesis would have been raised in Poland if a revolution like February in Russia, giving power to Solidarity, had triumphed. Then, there would have been the possibility of a peaceful development of the revolutionary process towards a dictatorship of the proletariat.

That revolution of Solidarity, if it was accompanied by the seizure of all power by it, would have led in the short term to a non-bureaucratic proletarian dictatorship, of transition, because the control of the State would have been in the hands of the revolutionary workers' movement organized democratically and not of the bureaucratic caste. But it would not be revolutionary since its momentary leadership would not pose as an essential task the permanent mobilization of the masses to deepen the revolution in Poland and develop the world socialist revolution but, on the contrary, to curb the revolutionary process.

We Trotskyists should not limit ourselves to the single slogan of "all power to Solidarity" but to link it to a set of transitional slogans that would respond to the deepest needs and aspirations of the masses. We will not tire of repeating that the most urgent political need was to face the inevitable Kornilovian coup of the bureaucracy and call on the workers to prepare to do it militarily after a systematic political denunciation. We had to link this immediate political need with our strategic struggle for Solidarity to take power. The great political slogan of last year in Poland could have

been: “prepare Solidarity to face militarily the inevitable armed coup of the bureaucracy”, linked to other slogans against the coup, given in previous chapters. This slogan would become concrete by trying to anarchize the armed forces and destroy their discipline through the organization of military Solidarity, grouping the soldiers and the non-commissioned officers of the army and the police who had folded to the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Along with the internal destruction of the armed forces of the regime, Solidarity itself had to be armed, to make its pickets and armed militias. All this, without ceasing to alert constantly and tirelessly that the revolution would inevitably reach the critical point of confrontation with the armed forces of the regime and that the fate of the revolution would depend on the political and military preparation of Solidarity and the masses for that confrontation.

This preparation is not by itself a guarantee of victory, but the lack of it is a guarantee of defeat.

IX. The test of the Polish revolution

On many occasions we have said the revolution is the great laboratory where the analyses, programs and policies of the organizations claiming to be Trotskyists are truly put to the test.

There it was ratified and corroborated once again that the differences we have with the United Secretariat (USec) and with Lambertism are, for the moment, irreducible since they are issues of principles. We have agreed with them only in the defence and the vindication, in the abstract, of the political revolution. Outside of this, both in the transitional and principled programmatic issues, the differences are total. These differences were manifested essentially around two key problems: what organizations should make the revolution and what should be the strategic axis of our policy.

Within the Trotskyist movement, the leaders and organizations that make up the IWL (FI) we posed as the axis of our policy that Solidarity was the only organization of the existing revolutionary masses. We argued that Solidarity was the institutionalized workers’ and people’s power, whose task, therefore, should be to fight against the power of the bureaucracy until overthrowing it and taking over the government. Repeating the Bolivian experience, we say that the central slogan for the whole revolutionary stage lived in Poland should have been “all power to Solidarity”, or another similar one that took into account there was still no triumphant revolution in Poland, as there was in Bolivia and in Russia in 1917, before the emergence of the COB and the Soviets, respectively; that Solidarity should lead the insurrection, overthrow the bureaucracy, and establish the democratic government of the workers.

The United Secretariat refused to raise this policy. With its slogans it had the opposite line. Its program focused on self-management and the development of pre-Soviet organisms, which were emerging in parallel with Solidarity and in combination with it. With this last approach, it dissolved the concrete problem of the existence of Solidarity and, consequently, the problem of power in abstractions such as the development of Soviet organisms, existing only in an embryonic state and which represented nothing in the face of the power and the magnitude of Solidarity. With this the USec repeated — but now in a revolutionary process — its old European policy of not working in the only existing workers’ organizations — the reformist trade unions— but in a non-existent “broad mass vanguard”.

Neither is new the slogan of “self-management”, which the USec used to give the less sophisticated name of “workers’ control”. Thus, in the general strike of the French May, Mandel argued the task of the masses was not to overthrow the de Gaulle government but... workers’ control of the accounting books of the companies!

This policy centred on the “broad vanguard” and “workers’ control”, which translated into Polish is “soviets” and “self-management”, objectively makes up a betrayal of the Polish political revolution.

For his part, Lambert, pressed by us in the FI (IC), accepted that Solidarity was the only national institution of workers' power and that dual power existed, that of Solidarity and that of the bureaucracy. But this concession, like so many others that Lambertism made us, only served to smuggle its revisionist merchandise since it refused to draw the logical and inevitable conclusion of fighting to overcome the dual power, getting Solidarity to take power by overthrowing the bureaucracy. It refused to raise the slogans "all power to Solidarity" or "Solidarity to remove the bureaucracy from government" or something similar with a typical argument of the yellow union leaderships: unions should not participate in politics or fight for power because they lose their trade union character. From this argument they came to a conclusion identical to that of the USec: power should be seized by non-existent organizations, such as the soviets and the constituent assembly but not by Solidarity.

There were never soviets or constituent assembly in the Polish revolutionary process: both existed as slogans, as tasks to be carried out and the Soviets as embryos, but the reality was the Solidarity union, the only existing organization of the revolutionary masses. By ignoring it, by raising the soviets and the constituent assembly against the power of the bureaucracy as the axis of their policy, Lambert and his disciples fell into the same method as the opportunists and revisionists, whom Trotsky so often denounced: dissolving reality in abstractions.

We have learned from Trotsky and Lenin the policy that only Soviets can fight for power (our masters called it "Soviet fetishism") is a grim mistake. We should never raise the conquest of power by mass organizations existing only in our desires. The revolutionary Marxists must start from the living class struggle, to recognize the actual organizations, created by the masses in their struggles. In Poland, that organization was — we repeat it and we will not tire of insisting on it — the Solidarity union.

The USec and the Lambertists combined this mistake with another one no less criminal and nefarious: their policy, in fact their lack of policy for the armed forces in general and the inevitable putsch in particular, never warned the masses had to be prepared to face the armed forces of the regime within a few months, when they give their coup. Our policy, which we explained earlier, we could summarize in a few words: Solidarity should organize the soldiers to destroy the armed forces from within and at the same time create their own armed bodies, preparing the masses for the inevitable confrontation with the armed forces of the bureaucratic counterrevolution. We warned that, otherwise, the masses and Solidarity itself would be defeated by them. The revisionists did not raise this or any other policy to confront the putsch and with that they completed their betrayal of the Polish revolution.

The right wing of the revisionist front of Mandel and Lambert, made up by the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, deserves some words. The SWP revived old theories of its leader Joe Hansen, according to which the political revolution will not be the result of an insurrection but a consequence of the sum of many reforms. Taken as a whole, quantity is transformed into quality, that is, into political revolution.

With this the SWP eliminated theoretically and politically the problem of the military insurrection against the bureaucracy, as the maximum expression of the political revolution, to adopt the typical reformist attitude, applying it to a bureaucratic workers' state.

If the SWP gave the theoretical expression of this reformist policy of not preparing the masses for the inevitable armed confrontation, Mandel and Lambert put it into practice by posing to the proletariat abstract tasks and not telling them a word of the inevitable armed confrontation and the urgent need for a Trotskyist policy to confront it. It is a classic division of tasks on the revisionist front, which is characterized by its refusal to formulate and apply a policy for the key problem of the political revolution: the destruction of the forces of the regime and the armament of the proletariat, the only way to achieve the victory of the revolution and the defeat of the counterrevolutionary Kornilovian coup of the bureaucracy.

X. The crisis of the revolutionary leadership

From this article it is clear that, for us, the objective conditions were more than ripe for the victory of the Polish political revolution.

The factor that prevented this victory and allowed the momentary victory of the bureaucracy was the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, in the absence of the only organization capable of overcoming it: the Trotskyist party. This vital question also separates the three great currents that claim to be Trotskyist.

The USec, mainly the SWP of the United States, capitulated directly to the leadership of Walesa. They praised him at all times, never denounced his consciously counterrevolutionary nature, and limited themselves to pointing out his immaturity. He was, for them, an immature revolutionary leadership.

Lambertism, led hand in hand by us, denounced Walesa on some occasions, mainly his links with the Church. But, with its conception that Solidarity was only a union and not the organization of the revolutionary masses, it did not give this denunciation the fundamental importance it had.

In these two ways, Lambertism and the USec arrived at the same policy: to pose in abstract the problem of revolutionary leadership and power, the worst crime that can be committed during a revolution.

The denunciation of the counterrevolutionary leaderships is only one aspect of the policy to overcome the crisis of leadership; the other, vital, aspect is the construction of the revolutionary party with mass influence.

In a revolutionary process this task can be carried out very quickly. This is attested by the experience of the Bolshevik Party, which in February was a minority organization in the mass movement and eight months later was in power. For this to happen, the revolutionary party must join the powerful revolutionary tendencies that arise in the movement of rising masses. And this is only achieved by raising a clear and forceful program, which clearly divides waters with the opportunists.

How to distinguish those revolutionary tendencies from the opportunist ones in the specific case of Poland? The revolutionary tendencies would defend fundamentally several points of our program: they would be deadly enemies of the counter-revolutionary leadership of Walesa and denounce him systematically; they would accept the urgent and imperative need to prepare the workers for the short-term military confrontation with the bureaucracy, denouncing the putsch that was being prepared; they would work with preference in Solidarity, the only national organization of the revolutionary masses, raising the slogan “all power to Solidarity”, or another similar one.

We will deliberately not consider the thousands of tactical problems posed by the Polish revolution, such as how to formulate a program of democratic freedoms. We do not deny the importance of this program, which was raised by the mass movement itself. Its discussion is reduced to what was the slogan or group of slogans most appropriate to develop it.

Here we are interested in stating the fundamental tasks for the construction of the revolutionary party and that nobody, outside the IWL (FI), has proposed.

The centre of activity of the revolutionists should have been Solidarity. Having as its axis the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the conquest of power, our policy was to focus on denouncing the great obstacle to this task, the counter-revolutionary leadership of Walesa. The slogan “all power to Solidarity” (or “that Solidarity overthrow the bureaucratic government” or any other tactical formulation of that content) fulfilled this double objective. On the one hand, it clearly showed the masses the great immediate task that was posed and the concrete way to carry it out; on the other, it opened a gap between the revolutionary masses organized in the union and the counterrevolutionary leadership, by refusing the latter to take our slogan.

The other great task can be formulated like this: “we must destroy the armed forces of the regime so they do not destroy us”. This means that Solidarity had to destroy the armed forces and

the police through a classic encircling movement. From within, by building military Solidarity to face the officer caste; on the outside, by building their own armed militias. These two tasks were concretized in an immediate and decisive purpose: to face the putsch.

The emergence of currents that are oriented towards revolutionary positions, characteristic of any process such as the Polish, imposed on us the line of the revolutionary united front, that is to say, the programmatic agreement with these currents, around the previous points, to later shape with them a common organization.

True to its line of capitulation to the leaderships of the masses (such as Sandinismo and Farabundo Marti in Central America), the USec did not even get near program.

Lambert, for his part, raised the need to build a social-democratic or Labour Party. Within his revisionism, he is consistent, there is no doubt. Just as the masses should not drive Solidarity, but some non-existent soviets to seize power, the revolutionists should not raise the conquest of power for Solidarity, but for a Labour Party that, like those soviets, only existed in Lambert's imagination.

Another quite different thing would have been to propose, for example, that Solidarity be organized as a political party or movement for the conquest of the power. This or any tactical variation like that could have been correct if it was at the service of the policy of preparing Solidarity for the insurrection and the struggle for power.

In short, any policy that did not try to achieve a revolutionary united front, around a transitional program based on the central points raised by the IWL (FI), was revisionist, opportunist: it went against the only possible and immediate solution to the crisis of revolutionary leadership in Poland, which was the unification of the revolutionary tendencies arising from the workers' movement around the central needs of the revolution.

The USec and Lambertism, for their opportunism, did not raise such revolutionary program. Those of us who make up the IWL (FI), we did, in the essentials of it.

It is not coincidence that history repeats itself: we were the only ones, against the USec and Lambertism, that held a consistent Trotskyist program for Nicaragua, before and after Somoza (together with Lambertism in the latter case), and for the popular front governments like Mitterrand's. The Polish revolution has been the best test of the revisionism of the USec and Lambert and of our Trotskyist consequence.

PART IV

Kuron's program, who does it serve?

In the previous issue of *Correo Internacional* we wrote that “not only do we have differences with the counterrevolutionary leaderships that support Jaruzelski but also with those that fight the bureaucracy and support the Polish workers. Among the latter there are positions that allow us to classify them as reformists, centrists, and revolutionists.

“The reformists say, with Kuron and Lech Walesa, that the goal of the struggle is to reform the bureaucracy, without breaking the framework imposed by the Kremlin and that the Polish proletariat made the mistake of rushing and ‘demanding too much’.”

The article we comment on today is a finished demonstration that the reformist wing exists, has led Solidarity, and has betrayed the workers' revolution. What is serious is that Kuron puts his undeniable talent at the service of continuing to propagate an analysis and a program fatal for the Polish, European and world revolution. We will try to prove it.

The coup and the crisis of the workers' states

Kuron defines the coup as “a classic occupation with censorship of correspondence, curfew, massive raids, inquiries, arrests, military courts, collective responsibility, etc.”

Although we believe the definition is abusive, since it is not an “occupation” — like those that took place in Hungary and Czechoslovakia — but an internal military coup, its description is true.

But the analysis of the international context of the Polish revolution is radically false. For Kuron, it is inscribed only in the crisis of bureaucratic workers' regimes, without even mentioning the world crisis of imperialism. “The entire Soviet bloc was deeply shaken by the Polish events. The deadly disease of which I have spoken is more advanced in Poland but it eats away at all the countries of the bloc. As the economy is modernized, the aspirations of society and its participation in the international division of labour increase. The imperatives of armament force the member countries of the socialist bloc to modernize their economy. In a diseased organism, modernization involves massive investments, while efficiency stagnates and, therefore, decreases. Hence, the growing dependence on the West and the growing sharpening of social conflicts.”

Instead of imperialism, he only sees the counterrevolutionary role of the USSR. “We know the war was declared in Poland under pressure from the USSR.” This is a painful truth but he forgets that the systematic and current aid of the imperialist countries, especially their banks, to the Jaruzelski regime is as important as this Russian pressure.

But the worst is that our author openly admits he never called for preparing to face the bureaucratic despots with arms in hand: “For many years I have advocated abstention from all violence.”

Two “small” oversights

For our author, the crisis of imperialism does not exist, it is not real: “Today, war, if there is one, develops in Poland and the agony of imperialism is only a prognosis.” The “West” exists but only as a positive factor for the Polish and Eastern European economy: “The sanctions have limited the possibilities of cooperation with the West, cooperation without which the economy of the bloc cannot function normally.” Put another way, user loans, the 27 billion dollars of Polish debt to the international banks, to imperialism, are a Western “cooperation” to the Polish and Eastern European economy and not a blatant imperialist pillage.

Kuron thus becomes an agent of imperialism since he does not denounce it. He does not even see its crisis: neither economic nor political. Neither Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, nor Central America. Nor are there, for the founder of KOR [Workers’ Defence Committee], dozens of millions of unemployed in the imperialist countries, nor their plundering of the backward countries, nor — even less — their colossal decline and mess: “The agony of imperialism is only a prognosis.”

The most elementary sense of observation tells us that since the postwar period the fundamental factors of contemporary reality are the “agony of imperialism” and the constant, albeit with ups and downs, development of the world revolution. I do not know what explanation Kuron gives for Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba, and to the political independence of the former Asian and African colonies. Its existence is what raised the “prognosis” from paper to reality. With them, imperialist domination agonises.

This is why Kuron is unable to take into account as a decisive factor in his analysis the development of the world revolution. This one does not exist. Not even the European revolution and that of the East itself. He does not see the Polish revolution as the weakest link, where Eastern Europe and all of Europe can begin their revolution. Because of this, the raising of slogans of workers’ solidarity among the different countries and of Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics of Europe does not even get on his head. For our author, everything takes place within the narrow frameworks of the Polish national State. There is an evident conception of current reality, provincial and reformist to the core.

Reformism at the service of the Polish bureaucracy and the Kremlin

Kuron’s policy to confront the Jaruzelski regime cannot be more reformist either. It is the policy of a mediocre middle bureaucrat who wants to be friends with the whole world. After noting the situation is burning on all four sides, he adds that “no call can stop young people who want to fight. If it is effective enough to prohibit other forms of struggle, it will throw them into the impasse of terrorism. No call can mitigate the explosive mixture of despair and hatred.” His policy is not to call these young people to an in depth fight against the bureaucracy but to a great commitment among all: the Kremlin, the bureaucracy, the Church, and the intellectuals who resist. Everybody but the working class, which he never remembers, as if it did not exist. “In anticipation of the worst, it is necessary from today to do everything possible so that the Soviet leadership understands that, with a minimum of good will on their part, a national agreement of the Poles — even without the participation of the current leaders of the country — would not threaten the military interests of the USSR and may only be beneficial to their economic interests. This is why the leadership of the resistance must prepare society for greater concessions with a view to a commitment to power and, at the same time, for the liquidation of the occupation, through a manifestation of an organized whole. It is necessary the men of power know they only have a strictly limited time to take the initiative of a commitment. But the episcopate pronounces itself in favour of a compromise, and it has enormous authority in Poland. It will be supported by the majority of the Solidarity leadership, the men of science and culture, in short, all those whose voice counts in Poland. And what is even more significant, the initiative for a compromise would offer the government a social mandate that

it has not had since 1956. Certainly, it would be a risky initiative, but the occupation is a suicidal act.”

To avoid the spontaneity of the mass movement or the incitement of the revolutionaries to the workers to arm themselves to overthrow the bureaucracy and confront the Kremlin and imperialism, calling the European workers to militant solidarity, Kuron demands an almost military discipline of the mass movement in its mobilizations. This discipline is at the service of achieving agreement and of preventing the history of last year, of revolutionary initiatives of the class, from repeating itself. “Unlike the pre-August 1980 era, we need to concentrate around a central core and demonstrate absolute discipline about it.”

As we see, more opportunism is impossible. It is at the service of the Kremlin, imperialism, the bureaucracy, and the Church. This has been the ideology of the leadership of Solidarity and Walesa, as a transmission belt of the Church. The defeat of the workers and the triumph of Jaruzelski are easily explained.

Now what we have to avoid is a new defeat. The first step to prevent it is to reject Kuron’s nauseating program.