

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

No. 2

January 1971

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(Published as a fraternal
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retariat of the Fourth
International)

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LETTER FROM HUGO BLANCO TO LIVIO MAITAN -- OCTOBER 17, 1970

Comrade Livio:

I did not answer your letter [of March 26, 1970; see International Information Bulletin, No. 7, September 1970] sooner because, to tell the truth, I could only have repeated what has been said by Comrades Hansen, Moreno, or by us of the FIR an infinite number of times in our newspaper.

Now the events in Bolivia warrant examination in the light of both methodologies. Comrades of greater capabilities will surely be doing this; nevertheless I feel an obligation to voice what I think despite all the limitations I face: low level, lack of information, isolation, etc., (the repression has worsened).

You state that the alternative between engaging in guerrilla action and mobilizing the masses has already been superseded, not only for our movement but for the majority of the Latin-American movements and that all that is involved now is to determine the concrete forms of armed struggle.

In my opinion this is not so. Although "Debrayism," the guerrillerista position in its extreme form, has been superseded, less rigid forms of Guevarism continue to confront us.

It is undeniable that under the blows of reality, the Guevarist comrades are slowly coming closer to Leninist positions. This shows us that our attitude toward them must be completely fraternal in order to help them in their evolution. But this does not mean that we should move toward them ideologically; exactly the contrary, the more firmly we hold to our Leninist positions both theoretically and practically, the more effective the aid we can offer them in surmounting their positions.

In my opinion, to state that the discussion between guerrillerismo and mobilizing the masses is no longer of fundamental importance signifies merging with Guevarism in evolution. It is a way of "superseding the discussion" by identifying ourselves with them.

It is true that these comrades are already talking about mass work, but we should take note, not only by their praxis but by the contradictory way in which they refer to this work, that their conception is different from ours. It is typical to hear them talking about "linking armed struggle with the mass movement," or that it is necessary for "the guerrilla fighter to carry on preliminary work among the masses before launching the struggle." Although these affirmations show us that a healthy

process is going on, we cannot identify with it. They still stand within the guerrillerista schema.

For us what is central is the mass movement, which at a certain moment arrives at armed struggle in one form or another. We are not guerrilla fighters carrying on prior work preparatory to the outbreak of guerrilla war, placing fundamental importance on the geographic locale, the establishment of supply lines, etc. We are revolutionists carrying on political work in the ranks of the masses, leading them toward revolutionary maturity, organizing the party on this basis. At a certain moment we can become guerrilla fighters if this is the form the armed struggle has to take. Our work is political, the military is incidental. For the guerrilleristas it is the reverse; they are "guerrilla fighters" who incidentally carry on "preliminary work." This is not a play on words, Comrade; it involves profound differences in the mode of confronting every task. Their "preliminary work" is not the same as the Leninist conception of mass work.

If we seek to move ideologically in the direction of the Guevarist comrades, the danger exists not only of retreating back to where they stand, but of passing each other going in opposite directions, which is what apparently has been happening with respect to the importance of rural guerrilla warfare. As we know, many of them are placing more and more importance on the urban struggle, be it confined within the guerrillerista conception.

I now turn to some interesting translating errors committed by the comrades here in Peru who hold your positions. In place of: "Likewise, it is widely accepted that viable connections with the masses cannot develop almost automatically as the consequence of courageous initiatives by small vanguard groups but can only be established by systematic organizational and political work" [see Livio Maitan, "Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," Intercontinental Press, April 20, 1970, p. 358], they wrote: "The idea...that solid relations are not an almost automatic consequence of the initiative and courage of small vanguard groups, but can be established only through systematic political and organizational work, is a much more prolonged acquisition." To tell the truth, I am more in agreement with the erroneous translation.

Further on, referring to my replies in the interview [see "Bejar, Gadea, Blanco on the Peruvian Revolution," Intercontinental Press, February 23, 1970,

p. 162], in place of: "However, what is vital for the Latin-American movement, once there has been a clarification of the relationship between armed struggle and the masses and the need for a party as the instrument of revolution, is to sketch the concrete forms armed struggle will take" [Maitan, *op. cit.*, p. 359], they wrote: "But once again lack of clarity on the relations between armed struggle and masses and on the necessity of the party as instrument of the revolution, it is vital for the Latin-American movement to project the forms in which the armed struggle will become concretized." Here, too, I am more in accord with what the erroneous translation says, which continues to place importance on the first two points as the axis of the discussion by attributing to me "lack of clarity."

Nevertheless, in place of your sentence, I would prefer saying:

"Once there has been a clarification on the necessity of work within the mass movement and the necessity for a party, what is important is to determine the form these tasks will take in each country, exerting ourselves to sketch the general characteristics of the region."

For example, it appears that the Peruvian MIR has already reached an understanding of the necessity for mass work. Consequently, what we must discuss with the MIR are the forms of this work, the methods, the key sectors in which this work must be carried out, the immediate slogans, etc. And not "the forms armed struggle will take."

To tell the truth, in Peru, because of our limitations, we have not ventured to say much on Latin America in general. Against this, the document of the Argentine comrades (La Verdad) on this, is worthwhile.

In line of development of the tasks mentioned above, we can still find ourselves confronted with the need to elucidate the forms of armed struggle; that moment will be determined by the process of the mass struggle. Whether such a study has been made (aside from the Argentine document), I do not know; I view the annotations included in the Latin-American document as lacking the necessary depth.

In my opinion, because of the view that rural guerrilla war is imminent, great possibilities of serious work in the distained, "classical form," the Leninist form, are being lost.

With regard to Bolivia, the COB document [see "Theses Adopted by Bolivian Labor Movement," Intercontinental Press, July 13, 1970, p. 676] indubitably shows the mark of persevering Trotskyist work.

Because of this it is all the more painful to see comrades showing lack of confidence in this marvelous proletariat, which destroyed the army and was on the verge of taking power in 1952 (in Bolivia no defeat in a war was required for workers militias to spring up and destroy the army). At that opportune moment, the audacity was lacking to raise the Leninist slogan, "The COB to Power!"

This same proletariat is showing us that it has not been defeated--far from it. The rise of Tórres is the product of terror inspired by the working class. The next weeks and months will be of decisive importance for Bolivia. In view of this it is very sad to see, precisely at this time, valuable revolutionists being pressed to leave for guerrilla war, separating themselves from the worker and student masses that are moving into struggle. It would not be strange, should these masses be defeated, that they will be blamed, or perhaps it will be used to demonstrate "the impossibility of coming to power through the mass movement." If this misfortune occurs, a big share of the guilt will lie with those who took away from the masses a part of their valuable vanguard. As if there were an oversupply of revolutionary cadres to lead the masses in these days!

Thus Leninist work is required not only in Peru, where for the moment we must bide our time, but also in Bolivia and Chile, which are or could be on the verge of armed struggle.

(I know almost nothing of the position of the Chilean comrades, but from outside the country it can be seen that the electoral and postelectoral processes have opened magnificent opportunities for the revolutionary left, provided they do not, in sectarian fashion, leave the masses in the hands of the opportunists.)

It is correct in Bolivia to discuss the form that armed struggle must take within the process of the mass upsurge, but the best teacher in this is the Bolivia of 1952, which does not recommend taking to the hills, isolating oneself, or anything like that. Work among the peasants as a complement to the movement of the workers and city dwellers generally is one thing; such work will almost surely lead to peasant guerrillas. The guerrillas of the ELN are something quite different, holding as they do a more or less modified Guevarist, but not Leninist, conception.

With respect to the characterization of the Peruvian regime (in referring to what you have written, I am taking the version in Intercontinental Press), I believe that the fundamental difference between your interpretation and ours is that for us there exist important economic changes corresponding to neocapitalism, the strengthening of the imperialist and

native sectors interested in the industrial development of our countries. In addition, it is clear that political reasons for this development exist--the necessity of holding back the masses by means of pseudonationalism and what you call

"military reformism." It appears to me that you place no importance on the first aspect. I will not dwell on this since you must be aware of our articles on the subject.

Hugo Blanco G.
El Frontón
October 17, 1970

DEFENSE OF AN ORIENTATION AND A METHOD

by Livio Maitan

I. Reply to Some Questions and Arbitrary Interpretations of Comrade Hansen

The discussion in progress on Latin America concerns questions vital for the revolutionary movement and for the future of Trotskyism in that part of the world. The situation of some of our sections, the blows we have suffered, and the divisions that exist make it essential to clarify and define the problems sufficiently to permit all the necessary conclusions to be drawn at the next world congress. However, our discussion can be fruitful only if the legitimate desire to win acceptance of one's own point of view does not involve the danger of ignoring or underestimating the changes that have occurred. One must avoid setting up strawmen, arbitrarily reconstructing the positions of others, as well as engaging in a tendentious and scholastic reading of documents. At the same time, while not denying that connections exist between the orientations proposed for Latin America and possible orientations in other sectors, we think that no progress can be made in our discussion by mixing in problems which, if they need be discussed at all, should be taken up in a different context.

Comrades who have read the document of the last world congress attentively, as well as a whole series of articles, analyses, and documents written by comrades belonging to the majority, should realize without any difficulty that a not inconsiderable part of the criticisms raised against us by Comrade Joe Hansen are not directed at our real conceptions. We stated this already with regard to his initial document. But since he persists, we have no choice but to go back over a certain number of arguments, devoting the first part of our text to a more direct polemic with "A Contribution to the Discussion on Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America."

Let us sum up and summarize the points most worthy of attention.

1. In his attempt to account for the thrust of ultraleftism which is supposed to have wreaked havoc extending even into the leadership of the International, Comrade Hansen refers to the rise of new generations and the breakthrough achieved by our movement in some European countries, notably in France in May-June 1968. "It was precisely following this exhilarating expansion of forces, he adds, "that some leaders of the Fourth International, above all comrade Maitan, began adapting to ultraleftism." Perhaps this is an apt formulation, but unfortu-

nately the chronology is wrong. The orientation expressed in the world congress document had already been outlined rather precisely at least as far back as the beginning of the second half of 1967, notably in discussions between comrades in the leadership of the International and representatives of certain Latin-American sections. From Comrade Hansen's first article itself it can be deduced that I had defined my orientation before May 1968 and thus before the Trotskyist breakthrough in France was concretized in the building of the Ligue. But one thing must be absolutely clear. The draft resolution for the world congress drawn up in October 1968 was not the project of the analyses or thoughts of one person alone or of a small group, but the outcome of a collective elaboration, in which a large number of our cadres in Latin America, representing a very clear majority of our movement, participated more or less directly. I would also add that it was important to us at the time to see that our conclusions were shared by revolutionary militants of other movements, movements that had evolved as the result¹ of manifold experiences in the struggle.

2. At the world congress, the minority made no substantial criticisms of the analysis of the situation in Latin America. That is why now, in order to show the incorrectness of our perspective, Comrade Hansen prefers to make ironic comments about the mentality and illusions he attributes to certain delegates, which -- it seems -- were cleverly manipulated by Comrade Maitan. In fact, the document and the reports and contributions to the discussion all stressed the long duration of the armed struggle, strictly refraining from fostering any naive optimism. Comrade Hansen even pointed to "pessimistic views" in the document. If, for our part, we often stressed the urgency of adopting the orientation we proposed and putting it into practice, it was because armed struggle was already taking place in Latin America and because it would not fail to develop in the future owing to the fact that the objective situation, in general, was pushing things in this direction.

This said, have changes occurred since 1968 in the situation in Latin America? In our March 15 article which Comrade Hansen cites several times we already answered this question, considering the possibility of "Peruvian" tendencies spreading to other countries. The document of the congress, moreover, had mentioned a variety of political

currents in the military, and the analytical part concluded with the affirmation: "If the objective possibilities are not exploited in time by the revolutionists, imperialism and indigenous capitalism will reorganize, if only precariously, alternating between 'new' and traditional solution." But we have no reason not to acknowledge that at the time we did not expect "new" solutions to develop with such scope and so near in the future. In this respect, we are ready to make our self-criticism.

However, even leaving aside all considerations of method, we do not plead guilty on the nub of the question. What we felt, and still do, is that in Latin America it would be wrong, in general, to count on the traditional variant of prolonged or relatively prolonged phases in which the workers movement would have the possibility of developing along more or less "normal" lines, more or less legally and progressively strengthening its trade-union and political organizations up to the moment of the outbreak of armed struggle which would be limited to the decisive phase of a general insurrection. This prognostication by no means excluded "reformist" or "democratic" interludes, or attempts to achieve "new" solutions; it sought to grasp the fundamental tendency of a whole period of class struggle in that part of the world. From this standpoint, the Peruvian and Bolivian events have not shown us wrong; all the more so, furthermore, because one could not claim that Velasco has allowed the masses to organize freely and independently; his objective, to the contrary, being to fasten the grip of the military regime on the masses, who are at best regarded as a passive supporting force. And no one can close his eyes to the fraudulent character of the Ovando regime, which has done nothing to replace all-out repression with a more selective type, and which is still ready to jail, exile, or even kill those who do not accept the rules of its game.

Comrade Hansen would unquestionably have scored a point if we had been slow to grasp the new tendencies and draw the necessary political and tactical conclusions from them. But this has not been the case, and our critic admits it, even though he wishes to see a contradiction in this. But why a contradiction? The contradiction exists only in his imagination: for, according to him, we have made a principle out of guerrilla warfare, "forgetting" the mass movements, and now, both in Peru and Bolivia, we stress the need for exploiting the possibilities that have opened up and even of formulating "a transitional program capable of impelling mass mobilization." However, if the minority comrades had been willing to listen to us at the congress and to read our document, as it is, they would have seen that we did not wait for the

events in Peru and Bolivia to discover, or rediscover, the transitional program....

The question of whether it is possible that other countries in Latin America might adopt the "Peruvian road" and whether more generally an objective possibility exists for "reformist" operations was already answered in our article "Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle." [See Intercontinental Press, April 20, 1970, p. 352]. We explained that in fact in other countries the ruling classes -- or certain sectors of the ruling classes -- might be led to seek new solutions, despite the danger of objectively starting up a dynamic capable of threatening the system as a whole and despite the narrow margin for maneuver both economically and socially.

Since then the attractions of "reformism" or "populism" have unquestionably grown in various countries. In Chile, shaken by increasing tensions throughout the last year, Allende's electoral success -- accompanied by a strong polarization on the right around the conservative Alessandri -- preemptorily imposed a choice on the bourgeoisie between an attempt to cancel out the electoral verdict by force or a political maneuver, or acceptance of a daring reformist experiment, which, while having an economic content analogous in several respects to the Peruvian experiment, would, nevertheless, develop in a political context much more favorable to the mass movement. New turns, spectacular new crises might, then, be on the order of the day in Latin America in the weeks and months to come. While never losing sight of the fundamental guidelines established by the world congress, which, as we have said, remain substantially valid, our movement must be prepared to decisively and flexibly exploit any possibility for strengthening itself, including by exploiting sops of "legality," above all by increasing its links at the level of the masses.

A final item on this subject: no one can exclude a priori the possibility that in a more distant future the basis for a strategy of armed struggle in Latin America might change radically. If we assume that imperialism and the native bourgeoisie can hold on for a few decades more, structural changes will inevitably occur in the meantime. For example, the specific weight of the agricultural economy and the peasantry would decline rather drastically. In such a perspective, what we have written in our documents on rural guerrilla warfare would lose a large measure of its meaning. But we have elaborated and will elaborate a policy for the context that exists now and will persist at least for a certain period, and our orientations are aimed at exploiting all the potentialities of this stage by

corresponding to the present situations and relationships of forces.

3. According to Comrade Hansen, "two concepts concerning the main road of the revolution were adumbrated at the congress" in the sense that the majority is supposed to have considered rural guerrilla warfare a "matter of principle," while the minority considered the matter of principle was building the party. Thus, by an arbitrary procedure, a question of vital importance for orienting our movement in the present stage has been transformed into a false problem!

If it needs repeating once again, we do not accept this interpretation of our view. We even add that if in fact there were a tendency in the International that denied the "principle of building the party," we would not only have to wage an uncompromising struggle against it but would even have to consider breaking with it -- just as we had to break with tendencies that defended the idea that the bureaucracy in the workers states could possibly reform itself or that power could be won without revolutionary violence.

At bottom, Comrade Hansen contrasts two concepts that by no means stand in opposition. Our conception is and remains that in order to carry through the workers' struggle for power to its culmination, a revolutionary party is a *sin qua non*. This is the ABC of Leninism and we will not go back to it. Guerrilla warfare is one method of struggle to be used in a definite context to help build or reinforce the party. Has Comrade Hansen, for example, ever thought of opposing building the party and participating in a general strike? Why, then, does an orientation that involves our organizations participating in a guerrilla struggle in a given context stand in contradiction with the conception of the need for building, not a study club or a Marxist and Trotskyist propaganda group, but a "combat party?"

The world congress document contained an explicit polemic against all the spontanéist, or semispontanéist tendencies that have existed and still exist in Latin America as well. Read it attentively, if you please, comrades of the minority, and without preconceptions. Remember what we ourself wrote on this question in the past, opposing Debrayism when it was the latest thing in ultra-left circles. Read, or reread what the Bolivian comrades wrote, for example, and take into consideration what they have done and are doing to organize their party, to train Trotskyist cadres, among other things, organizing their schools in strict clandestinity, in much less comfortable circumstances than those of our schools in Western Europe, or those

of our American comrades!

But there is another point that should definitively clarify our real conception. According to Comrade Hansen -- and I am referring here to his first discussion article -- there was a contradiction in the congress document between the analysis, which characterized the situation continent-wide as prerevolutionary, and the "considerable reservations as to the possibility of a major victory anywhere in Latin America in the near future." But this contradiction exists in reality because of the subjective factor, that is, the lack of a revolutionary party capable of operating on the mass level. It is precisely because the sections of the Fourth, despite their influence in certain countries, are at present not in position to play such a role (nor are any other groups able to play it in their place) that, while not absolutely excluding exceptional variants, we do not count on any successful revolutions in the near future and we projected a perspective of prolonged struggle. Far from forgetting or underestimating it, we assigned to the factor of the party an essential place in the analysis itself. Comrade Hansen's criticisms thus have no basis whatever.

Another example of a misinterpretation: Comrade Hansen quotes our discussion article "An Insufficient Document," which says: "Our role will be appreciated at its true value by the new movement if we are in position to express in time and better than any other current their real needs and to outline solutions to the problems which they raise." According to him, and he returns to this theme twice, this means that we are suggesting that the Trotskyists should become the best technicians of rural guerrilla warfare. This is a ridiculous conclusion. We are just as aware as Comrade Hansen that in this area others have more experience than we and that it is above all the political and theoretical acquisitions of our international movement that we can capitalize on. However, if we take ourselves seriously when we talk about the inevitability of armed struggle and at the same time the irreplaceable role of the Trotskyist movement, this implies that in a revolutionary or prerevolutionary context we must ourselves assimilate the indispensable "technical" concepts and transmit them to others.

Must I remind the minority here that Lenin recommended studying military technique in detail and that Trotsky indicated that insufficient technical preparation had been "the weak side of all revolutions?" As regards our movement, it ought to be regretted, for example, that the experience of a certain number of our cadres in the European

resistance is completely unknown to other sectors of the International, although this experience might prove definitely useful.

4. Comrade Hansen considers that we developed our conceptions under the influence of the Cuban leaders.

Let us acknowledge that this allegation does not impugn our revolutionary honor. We admit having learned something from the Cuban revolutionists, who, after all, established the first workers state in the Americas and who have not, up to now, suffered a process of bureaucratization like that of the other workers states. In any case, since I cannot examine the Cuban conceptions and their evolution fully here, I will note briefly the following:

a) It is true that the Cubans have often fostered false conceptions of revolutionary struggle in Latin America. But in their own armed struggle they have absolutely not acted as adventurists or "foquistas."

b) For our part, we have not neglected to express our criticisms of the Cubans, while taking account of the limits imposed on revolutionists in given contexts, and as we have already said, we formulated a critique of Régis Debray's book at a time when the Cubans were supporting it without any reservations.

c) We quite quickly pointed out, what, according to our analysis, were the reasons for the²defeat of Che's guerrillas in Bolivia,² being careful to avoid getting mixed up with the opportunists of all stripes who had opened a counterattack. Nonetheless, we considered it incorrect to characterize Che's undertaking as an artificial operation, or an application of the foco theory because subjective and objective conditions for armed struggle existed in Bolivia at the time.

d) We have never thought that armed struggle could only be conducted in Latin America if the Cuban revolutionists supported it. At the world congress we were completely explicit in advancing the hypothesis, in our contribution at the end of the debate that there would be a rectification of the Cuban orientation and stating that, if this rectification was not determined by a change in the objective situation, we would maintain our course. That did not exclude possible rectifications of tactical approaches, the determination of timing, etc.

Now in fact we have cause to reflect on the Cuban line. This, moreover, was also true six months ago, when we wrote our article that appeared in Quatrième Internationale and Intercontinental Press. As regards Latin America, what Hansen calls the "pause for reflection" seems to

be continuing. But three things at least are already clear. The Cuban analyses of the developments in Peru and, to a lesser extent, in Chile, are incorrect and our entire movement has rightly criticized them. In these cases, then, there is no progress. The second element is that in the polemic between the Cubans and some Latin-American movements previously linked to Cuba, the latter have been the ones who have most clearly affirmed the necessity of abandoning the foco theory and having a much more developed and more dialectical conception of armed struggle. Finally, no one can deny that the new relationship with Moscow has had a considerable effect on the policy of the Castro leadership. And this puts another question mark over the results of the "pause for reflection."³

5. Our policy must of course be examined at the next world congress. The experiences of Bolivia and Argentina in particular must be scrutinized free from all factional considerations. We cannot undertake such a balance sheet here, in the absence of all the elements which are indispensable for making a judgment.

However, as regards Argentina, until we are more fully informed, we are inclined to believe that very grave errors have been committed and when they applied the basic orientations both of the world congress and the Fourth Congress of the PRT [Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores] the comrades in fact departed from these guidelines. In the present context of the country, they have had to pay very quickly an extremely heavy price both politically and organizationally for these errors. As regards Bolivia, it must at least be made clear that there was no premature or aborted attempt on our part and that the causes of the repression that hit us last year must not be sought in this area.

Our Bolivian comrades themselves will have the occasion to answer the question of whether they were aware of Peredo's conceptions. Obviously we knew that these conceptions were not ours both as regards building the party and the strategy of the armed struggle. This is why we did not envisage a unification with the ELN [Ejército de Liberación Nacional], but strove to achieve a united front which by its very nature could not threaten our organizational and political autonomy. On this point no doubt is possible. If there was anyone who simply wanted to "throw the Trotskyist movement behind Peredo's guerrilla front," he must be sought somewhere else. In a document by Comrade Moreno at the end of 1967, we could read literally:

"Inti Peredo and his heroic companions survive and continue struggling. They are in fact the new leadership and governing organization of the proletariat

and the Bolivian masses. On all the walls of Bolivia the same slogan is written: Inti will not die. This fundamental, decisive, concrete fact is the first that we must take into consideration in looking at the Bolivian situation...Inti and his group, like Fidel and his group in their time, have survived. There can be no Marxist analysis of the revolutionary reality in the southern triangle, in our country, or in Bolivia that does not start off from this immediate, concrete, definitive, and conclusive fact known to all.... Hence the number one task of all Latin-American revolutionists at this time, of OIAS as the only organization capable of supporting the armed struggle, of our party as a component of this organization, and of a country bordering on Bolivia is first to save and then to consolidate the ELN and Inti as its unchallenged leader. There is no more urgent task than this....

"OIAS, and most concretely its armed detachments, is the highest organizational expression of the Latin-American mass movement for the struggle for power. Our entry into OIAS has much greater importance than our activity in the Peronist unions in its time, for the Peronist opposition slates, or our entry into the Peronist movement and the 62. But for our action to have this fundamental importance we must join its armed detachments, or help to create them where they do not exist. This means loyal and disciplined recognition of the leadership of OIAS, recognition of the disciplined and centralized character which the struggle and its Latin-American organization must have, and most of all the need to maintain direct contact with the Cuban leadership, which is the unchallenged leadership of the continental civil war and of OIAS. It also means our unconditional entry into its armed detachments...."

This piece is unique as a mélange of mechanical formulations, opportunism, adventurism, and distortion of the objective facts. But how can it be explained that after writing this Moreno opted for the minority line and that Comrade Hansen has never had the least occasion to differentiate himself from him?⁴

Here then is our answer to the questions raised in Comrade Hansen's document. If no overall criticism of his position flows from this, the reason is very simple. The minority comrades do not have an alternative line that we could analyze and reject.

At the world congress, the minority asked the delegates to reject the fundamental line of the document and proposed opening a discussion. Fourteen months later Comrade Hansen has renewed the argument, but the result is no different. The line of the majority is subjected to criticism but there is no proposal for

replacing it. It is good to recall the criteria of the transitional program, warn against dangers, stress the essential role of mass work and the necessity of a revolutionary party. But Latin America is experiencing a situation of profound crisis in which, in a number of countries, the class struggle has already gone over into armed combat. We have proposed a strategy for this stage based on the experience of our sections and taking account of the experiences and conclusions of other revolutionary currents which have already participated in the struggle. What does the minority propose? What is its conception of armed struggle for a continent at a stage when, I repeat again, armed struggle is on the order of the day. How does it think that the struggle for the overthrow of imperialism and national capitalism can take place concretely? There are many questions that demand answering if the discussion in progress is to result in the necessary clarity at the next congress.

II. A Few Reminders on the Revolutionary Marxist Conceptions of Armed Struggle

Since our debate on Latin America involves the question of armed struggle more generally -- a question which faces the entire workers movement in a time so rich in revolutionary upheavals -- we consider it useful, before clarifying our guidelines, to review what the Marxist theoreticians have written on this subject.

Everyone knows that Engels studied military questions very seriously and it was he in reality who gave us the celebrated definition incorrectly attributed to Marx: "Insurrection is an art, like war or anything else. It is subject to certain practical rules, and a party that disregards these rules is heading for its downfall." From this famous passage in Revolution and Counterrevolution in Germany it clearly follows that the hypothesis advanced by Engels is that of a mass insurrection, conceived as the culmination of a profound revolutionary process (that is, collapse of the existing system, a crisis in the armed forces, active mobilization of the oppressed classes, etc.). This is -- need it be pointed out -- the "classical" variant which materialized in October 1917 in Russia. In his preface to Marx's book Class Struggles in France, Engels indicated the changes that had occurred especially from the standpoint of military technique, but, contrary to the false interpretations of the reformists, he did not change his opinion on the essential point, armed insurrection, and he insisted on the necessity of a broad mobilization of the masses as well as the previous preparation of armed detachments.⁵

In his letters Marx's collaborator alluded several times to guerrilla warfare, notably with regard to the American Civil War and Poland. He noted, among other things, that geographical conditions were not sufficient for the development of guerrilla warfare if the social conditions were lacking.

With Lenin who operated in a context where, in a general sense, revolution was already on the order of the day, the problems of armed struggle reappear much more frequently and in a more concrete and direct form. In this area also Lenin's intransigence of fundamental conceptions and goals goes hand in hand with the greatest flexibility as to means whose adoption or rejection depend on their correspondence to the ends, on their practical usefulness. It is sufficient to recall his position toward terrorism against which he polemicized strongly, without, however, rejecting it in principle, accepting it to the degree in which it was integrated in an overall plan and not divorced from the mass movement.⁶

But the very essence of his method was expressed most explicitly in an article entitled Guerrilla Warfare (1906) from which it is worth recalling some passages:

"In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle...Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation changes...In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism...." another document, Lenin pointed out: "Substituting the abstract for the concrete in a revolutionary situation is one of the gravest and most dangerous possible faults." (July 1917).⁷ It is clear then that a study of Lenin's indications on armed struggle must not lead us to apply these indications mechanically but should help us with regard to basic criteria and conceptions. From this standpoint, it would be absurd to talk of "principles," and it is not us, if Comrade Hansen will permit, who elevate guerrilla warfare into a principle, and still less in its specific rural form, nor, moreover, any form of armed struggle.

There is no need for me to stress here the conceptions of Lenin that in-

spired the Bolshevik party in the October revolution. They are part of the essential heritage of our movement. In the context of the present discussion, however, it seems to us worthwhile to review the fundamentals, that is, for Lenin the class struggle at a given moment in its development reaches the level of civil war and then "the military question becomes the essential political question" (stress in the original). Here is a precise idea certain comrades should reflect on instead of engaging in variations on the theme of which, in the abstract, takes precedence, the political or the military aspect. Secondly, Lenin conceived of the insurrection "as the culmination and crowning moment of every workers movement as a whole." But he never made the slightest concession to the spontanéist conceptions of insurrection that ignore or underestimate the following facts: that insurrection is an art and thus has its specific military aspects; and that, "at a given moment," lineups based on political slogans are not sufficient and "a lineup must take place on the attitude toward armed insurrection." If the working class wants to have a chance to win the game, it must prepare its military force, "its revolutionary army," the building of which will be "difficult, complex, and long in duration."

It would be wrong, specifically, to think that Lenin did not pay enough attention to partisan struggle or guerrilla warfare. To the contrary, the question is scrutinized closely in some of his writings dealing with the revolution of 1905.⁹ It was clear to him first of all that partisan struggle could not be compared to traditional terrorism, because it was in fact integrated in the general framework of armed insurrection. The platform proposed for the unification congress of the RSDRP [Rossiiskaia Sotsial'demokraticheskaja Rabochaia Partii -- Russian Social Democratic Labor party], which was drafted in March 1906, after reviewing the essential conceptions on armed insurrection, added that "scarcely anywhere in Russia since the December uprising has there been a complete cessation of hostilities which the revolutionary people are now conducting in the form of sporadic guerrilla attacks on the enemy;" that "these guerrilla operations, which are inevitable when two hostile armed forces face each other, and when repression by the temporarily triumphant military is rampant, serve to disorganise the enemy's forces and pave the way for future open and mass armed operations;" and that "such operations are also necessary to enable our fighting squads to acquire fighting experience and military training, for in many places during the December uprising they proved to be unprepared for their new tasks." On several occasions Lenin did not neglect to give specific advice on the

makeup and technical education of partisan detachments.

Moreover, in his Guerrilla Warfare Lenin gives us the key to a more general understanding of the function of partisan struggle: "Guerrilla warfare," he wrote, "is an inevitable form of struggle at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the 'big engagements' in the civil war." And further on: "It is therefore absolutely natural and inevitable that in such a period, a period of nation-wide political strikes, an uprising cannot assume the old form of individual acts restricted to a very short time and to a very small area. It is absolutely natural and inevitable that the uprising should assume the higher and more complex form of a prolonged civil war embracing the whole country, i.e., an armed struggle between two sections of the people. Such a war cannot be conceived otherwise than as a series of a few big engagements at comparatively long intervals and a large number of small encounters during these intervals. That being so -- and it is undoubtedly so -- the Social-Democrats must absolutely make it their duty to create organisations best adapted to lead the masses in these engagements and, as far as possible, in these small encounters as well." Ten years afterward, making a new balance sheet of 1905, Lenin said: "The Russian revolution of 1905 confirmed what Kautsky wrote in 1902... 'the future revolution... will be less like an abrupt uprising against the government than a long civil war! That is certainly going to happen in the imminent European revolution!"

From this we can conclude that Lenin in fact considered armed insurrection, which would be the culmination of a mass mobilization, as the decisive phase of the revolutionary struggle for power. But he did not limit all armed struggle to the insurrection. He foresaw the possibility of a prolonged civil war, even in the industrialized countries of Europe, and he considered guerrilla warfare a necessary method in a given context, more precisely when a revolutionary or prerevolutionary situation was produced or persisted but when a "big" full-scale battle was ruled out because of a temporary relationship of forces.

It is superfluous to note in our movement that Lenin's conceptions on insurrection and on armed struggle more generally can also be found in Trotsky's work after the first Russian revolution. The Year 1905 and the History of the Russian Revolution contain pages and entire chapters that rank among the most brilliant contributions to revolutionary theory. Like Lenin, Trotsky conceived of the insurrection as the peak of a revolutionary mass mobilization and made

no concessions to adventurist, putschist, or elitist orientations. But neither did he concede anything to spontaneist interpretations of insurrection, stressing the need for organizing armed struggle to the point of making a partial defense of Auguste Blanqui. Moreover, he was very careful not to limit civil war -- which in turn is "a definite stage in the class struggle" -- to the insurrection striking for power; armed struggle, in fact, embraces other stages and other variants. In the specific case of the 1905 insurrection in Moscow, Trotsky also noted the importance of guerrilla warfare -- in connection with the mass movement -- and he explained, using concrete examples, the effectiveness of even very small nuclei of fighters. "A little war based on revolutionary strike -- such as we have seen in Moscow -- cannot itself assure victory. But it can provide the means for testing the discipline of the soldiers. And then, after the initial important success, when a section of the garrison has gone over to the rebels, the skirmishing of small detachments, guerrilla warfare, can become a large-scale conflict involving the masses. In this confrontation, a section of the army, supported by both the armed and unarmed population, will combat the loyalist section of the army, isolated in a sea of popular hatred." (The Year 1905.)

Trotsky returned to the question of guerrilla struggle in his Problems of Civil War and his Military Writings. In many places he polemicizes strongly against the methods and conceptions characteristic of guerrilla warfare, whose peasant social mold he did not fail to note. But there can be no mistake about this -- all this refers to the period following the seizure of power in Russia and the organization of the Red Army. In this context, the denunciation of "theories" that guerrilla warfare was "the revolutionary tactic par excellence," corresponded to an elementary necessity.

This by no means implies that Trotsky failed to recognize or that he minimized the significance of partisan struggle or guerrilla warfare in its manifold forms in other contexts. We have seen how he appraised the role of small armed detachments in 1905. In Problems of the Civil War he picked up the thread of his reflections in The Year 1905, writing that "in the initial period of the revolution we are pretty well compelled to rely exclusively on partisan detachments." Even after the seizure of power, if the resistance of the enemy is not completely broken, such detachments "can play an extremely effective role in the open country." Trotsky's Military Writings, moreover, explain several times the role of guerrillas during the civil war, within the framework, of course, of the overall strategy of the Red Army (which, moreover, Trotsky noted was originally

formed precisely from partisan detachments).

The idea of the role of guerrilla struggle before the seizure of power is taken up on other occasions. "Partisan detachments," Trotsky declared November 9, 1918, on the floor of the congress of soviets, "are characteristic of the period of struggle for power," and later on he wrote: "guerrilla warfare can achieve miracles when impelled by a class rising up in a struggle for power." And again (February 24, 1919): "The purpose of guerrilla warfare is to wear out a stronger opponent. Guerrilla warfare as such cannot be decisive in achieving final victory over an organized army. Indeed, it does not even contemplate this objective. It limits itself to tying down and obstructing its opponent, to destroying railway lines and spreading chaos. It is in this area that the weaker force has the advantage over a stronger opponent."

On the question more specifically of rural guerrilla warfare, Trotsky grasped the importance of armed peasant detachments in his writings on the second Chinese revolution and the following period, although he condemned the adventurist orientation of the Chinese CP and the Stalinized Comintern. He noted that guerrilla struggle could develop or survive because of the difficulty repressive forces have in moving decisively over "immense expanses" against a scattered multitude. He even projected the hypothesis, in a Left Opposition document, that peasant guerrilla nuclei could maintain themselves "continuously throughout the prolonged period needed by the proletarian vanguard to gather its forces, in order to engage the working class in the battle, and coordinate its struggle for power with the broad peasant offensives against its most immediate enemies." Later, in a letter written in 1931, he expressed the hope that the Chinese Left Oppositionists would integrate themselves into the armed detachments to share the fate of the fighters.

Finally, the Transitional Program poses the problem of arming the proletariat in the context of a struggle against fascist reaction. The point of departure must be strike pickets -- "the basic nuclei of the proletarian army" -- and workers self-defense detachments. "The arming of the proletariat," the document concludes, "is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming."

From my brief review of the conceptions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, I obviously do not draw the conclusion that the orientation of armed struggle we are proposing for this stage in Latin America flows automatically from these conceptions. That would in fact be using

the method we reject as scholastic. Our concern is to emphasize that our conceptions and criteria are part and parcel of the approach of the masters of revolutionary Marxism and no one can accuse us of any ultraleft-tinted revisionism. We are drawing on the generalizations, outlines, and even some extremely valuable anticipations of the past. Our task is to fill in these outlines with a concrete content in the specific conditions under which we are struggling now.

III. On the Balance Sheet of Guerrilla Warfare

From a recognition of the fact that the guerrilla movements in Latin America have suffered a series of unquestionable setbacks, it does not automatically follow that this method of struggle must be rejected. After all, there are periods in the class struggle when one defeat follows another, no matter what method is adopted. No one can conclude from this, however, that we must abandon strikes. Likewise, Comrade Hugo Blanco's attempt ended in failure. This does not prevent Comrade Hansen from speaking, correctly, of the "extraordinary value" of his action. The question in reality is more precise and it demands an analytical answer: Are these failures explained by the incorrectness of the method in general, or by other more specific reasons?

We will not draw up such a balance sheet here. This will be done at the next world congress, with the contribution of our Latin-American comrades. However, we would like to advance a few brief considerations.

First of all, if we accept the criterion that all experiences of the workers movement that end in defeat are negative, we would have to blot out the greater part of the history of the class up to our day, beginning with the crushing of the Paris Commune. Every comrade knows, however, that defeats -- often inevitable in the given relationship of forces -- are not only rich in lessons for future battles (events like the Paris Commune make it possible to grasp in advance all the possibilities of the future), but they can also provoke crises in the opponent's system, weaken it in the long or intermediate term, stimulate the consciousness of the oppressed and the ripening of the vanguard. In short, all later developments would be different without such "defeats." In drawing a balance of the last decade in Latin America, we must not forget above all that it was precisely the method -- correctly applied -- of guerrilla warfare that made possible Fidel Castro's victory and the establishment of the first workers state in the Americas. As for the wave of guerrilla movements that spread subsequently to a number of

countries, it at least highlighted more dramatically the contradictions and the decay of the neocolonialist system; it provoked major political crises, whether immediately or later, prevented the stabilization of certain regimes, palpably accelerated the crisis of the traditional workers movement, and gave impetus to the development of new young vanguards. What has been written in Peru and Bolivia, for example, by partisans of Velasco and Ovando is quite eloquent in this regard.

It goes without saying that these considerations by no means eliminate the need for analyzing the reasons for the defeats, and especially the major ones. We did not wait for the criticisms of the minority to see that there were tendencies or groups in Latin America whose orientations and methods were leading inevitably to failure. "The experience of several countries has shown," I wrote in 1964, "that the revolutionists claiming to be Castroists have not rid themselves of putschist or adventurist tendencies despite certain grave setbacks and painful losses. Their weakness lies notably in an arbitrary extension of some of the specific features of the Cuban process, in overestimating the importance of military techniques to the detriment of more strictly political factors, in the tendency to divorce the action of very small vanguard nuclei from the development of the mass movement. Our task is to warn against such errors, which, moreover, need I repeat, have already had very negative consequences in several countries." (Quatrième Internationale, Vol. 23, No. 24.)

In our critique of Régis Debray, furthermore, we drew a preliminary balance sheet of the 1965 guerrilla movement in Peru. "We are inclined to the view," we wrote, "that the defeat of the 1965 movement was not due essentially to false theoretical conceptions, or over-all line, but was rooted in an incorrect analysis that led to belief that the conditions vital to its success existed. These conditions -- namely: (a) a growing movement in the countryside; (b) real ties between the group undertaking guerrilla warfare and this movement; (c) active solidarity on the part of the exploited urban layers; (d) a political crisis so acute as to impel very wide segments of the population into struggle, eliminating those important areas of passivity and apathy which have unfortunately featured the Peruvian situation at crucial stages in the past -- did not exist in 1965." [See International Socialist Review, September-October 1967.] We also mentioned the technical military criticisms raised against the MIR by Castroist circles regarding the premature creation of guerrilla base areas. We might also add now -- on the basis of additional information -- that beyond declarations of principle the Bejar

nucleus did not concern itself with achieving the minimum conditions for establishing ties with the peasants, and that De La Puente and his companions did not take account of certain transformations which had occurred in their area of operation.¹¹ This, very briefly, is my opinion on Peru.

As regards Bolivia, there is no need here to go back over the political errors which were the basis of the defeat of Che's guerrillas. We have discussed them several times, while the same time pointing out -- on the basis of the analyses and perspectives of the Bolivian comrades -- what the conditions were for a victorious outcome of the new wave of armed struggle, which seems clearly inevitable. If we make an assessment now, benefiting from greater hindsight, and taking into account also of other experiences, such as those in Venezuela, it appears still more clearly that a common feature of all these struggles was in fact failing to recognize, or underestimating, the inevitable necessity of not viewing guerrilla warfare in isolation from the movements, the concrete conditions, and the spirit of the masses, even in the earliest and most embryonic stages. Understanding this problem is, of course, not sufficient to solve it -- in the last analysis, what must be done is to create a given relationship of forces at the right time; but such an understanding of the dialectical relationship between armed struggle and the mass movement is a condition sine qua non for avoiding new defeats.

We agree very largely with Comrade Hansen in his evaluation of the implications of Hugo Blanco's experience in the valley of La Convención and the method he used to give impetus to the peasant movement; all the more so because on the base of the orientations expressed by the Peruvian comrades contacted at the time in 1962 (we unfortunately knew very little about Hugo's activity), we had concluded that "it is very likely that it will be in direct connection with the land occupations...that the armed struggle will develop, especially in its first stage." It is correct also to reject the allegations that Blanco acted purely as a "syndicalist," not seeing the perspective of armed struggle.

From an objective standpoint, there is no question that the cause of the unfavorable conclusion of the struggle lay in the fact that the full development of the movement remained limited to the Cuzco region, and that the workers movement in the cities, still under the influence of the traditional organizations, remained passive. It is also unquestionable that the FIR -- decimated, among other things, by repression -- was not able to operate in any way approximating a Leninist party on the national scale, or to

effectively aid the comrades in Cuzco.

There are, however, two other questions which we may be able to come back to in the course of our discussion, let us hope, with the indispensable assistance of Comrade Hugo himself. The first point: In the absence of a party, was the role of political leadership played in practice by the unions, with all the difficulties inevitably flowing from this (and all the more because the unions did not represent a homogeneous reality nationally, or even regionally)? All fetishism of organizational forms must be carefully avoided. After Lenin, it was Trotsky himself who taught us this by his masterly analyses of the 1920s and 1930s. But when a classical instrument for mobilizing the masses and offering them revolutionary leadership is lacking, there is the risk that you may have to pay a very heavy price, all the more so if you are not completely conscious of the dangers inherent in this unfavorable situation. To what extent was our Peruvian movement aware of this at the time?¹² Second point: Did the comrades in La Convención have the perspective that at a given time there might be a wave of repression, that they would have to fight arms in hand, that the militias might no longer be the most adequate instrument, and that the only viable solution, in such a context, would be the action of guerrilla detachments (which, by comparison with other experiences would have had the inestimable advantage of a very profound tie to the peasant masses)? Were they prepared for such an eventuality?

It is quite possible that we are mistaken and that new information will compel us to rectify our opinions. But we have the impression that at least the second question must be answered in the negative and that, therefore, it is in this area also that the causes of the unhappy end to the movement in Cuzco must be sought.

IV. General Guidelines and Concrete Applications

Let us try again to clarify and spell out our conceptions of armed struggle in Latin America at this stage.

Our movement cannot restrict itself to criticizing the reformist orientations of the Communist parties nor to affirming the inevitability of revolutionary struggle for power. If we did do so, that would mean objectively to give lip service to armed struggle -- in the style of classical centrism from Kautsky in 1910 to Rodney Arismendi -- but, in the absence of a concrete application of this principle, renouncing it in practice. In the best of suppositions, I repeat, this would come down to accepting a spontanéist conception of insurrection, a conception which, in fact, can be perceived some-

times in the formulations used in the documents or publications of certain segments of our movement and which is in flagrant contradiction to the revolutionary Marxist conception of insurrection as an art, of the necessity, in a revolutionary or prerevolutionary context, of specifically military activity by a combat party. We are not unaware of the fact that in a context like that of Latin America today adventurist deviations can always occur, above and beyond more or less correct formulations in documents -- we have to keep our eyes open to this danger and fight it without hesitation, if necessary. But above all at the time when we began to spell out our present conceptions on Latin America, that is, in the second half of 1967, the emphasis had to be put on the opposite danger. Despite its being founded by a leader of the October Revolution, the founder of the Red Army, and a man with an extraordinary list of honors for his participation in revolutionary struggles throughout the world, our movement might have given the impression of either being ignorant of the problems of armed struggle, or viewing them in a purely theoretical or propagandistic way to such an extent that even in our own ranks there were comrades wanting to study military problems who drew on other sources, unaware of Leon Trotsky's contribution. This deficiency must be accounted for by the conditions in which we struggled for decades and by a legitimate concern not to encourage a suicidal adventurism, not to impose overwhelming tasks on very small nuclei. But, with the objective situation on our side, it was vitally necessary to make a turn. The world congress document was a contribution in this direction; the documents and decisions of the Bolivian and Argentinian comrades, at bottom, have had the same significance, with the advantage of adding more concreteness to the overall conceptions.¹³

Referring to the last part of my article of last March, Comrade Hansen accuses me of outlining "various forms, trying to put them into a kind of logical order and to assess the chances of their being seen in Latin America in the future. This is a barren exercise in the absence of the political context, particularly the party-building context, of the forms." What we did in our writings -- perhaps without the needed clarity and precision -- was on the one hand, give indications, starting precisely from an analysis of the specific and concrete situations; on the other, to review briefly the categories of armed struggle that could possibly be determined on the basis not of an abstract logic but of the real experience of the revolutionary struggles which have thus far marked the transition from capitalism to socialism. The concept of armed struggle is not synonymous with an insurrection of the masses who generate

armed detachments from within their ranks. When the class struggle reaches the level of an armed confrontation, such an insurrection can, in fact, take place; but the result may also be a civil war with real armies occupying different regions of the country locked in conflict. "There is finally," we wrote, "a third variant which occurs when the class struggle has already reached the level of armed confrontation but not yet the generalized form of a civil war. This is the variant of guerrilla warfare which, as we have seen, can assume very different concrete forms." It is perfectly legitimate to ask whether these categories can be applied in the present Latin-American context and in what forms. In principle, we cannot exclude totally new variants. For my part, I am ready to examine any suggestion on the question with the greatest interest.

The most favorable variant would unquestionably be the one "of an explosive crisis involving the breaking up or paralysis of the state apparatus and a mass mobilization so impetuous that it could prevent or neutralize recourse to repression as a decisive measure" (point No. 18 of the congress document). We did not rule out a priori that such an eventuality might occur. However, in order for this to happen not only the native ruling classes but imperialism as well would have to find themselves in a state of collapse and impotence which it would be irresponsible to count on in the immediate or near future. This is why we consider this variant by far the least likely. What is possible is upsurges in the mass movement culminating in broad mobilizations, or political general strikes. But, in the absence of a specific orientation for armed struggle and the necessary instrument to lead it (and only spontanéists could conceive of its emerging out of the struggle itself), such mobilizations would be subject to police or military repression, or to decline and exhaustion. The last fifteen years in the history of a country like Argentina are very instructive in this respect.

In his initial contribution, Comrade Hansen mistakenly judged that the document on Latin America stood in contradiction to the considerations set forth in the one on the world situation (first part, last paragraph). It is clear that the allusion to drawing much closer to "the Leninist norm of proletarian revolutions" refers primarily to the industrialized capitalist countries. It concerns the neo-colonial countries more indirectly. In any case, reaffirming the primordial role of the industrial working class and its methods of action and organization -- which involves a definitive rejection of all revisionism along the lines of Marcuse, Sweezy, and even Lin Piao -- does not automatically resolve the question of the forms of armed struggle. In

this area, the revolutionary crisis of May 1968 in France has not given us the slightest pointers for the simple reason that this extraordinary mass mobilization halted on the threshold of real struggle for power, which would inevitably have culminated in an armed confrontation.

In speaking of "classical" norms the reference is clearly most of all to the October Revolution. We do not doubt in the least that this "model," in principle, represents the most favorable variant; because the breadth of the mobilization of the workers and peasants produced a very clear situation of dual power, gave rise to the embryonic forms of a new revolutionary democratic state structure, and reduced to a minimum the armed confrontation, which was conducted by detachments arising from the masses and closely linked to the ascending mass movement. But even leaving out the civil war that followed, it must not be forgotten for an instant that two conditions permitted such a development: the bourgeois army had been broken up by the war and the state apparatus more generally was in the midst of crisis; a revolutionary party existed, linked to the masses for fifteen years, which posed the question of armed struggle and the creation of a military apparatus from the start. Applying the schema of October to Latin America today, "forgetting" these two essential elements, would really be a "barren exercise!"

We must start by recognizing that prerevolutionary situations exist in Latin America -- in the context of the worldwide crisis of imperialism -- but that revolutionary parties of mass influence have not arisen. (The Fourth International is better able to explain this than anyone.) At the same time the class struggle has attained the level of armed confrontation while bourgeois armies remain that are not disintegrating and have the advantage of increasingly modern potentialities; as a last resort, the imperialist army can intervene directly (Santo Domingo). This is why the vanguard, the Trotskyist organizations first of all, must at the same time accomplish the tasks of winning or considerably increasing their mass influence and of participating in the armed struggle. We reject the conception of those who think that this contradiction -- which is an objective contradiction -- can be overcome by the determined action of small nuclei, which, by throwing themselves into armed struggle, would automatically create favorable conditions and set off an irreversible dynamic. But neither do we accept the mechanistic -- and, from the methodological standpoint, Menshevik -- idea that the problems of participating in armed struggle will not arise before the relationship of forces is reversed or radically changed on the mass level.

In fact, the masses, in a series of countries at least, are more and more realizing that the only way out in the last analysis is armed struggle. This is shown, for example, in the sympathy that surrounds those who organize armed struggles, even when these are adventurous undertakings. This explains, moreover, why, despite some appearances, the gap is widening between the masses and the bureaucratic apparatuses and why the groups organizing armed commandos are multiplying. In this context, revolutionists adopting forms of armed struggle, linked to mass work and precise political analyses, can accelerate certain process and impel an evolution in the relationship of forces.

All that we have said implies that in its initial stages the armed struggle will develop under conditions unfavorable to the revolutionary forces and that for a period, probably a rather protracted one, the armed struggle will be unable to rise to the level of a mass insurrection or real civil war. The form of armed struggle suited to such a relationship of forces in such a context -- as Lenin and Trotsky indicated -- is precisely guerrilla warfare in its manifold forms.

When Comrade Hansen writes that if certain guidelines of the document on Latin America are accepted, we must draw similar conclusions for "the rest of the colonial and semicolonial world," he raises a real problem. We do not think that it is correct to proceed to generalizations in the abstract and we would not attempt to outline the methods of struggle necessary in South Africa or Thailand by way of analogy, citing some so-called strict logic. But, without regard to our conceptions and our possible deviations, it is a fact that over the last fifty years guerrilla struggle has developed -- in different forms -- in many countries of the world, from China to Nazi-occupied Western Europe, from so-called Portuguese Guinea to Bolivia.

In a whole series of cases, guerrilla warfare was a phenomenon linked to military operations in an armed conflict of much wider dimensions. More generally, on the other hand, this worldwide expansion of guerrilla warfare is only a reflection of the revolutionary character of the historical period in which we are living. But, if we want to explain all this and comprehend the potential tendencies for the future, we must understand above all that this spread of guerrilla warfare throughout the world -- even in genuinely adventurist forms -- is, in the last analysis, the result of the contradictions in this period, of the relations between the forces present.

The concept in the Transitional Program that "the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by

a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat," whose farsightedness can be appreciated today better than at any time in the past, can be specified as follows. In many countries of the world, the old society is in crisis, the ruling classes are split and unable to impose long-term solutions, the masses no longer accept their condition or bourgeois and imperialist domination -- they are demanding a qualitative change. At the same time, despite the spectacular episodes of these years, the relationship of forces within the exploited classes remains unfavorable to revolutionists in the sense that at the mass level the bureaucratic apparatuses retain the dominant influence as well as considerable room for maneuver. This is why, when the class struggle reaches the level of armed confrontation -- which it does most often independently not only of the will of the traditional organizations but also of the concrete decisions of the revolutionists -- this occurs in conditions where the conservative forces have the military advantage. As a result the tendency arises to adopt the method of guerrilla warfare, which, let me repeat once more, is the most suitable form of armed struggle in the given context.

In Latin America, as long as there is no radical change in the relationship of forces within the working class and peasantry, the alternative of avoiding armed struggle does not exist in practice, because, regardless of our strategic or tactical choices, the stage of armed confrontations has already opened and the question of armed struggle is posed periodically, even in countries which have experienced or will experience "democratic" interludes or non-violent class struggles and in spite of any temporary defeats.

Rejecting all one-sided interpretations or caricatures of our conception, we reaffirm here that the stress put on rural guerrilla warfare had a very precise meaning that did not imply any concession to revisionist ideas, or to foquista illusions, and this stress went hand in hand with the understanding "there will inevitably be a whole gamut of variants and that the different factors at work will combine in different forms according to the different countries and conjunctural situations" (point No. 17). We also envisaged the possibility of essentially urban guerrilla warfare and armed struggle. (In this, Comrade Hansen would certainly admit that we are not exactly under Cuban influence.)

It is necessary to stop a minute on the case of Uruguay. In this country, from an objective standpoint, the possibility of a struggle for power along the lines of the "classical" variant has, in

fact, existed. The upswing of the mass movement, especially in mid-1968, was so great that the masses mobilized almost unanimously against the regime. Moreover, for historical reasons, the regular armed forces at the time were so small and so inadequate to the needs of a civil war that they would not have been an insurmountable obstacle. What was lacking, however, was a strategy for taking power, a strategy of armed struggle developed in advance, concrete instruments for such a struggle prepared in advance. This deficiency was the result of the hold of the reformists over the proletariat. As a result, the full potentialities of the situation were not exploited and urban guerrilla warfare appeared to broad layers of vanguard as the only valid form of struggle.¹⁴ The Tupamaros, who are the protagonists in this struggle, enjoy very extensive sympathy and support. From this standpoint, it cannot be claimed that they are cut off from the masses. They cannot be criticized either, as some have done, for conducting a fundamentally urban struggle, given the structure of Uruguay. Their weaknesses lie, in our opinion, in the lack of a clear political perspective of struggle for power. This makes them appear much more like militants who punish the exploiters and oppressors for their crimes than a real alternative leadership.

The developments subsequent to the world congress make it possible to get a better idea of the perspectives for countries like Brazil and Argentina. Practice has shown that the armed struggle can begin with forms of urban guerrilla warfare (without thereby excluding the necessity at a later stage for a more comprehensive strategy which must include, above all in Brazil, armed struggle in the rural areas). The mobilizations in Córdoba and Rosario more particularly have shown on the one hand the validity of the analysis that the stage of prostration of the workers movement had been surmounted and on the other that the question of armed struggle could arise concretely on the mass level. It is regrettable that certain Argentinian comrades did not understand this and have continued to pose the problem of beginning the struggle in the same terms as in 1967. This is wrong in several respects, and has led them to adopt adventurist resolutions.¹⁵

The development of a line for Chile has thus far presented very grave difficulties, which is reflected, among other things, in the oscillations and internal crises of the MIR. But after Allende's success, a situation has been produced that makes it possible to put the question of a struggle for power before the masses who have mobilized and are not ready to let themselves be robbed of the victory they won in the elections without fighting back. Both before and after September

4, the documents of the Chilean comrades have correctly viewed the problem of armed struggle and arming the proletariat in connection with mobilizing against any reactionary attempt to crush the rising mass movement. In reality, if the Chilean revolutionists were able to establish an even partially favorable relationship of forces vis-à-vis the Communist and Socialist parties, they would have to put their trust in such an orientation with the perspective of a rather rapid passage to a real insurrection. Unfortunately the actual situation -- which is the result of the evolution of the workers movement for forty years -- does not permit us to entertain any excessive optimism. The alternative, then, is shaping up in the following terms. Either the bourgeoisie will choose to risk a reformist operation, accepting a new version of the popular front (in this case the perspective of an armed confrontation would be postponed for a certain time) or it will seek a showdown, because the response of the dominant organizations will not be adequate to head off a repressive regime -- and then the problem of armed struggle will be posed in forms similar to those in other Latin-American countries. It goes without saying, that in any case, by a flexible orientation free from sectarianism, our comrades can promote an understanding on the mass level of the necessity of a revolutionary outcome through armed struggle.

We will not go back over what we have already said on the need for a comprehensive and well-hinged strategy for a country like Bolivia, where the armed struggle may take different concrete forms from its first stage. We will not go back either over what our Bolivian comrades have written on the necessity of exploiting the situation created a year ago by the Ovando coup. (It should be said in passing that the situation may change again in the near future, since the credit of the Ovando regime is becoming more and more eroded.) We are not, moreover, in a position to evaluate the episodes which marked the resumption of the struggle by the ELN. I would stress the fact, however, that, far from declining, sympathy for the guerrillas has increased and it is symptomatic that leaders of the student movement have publicly associated themselves with the fighters. This says a great deal about the possibilities for close links between the masses and a guerrilla movement capable of avoiding all adventurism and sectarianism and basing itself from the outset on a correct orientation.

It is not our task here to outline specific indications for every country in Latin America. The sections there have been the ones to do this and will continue

to do so. The next world congress will, if necessary, be able to aid them in this task. We are perfectly aware that overall conceptions and general rules are not enough. They are, in the last analysis, only a precondition; the real difficulties begin when you have to evaluate the relationship of forces minutely, discover the weakest link in the enemy's armor, establish your timing, determine the minimum forces for undertaking a given

action, etc. But what we wanted to do here was to further clarify the real significance of an orientation and a method which was approved by the last congress and which cannot be abandoned without very grave consequences for our movement in such an explosive region of the world.

September 30, 1970

FOOTNOTES

1. During the summer of 1967 -- the period of the OIAS conference -- we were convinced that on his essential appreciation of the conclusions of that conference we had no differences with Comrade Hansen, whose article analyzing the conference was republished without reservation by the organs of the International and several of its sections.

2. Cf. our articles published in Quatrième Internationale of November 1968 and Intercontinental Press of December 8, 1967 and September 2, 1968.

3. Comrade Hansen reproaches us with being more Cuban than the Cubans and adopting a guerrilla warfare course at the very moment when the Fidelistas are taking a "pause for reflection." If that were true, it would in any case show that we are capable of thinking independently. But unfortunately in this case also Comrade Hansen takes liberties with the dates.

4. In his document Hansen presents Moreno in a very favorable light, writing: "Our first big advance came in Peru through the work of Hugo Blanco, carried out with the active participation of Argentine comrades like Daniel Pereyra and Eduardo Creus under the leadership of Comrade Nahuel Moreno." A stage in the life of our Peruvian movement, on which the opinions of the participants are, to say the least, divided, is presented in a grossly oversimplified way. Furthermore, it is not our movement's style to use expressions like "under the leadership of Comrade Nahuel Moreno," which should be avoided even if they had any correspondence with the reality.

5. It is regrettable that in a publication by three Argentine comrades (El Unico Camino Hasta el Poder Obrero y el Socialismo), the idea is slipped in that Engels' preface contributed to the degeneration of the German Social Democracy. This is a totally unacceptable judgment.

6. "In principle, we have never renounced and can never renounce terrorism." (in an article in Iskra, No. 4, May 1901.)

7. It is impossible for me to cite Lenin

in the different translations and making bibliographic references would burden the text. I am translating [into French] from the Italian edition of the complete works. [The text in the standard English edition of the complete works is given where the author provides sufficient reference to find it. -- Translator.]

8. In 1917 Lenin scored those Bolsheviks who forgot that the military question had become the essential political question and who "expect that a wave will topple Kerensky....Such a naïve hope would be the same thing as trusting to 'luck.' In the party of the revolutionary proletariat such an attitude can become a crime."

9. Cf. above all the following articles: "Guerrilla Warfare," "The Political Strike and the Street Fighting in Moscow," and "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising."

10. We apologize for quoting ourselves again, but the record must be clear.

11. Some persons have stressed the gaps in the MIR's analysis of Peruvian society. We don't think that this played a very important role in practice. In regard to Bejar's position on the party, see our article of last March 15.

12. I presume to raise this question, among others, because in a letter by Comrade Blanco (January 1964) one reads: "Today I have the impression that there must be a single centralized apparatus embracing all the aspects of the open struggle and that apparatus will depend on the only mass revolutionary party sui generis that exists in our country -- the peasant unions." (In the letter of April 7, 1964, published in Quatrième Internationale, Vol. 23, No. 24, the question is posed in different terms.)

13. As regards Argentina, I consider that the little book El Unico Camino, written by three Argentinian comrades, made a valid contribution in several respects. It goes without saying that we do not accept their impressionist, confused, and outright false generalizations on Trotskyism, Castroism, and Maoism, which,

however, were part of the stock and trade of the PRT -- including Comrade Moreno -- before the 1968 split.

14. The interpretation that the Tupamaros had their greatest expansion with the peak of the mass movement and began to decline after the downturn does not correspond to the reality and it reflects a mechanistic method of analysis. (Cf. the article from La Verdad, republished by

Intercontinental Press, September 21, 1970.)

15. The elements that have changed with respect to 1967 -- in different directions -- are notably the social situation in certain regions of the country, the situation among the urban working class, the organizational situation of our section, and last but not least, the situation in Bolivia.

THE STRATEGIC ORIENTATION OF THE REVOLUTIONISTS IN LATIN AMERICA

by Ernest Germain and Martine Knoeller

The discussion on the strategic orientation for Latin America that has been taking place in the ranks of the international Trotskyist movement since before the last world congress and that is still continuing fits into the framework of a broad debate of like character developing throughout the entire anti-imperialist vanguard of the continent. This is an essential preliminary point to be borne in mind that immediately clarifies one vital fact. This debate is not the result of any revolutionary group accommodating to "pressure" from some "mystical" sect that lacks political experience on behalf of some "surefire solution." It is rather an outgrowth of the practical, living experience of all revolutionists and all mass struggles over the past ten to twelve years on this continent.

This experience can be summed up in a few words. Whatever the different starting points of the mass movements in the various countries of Latin America, everywhere they have come to the same conclusion--that is, all forms of struggle that revolutionists have attempted, in close liaison with the masses or in isolation from them, have culminated in armed confrontations with local or international reaction, or both at once, from the moment they began to show the slightest serious progress.

Whether it was militant peasant unionism (Hugo Blanco); militant working-class unionism (Córdoba, Rosario); whether it was mass urban uprisings (Santo Domingo) or mass rural uprisings (recently in Ecuador); whether it was urban guerrilla warfare (Uruguay, Brazil) or rural guerrilla warfare (Peru, Colombia); the armed confrontation with the state, imperialism or a direct representative of imperialism (like the counterinsurgency groups or Rangers), did not occur at the conclusion of a long period of building up forces by a gradual advance of mass mobilizations. In every case, this confrontation came in the initial stage of the ripening of each potentially revolutionary form of struggle.

The reasons for this state of things does not lie either in the relative weakness of the mass movement, as some claim; or in the "premature" adoption of violent forms of action by this movement, as others claim. It lies in a complex combination of several factors:

(a) The hyperacute and explosive nature of the social contradictions, which make it impossible to channel the militant thrusts of the masses into reformist paths.

(b) The assimilation by the masses

of the principal lessons of the Cuban Revolution, notably a loss of confidence in the traditional bourgeois and petty-bourgeois formations and an accentuated hostility toward imperialism.

(c) The assimilation by imperialism and by the Latin-American bourgeoisie of the principal lesson of the Cuban Revolution, that is, the tendency of any vast mass movement to exceed the limits of its initial objectives and enter into a process of permanent revolution.

(d) The capacity of the masses for rapid recovery, even after grave defeats, precisely because of the inability of the ruling classes to achieve real solutions, even temporarily, for the ills the people suffer. (Two striking examples of this are the revival of the Brazilian movement in 1968 in vast mass demonstrations and strike mobilizations, despite the crushing defeat suffered in 1964; and the recovery of the Bolivian mass movement in 1969, despite the no less crushing defeat it suffered in 1964, which was, proportionately speaking, bloodier and more grave than the Brazilian one.)

(e) The considerable strength retained by the bourgeois repressive apparatus (constantly fueled, financed, and reinforced by imperialism itself). The strength of this apparatus stands in clear contradiction to the weakness and decay of the traditional bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political apparatuses (Peronism, Vargasism, Goulart populism, the AD in Venezuela, and APRA in Peru). The result of this is that the bourgeois army is becoming the bourgeoisie's principal political force in all the Latin-American countries.

We by no means draw the conclusion from this that imperialism and the bourgeoisie can no longer govern except under the hideous mask of "gorillas." To the contrary, we have explicitly warned the comrades against such a simplistic view of things at the Ninth World Congress.¹ But we do draw the conclusion that whatever the vicissitudes or maneuvers of the bourgeois, one variant seems extremely improbable, if not excluded; that is the one of a rather protracted period of 'bourgeois democracy' on the European or American model (with all the limitations of such democracy, it goes without saying) that would permit the increasing growth of the mass movement thereby permitting revolutionists to achieve a progressive buildup of strength through slow and patient work in the unions or other mass organizations, thus making it possible to postpone a major armed confrontation

until the revolutionary organization and mass movement have achieved sufficient experience and maturity to undertake this struggle in the best possible conditions.

The possibility of such a development seems excluded, in our opinion, because the bourgeoisie wants to prevent it at all cost and because it still has enough power to prevent it.

Let us take the exceptional and only case in Latin America over the last decade where the workers movement has been able to develop and grow in conditions of more or less classical "bourgeois democracy"--Chile. What do we see the moment Allende has won his celebrated electoral victory? The entire vanguard is talking about the possibility of an armed confrontation with the bourgeoisie. No one seriously believes that it would be possible to "purge" or dismantle the bourgeois military apparatus, to say nothing of overthrowing capitalism in Chile, without the army acting.

The eventuality of going through an "Allende era" without an armed confrontation would be the worst of possibilities. It would mean a terrible defeat for the workers movement; that is, with Allende limiting himself to a "classical" popular-front policy, not modifying the capitalist structures of the economy and the state in any way, with the masses accepting this deception and betrayal without a violent reaction, and with the right returning triumphantly to power on the basis of a general decline in combativity, on the basis of a great demoralization.

If we rule out this highly pessimistic hypothesis, armed confrontation is on the order of the day in the relatively near future even in Chile. And, we repeat, everyone is talking about it. Because under this variant, the masses, more and more outraged and exasperated by the hesitations, cowardice, and inevitable capitulations of the popular front to the class enemy will themselves move into extra-parliamentary action over Allende's head. And in that case, a violent reaction by the possessing classes and their army is not only possible but probable. (The only countries where such a confrontation is not on the order of the day obviously are those where the mass movement has been disorganized and on a very low level for long years, as in Mexico; that is, in those countries where there are no reasons to impel the bourgeois into such a conflict. But even in Mexico, all that was needed was the first timid efforts of an explosive student movement to influence sectors of the working class and poor peasantry and the government proceeded to stage the massacre of Tlatelolco.)

As long as the five factors mentioned above remain valid (and in this specific

combination, they are valid for the moment only in Latin America and a few countries of Southeast Asia), the important and intensely fought major armed confrontations will occur from the beginning and not in the culminating phase of every major resurgence of mass struggles. This is the lesson of experience. It is by no means contradicted by the establishment of "military-reformist" regimes in a certain number of Latin-American countries. To the contrary, the installation of such regimes completely confirms this lesson, which we are considering precisely in isolation from the specific form of the bourgeois governments in Latin America (with the sole partial exception of Chile, where the formal structure of bourgeois democracy has thus far been maintained). The regime of General Velasco has not had to suppress broad mass movements, not because he has tolerated them, or been forced to tolerate them by "mass pressure," but because none have yet developed. The limited movements that have occurred, notably a few spontaneous land occupations and hard-fought strikes have all encountered fierce repression which has claimed many lives. As for Bolivia, the first sign of a new rise in mass struggles provoked a coup d'etat followed by a bloody armed confrontation. Those who think that because he came to power "with the support of the left" General Torres will prove more "tolerant" have a few disagreeable surprises in store for them, as soon as he has restored the unity of the army, which is his primary aim.

We can regret that these things are so. We can say that this is not the best variant for the Latin-American revolution. But, nonetheless, it is the only realistic one. It will occur in any case, whether the revolutionists are prepared for it or not. Since the Cuban Revolution the Latin-American revolutionists have increasingly preferred to prepare for the armed confrontation instead of having to face it unprepared. We frankly believe that they are right. To state this, explain it, and draw the general conclusions from it was the fundamental function of the document presented by the majority of the United Secretariat to the Ninth World Congress and which was adopted by this congress.

The Influence of the Cuban Revolution on the Strategic Orientation of the Latin-American Revolutionists

When Comrade Joe Hansen referred in his last discussion document to the preponderant influence exercised by the Cuban Revolution for ten years on the thought and action of the Latin-American revolutionists, he got entangled in a strange and significant contradiction. On the one hand, he proclaims as an absolute dogma that guerrilla warfare is

not a strategy but a tactic. On the other hand, he states that the principal lesson the young revolutionary vanguard in Latin America drew from the Cuban experience was to engage in guerrilla warfare in its most primitive form--"foquismo"--and that the majority of the Fourth International is now succumbing to the same sin, at the very moment when the Cuban comrades themselves are in the process of correcting their errors. "These revolutionary-minded youth" (in Latin America), he writes, "did not understand the basic political reasons for the Cuban success; they sought for the explanation on the side of skillful technique in the use of arms."

If the Cuban experience essentially meant "foquismo," if guerrilla warfare is a tactical question, how did it happen that for ten years the entire revolutionary vanguard in Latin America crystallized around debates and passionate struggles centering on the Cuban experience? A few tendencies can always get disoriented. Still very small, the Fourth International could succumb to "the influence of ultraleftism." But for the entire revolutionary movement in Latin America (we repeat, the entire movement with only a few thoroughly minor and insignificant exceptions) to let its mind be clouded for more than ten years by a purely tactical problem--that would really be an inexplicable mystery. And Comrade Hansen does not resolve it with a few passing references to "inexperienced youth."

The mystery is very easily solved, because it exists only in the rather unreal construction of our friend Joe Hansen. The reality is much more complex. The revolutionists who let themselves be hypnotized by the question of "foquismo" and the purely tactical aspect of guerrilla warfare did not constitute all the revolutionary movement in Latin America but only a small minority. Of course among this minority were some of the most courageous elements that the Latin-American revolution has yet produced. The losses they suffered because of their tactical errors were heavy and painful. But the principal debate, the one which caught up almost all the revolutionary movement in Latin America, was not over a tactical question but over a strategic one. The essential contribution of the Cuban revolution to crystallizing and reinforcing the revolutionary current in Latin America was not involved with "foquismo" (which only Régis Debray really systematized) but with the question of which orientation to follow--one toward taking power through armed struggle; or a reformist one toward collaborating with the "national" bourgeoisie and its army (or a fraction of its army)?

The fundamental cleavage the Cuban revolution introduced into the anti-imperialist movement was the result of

this strategic alternative. It was on this ground that the Cuban Revolution challenged and combated thirty years of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist verbiage about an "alliance of progressives," the "electoral road to power," the "democratic tradition of our army," and so forth. It is because this question is a strategic one and not a tactical one that the debate has been so impassioned, the cleavage so profound, the crystallization so long drawn out. Otherwise, all that has occurred in the Latin-American left since 1959 would become incomprehensible indeed. Even the October Revolution, whose historic impact is unquestionably greater, was not able to provoke cleavages in the workers movement for ten years over purely tactical questions (such as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly; the Brest-Litovsk peace, etc.). On the other hand, it produced cleavages on strategic issues (on the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, soviet democracy or bourgeois parliamentary democracy) which still persist, and for good reason!

Let it be said, moreover, in passing that the nature of this cleavage reflected the nature of the Cuban experience itself and that it is a complete distortion to say, as Régis Debray and a few others have done, that Fidel and Che overthrew the Batista regime starting from some isolated "foco." In reality, the July 26 Movement was an organization that developed out of the left wing of a mass anti-imperialist movement in both the cities and the countryside, that even before the landing of the Granma had a political and material infrastructure in the cities much more solid than anything possessed today by any revolutionary vanguard organization in Latin America, and that in conditions of extreme clandestinity, under a ferocious dictatorship, tried to establish a close liaison with the mass movement. It should be added to this that up until the end of the struggle against Batista the July 26 organization had a greater number of people fighting and falling victim to repression in the cities than in the Sierra Maestra. Moreover, the general strike of January 1, 1959, played a key role in unleashing the process of permanent revolution.

These facts do not have a purely anecdotal value. They enable us to illustrate another contradiction in Comrade Hansen's document. He puts great stress on the heavy losses and disastrous defeats resulting from the guerrilla struggle in Latin America over the last ten years. What, then, is the mysterious reason why so many revolutionists and revolutionary groups in Latin America remain partisans of armed struggle, despite these losses? Is this out of a pure death wish or blind romanticism? Still, grave losses usually force mili-

tants to react, even those most set in their ways. Two years after the 1933 defeat in Germany neither the Communist nor the Socialist party dared repeat the policy that led to the disaster. Isn't ten years time in Latin America enough for people to draw the minimum lessons from catastrophic errors?

Here again the mystery clears up as soon as you leave the arbitrary construction erected by Comrade Hansen (i.e. "for or against foquismo") and rejoin the real and actual debate of the Latin-American vanguard ("for or against the strategy of armed struggle"). As soon as you look at the problem in this way, the reason why the Latin-American revolutionists persist, and why they are right to do so, becomes plain. They have acquired the conviction by experience that the losses suffered owing to hesitations or refusal to engage on the road of armed struggle have been, are, and will be infinitely greater than the losses of the guerrillas, given the nature of the political systems that prevail and must prevail in Latin America.

Compare the losses in guerrillas with the number killed in the massacres of unarmed worker and peasant populations in countries like Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil, and you will understand why these losses do not alarm any of the revolutionists.

We had the same experience during the Nazi occupation. When a certain level of ferocity on the part of the enemy is reached, revolutionists (including, if possible, broader groups and masses) take up arms as a measure of self-defense, even in the physical sense of the term. There were more survivors among the Yugoslav, Polish, and Russian partisans than among the unarmed sectors of the civil population exposed to the Nazi mass arrests (and we are not including the Jews exposed to total extermination). Many more of the armed partisans in all the countries occupied by the Nazis survived than the Communist, Trotskyist, Socialist, and trade-union leaders who let themselves be deported to concentration camps. Many more of the Vietnamese Communists who have been fighting arms in hand for twenty-five years have survived than of the Indonesian Communists who refused to engage in such a struggle. This is the historic dilemma confronting the revolutionists in many Latin-American countries.

Once you understand the great strategic debate that the Cuban Revolution launched in the Latin-American revolutionary movement in such terms, you have reason to evince much greater concern than Comrade Hansen does over the revision of strategy that is underway on the part of the Cuban leaders. If it were all a question of tactics it would obviously be

an excellent thing to stop disseminating hundreds of thousands of copies of the "terrible simplifications" of the hapless Régis Debray. But, unfortunately for Comrade Hansen, much more is at stake than a simple change in tactics. The question is whether under the combined effect of the failures of "foquismo," Soviet pressure, and the evolution within their own country, the Cuban leaders are not abandoning their strategic orientation toward overthrowing the bourgeois state in Latin America, which is the orientation of the "Second Declaration of Havana," of the permanent revolution. The question is whether they are abandoning their most important strategic advance to return to a neoreformist and neo-Stalinist variant of revolution by stages--first the "anti-imperialist revolution" in which socialists are supposed to give more or less critical support to a still intact bourgeois state and army (or their "progressive wing"); then a properly socialist stage.

The great majority of Latin-American revolutionists have recognized this danger, beginning with Hugo Blanco, who emphasized it in excellent terms that we entirely approve of. Once again the fundamental explanation is not to be sought in the realm of psychology (a previous embellishment of the Cuban line now producing an abrupt rebound, and so forth). It lies in the political logic. Any refusal to envisage armed confrontations in the near or relatively near future in Latin America can mean only one of two things--either abandonment of all perspective for revolutionary transformation; or a return to the illusion that this transformation will be miraculously possible with the aid or benevolent neutrality of the bourgeois army (or a part of it). There is no need to say that much more than the death of Che or this or that guerrilla defeat in this or that country, it is the practical experience of the Velasco regime in Peru, the Ovando-Tórres regime in Bolivia, and the election of Allende in Chile that is encouraging the return to these neo-Stalinist conceptions. There is no need to point out, either, that Moscow's international apparatus, which does not lack resources, is exerting every means to promote such a regression and not without success, unfortunately, in Havana also. Let us hope that there at least these successes will be strictly ephemeral, and let us work toward this end with all our strength. This is an essential contribution we must make to the defense of the Cuban Revolution.

Comrade Hansen is wrong when he suggests that the majority of the Ninth World Congress based its orientation on the contingency that the Cubans would continue to support guerrilla warfare in Latin America. We do not think that the destiny of the Latin-American revolution

depends on the orientation of the Cuban leadership. We think, to the contrary, that the rise and new victories of the Latin-American revolution will determine the destiny of Cuba (and subsidiary to this we think that they will profoundly influence the orientation of Fidel Castro). It is in this sense that our strategy of armed struggle in Latin America is an integral part of our defense of the Cuban Revolution.

The Historical Variants of Armed Struggle

In order to define more precisely the character of the strategic debate now underway in Latin America--and on Latin America within our movement--let us examine the principal variants of revolutionary struggle growing over into armed struggle that we have seen thus far in the history of the workers movement. (We are obviously leaving the minor variants out of the discussion.)

1. There is the variant that can be called classical--the mass movement undergoes a rapid expansion (after a long period of building up strength and experience) and goes over into arming the proletariat and confronting the bourgeois army at the moment when the revolutionary crisis reaches its fullest flowering, that is simultaneously with a general mass mobilization and emergence on a wide scale of organs of dual power. This is what happened, *grosso modo*, in Russia in 1917, in Germany in 1918-19, in Spain in 1936, in Vietnam in 1945-46, to pick the most well-known examples. Such a confrontation can occur at the outset of the revolutionary crisis, which happened in Spain and Vietnam; or only when the revolutionary crisis itself nears its culmination, which was the case in Russia. We will come back to the significance of this subvariant.

2. There is the variant that could be called "ultraleft"--a revolutionary party, already strong but clearly a minority, provokes a premature confrontation between its forces, in isolation, and the enemy army. The struggle invariably ends in defeat, a useless defeat. This is the case of the 1921 "March Action" in Germany by the young German CP; it was the case of the 1927 Canton putsch unleashed by the Chinese CP, and so forth.

3. There is a variant intermediate between the first and second, that is the case of an armed confrontation with the enemy which results from the advance and maturing of the mass struggle itself before the revolutionary party has won sufficient national influence to be able to defeat the bourgeois state. This was the case of the Paris Commune, the December 1905 insurrection in Russia, the armed struggles resulting from the general strike against General Kapp's

1920 putsch in Germany, and the Asturias insurrection in 1934. The outcome of such struggles is uncertain. Although they generally end in a defeat, such defeat is not inevitable. Above all, it is not useless because it enables the masses and the revolutionists to acquire the practical experience indispensable for a victorious insurrection in the future. This, in any case, was Lenin and Trotsky's opinion on the December 1905 insurrection in Russia. (In the chapter on "The Art of Insurrection" in Volume II of the History of the Russian Revolution, Trotsky explains that the Red Guard could be formed so easily in Petrograd at the time of the February 1917 revolution because the proletariat of the city had retained the tradition of the armed struggles in 1905.) We, for our part, are convinced that the Spanish workers would never have broken the assault of the fascists in almost all the big cities of the country in July 1936 if they had not gone through the experience of the 1934 insurrection and several minor armed uprisings between 1931 and 1936.

4. There is finally the instance of autonomous armed detachments of the mass movement which launch a struggle for one of the following reasons: to extend the fight being waged by the mass movement, with the aim of forcing the counterrevolutionary army to disperse its forces and relax its pressure on the centers of working-class agitation; to facilitate resumption of the mass struggle after a grave but not definitive defeat. (A subvariant is that of a rise of peasant insurrections coming as a delayed response to a working-class upsurge in the cities, after it has been defeated. This, in general, was the case of the Chinese guerrilla struggle after 1928. The aim of saving the cadres persecuted in the cities can play an important part in rapidly unleashing such a fight.) The guerrilla war in Russia in 1906, in China after 1928, in Yugoslavia under the Nazi occupation, and in Vietnam after the start of the imperialist reconquest all fall under this category.

Why this classification? Because it enables us to narrow the debate. We will not insult Comrade Hansen by claiming that he is opposed to the first category of armed struggle. No doubt he will not insult us by claiming that, turning our backs on all the experience of the international communist movement, we are deliberately seeking to provoke putsches. The debate is thus focused on the problems of the third and fourth category of armed struggle.

Now, we must highlight an extremely important distinction between the different cases that fall under the first category. Why were the Bolsheviks able to

avoid (and were a thousand times right to do so) a full and deliberate armed confrontation with the bourgeois army at the time of the February Revolution? Why could such a confrontation not be avoided in Germany or Spain? Was it owing exclusively or principally to the presence of the Bolshevik party in Russia and its absence in Germany and Spain? Frankly, we do not think so. We think so still less because in February and March 1917 the Bolshevik party was not the party of Lenin or of Lenin and Trotsky but the party of Stalin-Kamenev-Molotov, with a policy not fundamentally different from that of the German Independents in November-December 1918 to January 1919.

The reason for the difference between the Russian and German and Spanish cases seems to us to be an objective one. In Russia, the army had been broken up to such a degree by an external factor prior to the revolutionary process-- the world war-- and was moreover so rent by internal social contradictions (between landlord officers and land-hungry peasants), that it had virtually ceased being an adequate counterrevolutionary instrument. In fact, it never became such an instrument. After the conquest of power by the Bolsheviks, the counterrevolutionary officers had to recreate a new army from scratch in order to be able to unleash the civil war. This was, moreover, one of the reasons for their final defeat.

In Spain, the situation presented itself in a totally different way. There had been no war with a foreign power. The army was materially intact. It was shot through with unquestionable political and social contradictions, which a revolutionary party of the stature of the Bolshevik party would certainly have exploited, widened, and made more explosive by tenacious work among the soldiers; but it is extremely improbable that even the best revolutionary policy could have kept the reactionary officer corps, gathering around it the most politically primitive and backward section of the population, from constituting a counter-revolutionary striking force that would have acted as soon as the mass movement reached a certain level of revolutionary initiative.

What is the reason for this capacity for action on the part of the bourgeois army in the first phase of the revolutionary process? It derives from the uneven development of the revolutionary process, from the uneven development of consciousness in the various segments of the population, from the uneven development of the break up of capitalist society and the bourgeois state.

It is normal and virtually inevitable that the conscious industrial proletariat, the vanguard of the agri-

cultural and plantation proletariat, and the vanguard of the poor landless peasantry will reach the level of revolutionary initiative, going over into revolutionary action and constituting soviets, well before the working population of petty-bourgeois origin and the strata of workers still influenced by reactionary political formations begin to break with bourgeois society. A revolutionary party enjoying great political authority can seek, by its action, to reduce this uneven development; it cannot eliminate it. If the party tries to eliminate this unevenness by deliberately curbing the enthusiasm of the most revolutionary strata it risks producing the opposite result. Not only because the most advanced strata may become demoralized and withdraw from the struggle, but because the essential element for convincing or neutralizing the hesitant strata may disappear, this element being less the propaganda of the party or the soviets than the resolute action of the proletariat.

Save in exceptional cases, which a revolutionary party cannot count on without risking falling victim to disastrous illusions, it is unlikely that a revolutionary situation will coincide with a breakup of the army. Furthermore, the start of disintegration in the armed forces, coinciding with a general mobilization of the masses, will certainly provoke a move by the army. The military chiefs will feel that if they let the revolutionary process proceed a few weeks more, the ground might sink under their feet. One of the factors which no doubt precipitated the military coup d'etat in Brazil in 1964 was precisely the "mad sergeants' " mutiny, which indicated that the seed of dissolution was beginning to take root in the army.

Once we have understood this uneven process of the decay of bourgeois society, of which the army clearly remains one of the last intact "hard kernels," once we have understood this uneven process of the revolutionary mass mobilization which clearly leaves a backward layer of the population as a base for the army, even when the majority of the proletariat is already engaged on the road of revolutionary struggle, then, we understand that there is no Chinese wall between armed struggles of category number 1 and categories number 3 and number 4. And we also understand that the more the industrial and agricultural proletariat is in a minority in the nation--that is, the more backward the country--the more this relative weakness coincides with an extreme explosiveness of the objective situation, with a potentially revolutionary lightning mobilization of the masses, then, the more virtually inevitable is the intervention of the army in

the first phases of a broad mobilization, if only for the purposes of self-defense and self-preservation of the officer corps.

We have taken a long historical detour to return to the initial strategic conclusion concerning Latin America. Let us reinforce this conclusion by two clarifications on armed struggle, in the light of the general experience of the workers movement.

Can the struggle of armed detachments autonomous from the mass movement be equated with putschism or with terrorism? It would be strange, to say the least, if Lenin, who had struggled his entire life against putschism and populist terrorism should suddenly become an advocate of such methods in 1906 and maintain this position until the end of his days. What characterizes putschism is the attempt to win power--or sometimes to bring a radical reversal in the political situation of a country--by means of the violent armed action of a small minority. We reject this conception and everything that flows from it, just as Lenin and Trotsky always rejected it. For us the conquest of power is inconceivable without action by the broad masses--the emancipation of the workers will be the deed of the workers themselves.

But this by no means implies that we reject all violent armed action by autonomous detachments separate from a broad mass movement in every situation and for no matter what immediate tactical objectives. The theses "The Fourth International and the War," which Trotsky drew up in 1934, explicitly anticipated the need for such actions in defense of the USSR, in the event of an imperialist aggression against the first workers state. The experience of the second world war showed that such actions were possible and useful and by no means conflicted with the task--a more protracted one--of reorganizing and reviving the mass movement defeated by fascism.

In the struggle against rising fascism, exemplary actions by autonomous armed detachments may be useful and indispensable to convince the masses that such a struggle is possible--before the masses themselves enter into it. This was confirmed both by the German experience (negatively) and by the Austrian (positively)--the Schutzbund uprising in Vienna in February 1934 was an insurrection by a small minority, but neither Trotsky nor the Trotskyist movement would for an instant have considered condemning it as "putschist"; it was the right-wing Social Democracy that utilized this argument, completely misunderstanding the nature of fascism). It was confirmed above all by the Spanish experience, where the first initiative in fighting back arms in hand against the fascist insurrection did not come from the "broad masses" but from

small detachments of the vanguard of the workers parties and trade-unions, who, by their example drew the broad masses into the struggle later.

While we are resolute opponents of any isolated action incomprehensible to the masses; we are by no means advocates solely of armed actions organized by the masses themselves within the framework of their organizations. This variant is not always possible. In this respect Lenin employed a formula which summed up perfectly the historical experience of his time and the epoch following his death. In periods of a partial ebb of the mass movement in the wake of a defeated mass uprising, as well as in periods of a rising mass movement before the development of a generalized insurrection, actions by autonomous armed detachments are useful and essential to "disorganize the enemy's force and pave the way for future open and mass armed operations...." (Lenin, Werke, Vol. 10, pp. 146-147, Dietz-Verlag 1958, the resolution on "Fighting Guerrilla Operations" prepared for the reunification congress in March 1906 [Collected Works, Vol. 10, p. 153, Foreign Language Publishers, Moscow 1962.]). This is true, however, only if these actions are understood by the masses and correspond to their feelings and concerns.

Let us repeat again, to avoid any misunderstanding, that these considerations apply only to prerevolutionary conditions and in a precise political context (the absence of democratic liberties, the impossibility of a gradual ascent in the mass movement, etc.). There is no question of mechanically extending this reasoning to all countries in the world, least of all the United States, Japan, Great Britain, Germany, etc. In this regard likewise Lenin said all that needed to be said in "Guerrilla Warfare": "Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position." (Oeuvres, Volume 11, Editions Sociales, Paris 1966, p. 216 [Collected Works, Foreign Language Publications, Moscow 1962, p. 214].)

The document adopted by the Ninth World Congress did not establish universal rules, either for all continents or for all time to come in Latin America. It drew a certain number of strategic conclusions from a body of "concrete historical circumstances," for as long as these circumstances last. It is on this basis that we must be answered, not one of proclaiming abstract principles valid at all times and places.

A Polemic Leading Nowhere

In this respect, we are left perplexed by the vigorous polemic against the Ninth World Congress document which Comrade Hansen resumes in his "A Contribution to the Discussion on Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America." There are two possible explanations for this polemic, based on Comrade Hansen's document as well as the discussion article he wrote before the world congress.

1. Comrade Hansen may consider that the majority of the international leadership has abruptly gone over to Debrayist, foquista positions. In this case, he is engaging in a war to defeat the ultraleft phantom of foquismo.

If this is really the case, we can set his mind at rest immediately. Both the Reunification Congress documents and the Eighth World Congress documents, as well as the resolution on Latin America voted by the Ninth World Congress clearly and unequivocally opposed foquismo. There is really no danger of seeing the Fourth International take up the ball dropped by the Fidelista team in advocating "foquismo" in Latin America. The leading cadres of our movement have conducted a systematic polemic against "foquismo" for long years. You need only read Comrade Livio Maitan's article on Régis Debray's book to realize this.

Let us add that an objective reading, without preconceptions, of the Ninth Congress document makes it possible to conclude that it by no means advocates "a strategy of rural guerrilla warfare" (to say nothing of "a strategy of the 'foco guerrillero'"), but the strategy of armed struggle, which is an entirely different thing. To try to give the opposite impression, Comrade Hansen has been forced to single out a single sentence in the document adopted by the Ninth World Congress and polemicize against it instead of analyzing the document as a whole and polemicizing against its general line. The least that can be said is that this is not a very fruitful method of argument and will not advance the movement.

2. The other possibility is that Comrade Hansen considers that by putting "excessive" stress on the strategy of armed struggle, the World Congress document might "inspire" the sections to launch

into premature actions. The heavy way he emphasises the "defeat in Bolivia" seems to support this hypothesis. Therefore, this second one warrants a longer refutation.

The adoption of any strategy, even with the greatest unanimity and lack of dispute, always involves the risk of erroneous tactical applications. No guarantee whatever exists against such errors--and their appearance cannot in any way be considered an argument against the correctness of the strategy. In every period, participating in broad mass movements (and a fortiori in temporary united fronts with reformist organizations) has led some elements to make an opportunistic adaptation to the more backward layers of the masses. This is what is called "tail-endism." Revolutionary Marxists combat such opportunistic adaptations but they hold no less obstinately to the line of participating in mass movements and organizations (above all, the unions), which is a correct strategic line. Only sectarians on the model of the KAPD [Kommunistische Arbeiter Partei Deutschlands -- Communist Workers party of Germany] and Gorter have taken the pretext of the danger of opportunist adaptation to reject struggling inside mass organizations.

The adoption of the strategy of armed struggle in Latin America corresponds to an analysis of the objective conditions and their general tendencies of development, to the concerns and needs of the vanguard. This does not imply that it safeguards the revolutionary Marxist organizations against tactical errors in applying it. But it does imply one thing: as long as the conditions apply which we outlined above, conditions which make armed confrontations inevitable in an early phase of the advance of the mass movement, every revolutionary organization, even relatively small ones, that have passed a minimum threshold of organizational solidity, are condemned to periodic crises if they fail to take a correct position on this question (and by correct position we do not mean a purely literary and propagandistic position but also a minimum of practical application).

To explain the successive crises of the Argentinian organization simply by "Debrayist," or "foquista" pressure means substituting a fundamentally idealist explanation for a materialist one. It means failing to understand that the roots of these crises lie in the irresistible pressure for armed struggle resulting from the objective situation -- the pressure of the masses as much as the vanguard. It means believing that it is "foquista false consciousness" that determines being -- not being, that is the systematic strangling of the liber-

ties of the workers in a climate of explosive contradictions, that determines the consciousness of the necessity of armed struggle.

On this question Comrade Hansen would do well to reflect on Lenin's words devoted to this very subject of guerrilla warfare: "It is not guerrilla actions which disorganise the movement, but the weakness of a party which is incapable of taking such actions under its control. That is why the anathemas which we Russians usually hurl against guerrilla actions go hand in hand with secret, casual, unorganised guerrilla actions which really do disorganise the Party. Being incapable of understanding what historical conditions give rise to this struggle, we are incapable of neutralising its deleterious aspects. Yet the struggle is going on. It is engendered by powerful economic and political causes. It is not in our power to eliminate these causes or to eliminate this struggle. Our complaints against guerrilla warfare are complaints against our Party weakness in the matter of an uprising." (Lenine, Oeuvres, tome 11, Editions Sociales, Paris 1966, p. 221-2 [V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, Foreign Language Publishers, Moscow 1962, p. 219].)

This quotation admirably expresses the problem confronting our movement with regard to guerrilla warfare and armed struggle in Latin America. It ought to convince Comrade Hansen that he is on the wrong road and is leading us to an impasse by his polemic.

If Comrade Hansen's fear were limited only to seeing sections of too small a size engage prematurely in organizing autonomous armed detachments, we would obviously be in complete agreement with him. We are keenly aware that a primitive accumulation of forces must precede the formation of these detachments. Without this there could not be the indispensable coordination between mass work and the work of armed detachments, between paving the way for the mass insurrection and the preliminary "disorganizing the enemy forces." We are determined opponents of the spontanist idea that "the party is built as the armed struggle extends." For the same reason, we are likewise opponents of the no less spontanist idea that "the methods of armed struggle are learned as the mass movement rises to its peak." We are in favor of conscious, that is, planned and far-sighted, intervention by the revolutionary leadership at every stage of the struggle. And this implies the necessity of preparing for armed struggle when you expect it in the next stage.

But all these obvious truths would not justify Comrade Hansen's polemical heat, because they are already incorporated in the Ninth World Congress. What

was and still is necessary is to clarify the position of the Fourth International toward the great strategic debate on the "revolutionary or reformist road" in Latin America. And -- whether Comrade Hansen likes it or not -- this debate is very largely (not entirely but in very large part) expressed in terms of "for or against the armed struggle in the near or relatively near future."

Likewise, in seeking to counterpose party building to the strategy of armed struggle, Comrade Hansen is leading the discussion into a blind alley. In the same way, party building could be counterposed to any strategy, for example participating in mass demonstrations. This is the error Healy and other sectarians make who have reproached the SWP for participating in the antiwar movement, the Black nationalist movement, and the women's liberation movement rather than "building the revolutionary party." The SWP has replied correctly to these infantile objections that there is no other way to build a revolutionary party -- as opposed to a sect or religious-type cult -- than formulating a correct strategy corresponding to the concerns and needs of the masses themselves.

The fact is that the strategy of preparing for armed struggle, in most Latin-American countries, corresponds in precisely this way to the needs and preoccupations of the masses, to all their fighting experience over the last ten years. In these conditions, we will answer Comrade Hansen as the SWP answered Healy, that there is no way to build revolutionary parties in Latin America without adopting a correct position on one of the key strategic questions posed by the vanguard and the masses -- preparation for the armed struggle. Far from being mutually contradictory, party building, propaganda and agitation for transitional demands, and public defense of the strategy of armed struggle are inseparable and complementary in the present conditions in Latin America.

The Function of the Ninth Congress Document

The function of the document adopted by the world congress is precisely to clarify this strategic question. It does not attempt to determine when and in what precise conditions each section must "unleash" armed struggle. That is a question that depends on the circumstances in the various countries, on the development of the objective situation, on the level of consciousness of the masses and the mass struggle, on the preparedness and extent of our own forces, and other such factors. It is, in other words, a purely tactical question and must be left to the judgment of each section (with a minimum of coordination among neighboring

sections, insofar as we take seriously our own postulates about "continent-wide revolution," building a "world party," opposition to "national communism," etc.). Not for a moment did the world congress have the intention of bringing pressure to bear on this or that section to make such decisions. Where they have been made, they have been made by the section and the section alone. (This puts Comrade Hansen, moreover, in the disagreeable position of initiating an international polemic against tactical decisions reserved to the competence of the national sections. You can't have it both ways, Comrade Hansen!)

The world congress document had a different objective -- a strategic and not a tactical one. Its purpose was to define the position of the Fourth International in the great ideological debate that is polarizing the revolutionary vanguard in Latin America. In order to illustrate the meaning of this intervention and its intimate connections with party building and defending transitional demands, we would like to give a few examples drawn from the still fresh experience of the revolutionary movement in Latin America.

During the congress of the miners union in Bolivia and the congress of the COB [Central Obrera Boliviana -- Bolivian Workers Federation] which followed it, there were many discussions on the demands taken from our transitional program -- nationalization without indemnity or compensation (the question of compensating Gulf Oil is at the center of political polarization in Bolivia), reestablishing workers control over the mining industry, etc. Does Comrade Hansen think that after the experience accumulated by the Bolivian miners you can stop at that, and top it off with a fancy governmental formula or even a propaganda campaign for a "socialist revolution?" Thousands of miners and other vanguard Bolivian workers will surely answer: "Dear comrade, completely agree on workers control, eliminating indemnities to Gulf Oil, and the workers-and-peasants-government formula. We would point out, however, that we already partially achieved workers control fifteen years ago. All well and good. But in fighting for your nice program, which we already adopted almost twenty years ago, we ran up increasingly against the army. First it harassed us; then encircled us; then repressed us; and finally massacred us, our wives, and our children. Today it has 'generously' withdrawn fifteen kilometers away from our mining centers, but no further. Are you proposing a mere repetition of what happened in the 1950s? How then can we prevent the massacre of our wives and children? Are you proposing nothing more than building the party? But how can this organization defend itself from intervention by the army, in a year, two years,

three years? Isn't it irresponsible to urge us on the one hand to engage in widening mobilizations and struggles which must inevitably and in very short order provoke a violent clash with the army; and at the same time say nothing and do nothing to prevent this clash from being one between reaction armed to the teeth and the virtually unarmed masses?"

Our Bolivian comrades were entirely right to raise the question of arming the proletariat and preparing for armed struggle at the congress of the COB. It will be the historic shame of the Communist party and a pseudo-Trotskyist like Lora that they deliberately removed this question from the agenda, when all the experience of the proletariat and all the logic of the situation in Bolivia put it at the center of the strategic thinking of any half-way perceptive worker militant. The events that occurred a few weeks later have entirely confirmed the urgent immediacy of this question.

Let us take another example. In Argentina, the military dictatorship is compelled by the relationship of forces to tolerate a not entirely state-controlled trade-union movement. But every time any union leaders become too radical, the army intervenes to remove them. Like any reformist bureaucracy, the union apparatus in control displays an abject servility toward capital and its military flunkies. Obviously, the Argentinian revolutionists are striving to weaken the grip of this bureaucracy on the working class. To this end, with only a few exceptions, they defend the idea of extending and generalizing struggles (a few even use and abuse the slogan of a general strike). To every appeal by a Trotskyist journal for extending and generalizing struggles, the vanguard workers would have the right to answer: "Hold on! Hold on! You say that partial struggles, purely economic ones, are not enough. But as soon as the struggle widens, the army intervenes, as in Córdoba and Rosario. Do you want to send us into a massacre?" And if Comrade Hansen thinks that it is enough to answer them: "Build a revolutionary party before thinking about military self defense," they would be still more justified in replying: "But before you have built your party, stop calling for a generalized struggle which threatens to end in a massacre. At least be consistent with your own logic!"...It is apparent where such logic would lead, in the absence of a clearly advertised strategy of preparing for armed struggle....

Contrary to the impression Comrade Hansen leaves, we did not state in the world congress document that preparing for armed struggle was synonymous everywhere with making preparations for guerrilla warfare, or even rural guerrilla warfare. The situation is very

complex in this respect. It would have been useless and out of place for a world congress to want to establish a single variant for the future. We note in passing that even an organization entirely committed to rural guerrilla warfare like the Brazilian VPR [Vanguardia Popular Revolucionaria -- Revolutionary People's Vanguard] has come to the conclusion that urban guerrilla warfare is the best means for preparing for rural guerrilla warfare because it enables them more effectively to accumulate cadres and experience for this objective than isolated operations launched from the beginning in the countryside.

Armed struggle can develop out of self-defense in strikes as well as self-defense in peasant land-occupations movements. It can be closely combined with continuing the mass movement -- which is obviously the most favorable case, as Comrade Maitan has already emphasized -- as well as prolong such a movement after a partial defeat, with the objective notably of protecting the cadres or freeing the victims of repression. It can take place in the cities, in the countryside, or in both environments at the same time in varying proportions depending on the specific conditions of the moment and the country and the available forces. It must always be sought to integrate armed struggle closely with mass work, which must be pursued without letup through building the party, which remains the No. 1 overall task. It would be necessary to avoid stripping the plants and unions of experienced activists who have already gained experience in mass work, except to save them from repression. It would be profoundly irresponsible to want to set any general rules, since for the entire continent as well as each country changes in the objective conditions may call for changing tactics, as the Bolivian section has correctly done.

But the essential thing, in this regard, is to tell the masses openly that armed confrontations are inevitable as soon as the mass movement attains any serious breadth at all and that they must prepare for this. The essential thing is not to think that it is enough to declare this on paper, but also to prepare yourself for it as soon as you have assembled a minimum of forces. The future of our movement in Latin America, the future of every revolutionary organization on that continent depends in large part on the frankness and seriousness with which they approach this body of questions now and in the future.

So that the discussion can make real progress and not harden into a dialogue of the deaf, we would like to pose four questions to Comrade Hansen.

1. Does he believe that, as a

general rule (with only a few minor exceptions) in the stage immediately ahead of us in Latin America it is improbable if not impossible that we will see a peaceful advance of the mass movement, broadening out in successive waves within an essentially bourgeois-democratic framework?

2. Does he believe that, as a general rule, it is improbable that the breakup of the reactionary bourgeois armies in Latin America will proceed at the same rate as the rise of the mass movement, and that therefore these armies will lose their capacity for carrying out a bloody repression of the movement?

3. Does he think, on the basis of the two preceding considerations, that it is the duty of the Latin-American revolutionists to carry out a propaganda campaign to prepare the masses, and above all the vanguard, for the military confrontations inevitable in the near and relatively near future in most of the Latin-American countries? Does he think that the revolutionary strategy on whose basis the sections of the Fourth International are built must include a clear, unmistakable answer to this question, which in any case is being discussed by the entire vanguard?

4. Does he think that once our own organizations have accumulated a minimum of forces they must, in their turn, prepare for these confrontations or risk very heavy losses, both in physical terms (inflicted by the class enemy) and political terms (inflicted by the other tendencies in the revolutionary movement)?

If Comrade Hansen answers "no" to these questions, then the differences separating us would clearly be serious and would require a thoroughgoing discussion. But in this case, for heaven's sake, let us discuss these differences, and not "foquismo" which no one in our ranks is defending, or immediate and universal organization of "rural guerrilla warfare," which is a completely twisted interpretation of the document voted on by the world congress.

If, as we firmly hope and as we expect from all his own revolutionary background and the revolutionary tradition of his party, Comrade Hansen, in general, answers "yes" to these questions (perhaps with a few nuances), then there are no differences over strategy, then the debate as it has developed thus far has been based on misunderstandings and divergent interpretations of texts. Then all that remains would be a debate over the tactical question of whether one or another section was right or wrong to draw this or that tactical conclusion from our common strategy. Such a debate would not be

without interest. But it would support none of the dark apprehensions Comrade Hansen manifests about an ultraleft danger threatening us. And such a debate would be severely limited in extent, because Comrade Hansen would be the first

to proclaim that the decision in these tactical matters lies within the competence of the national sections and not the world movement....

November, 1970

FOOTNOTES

¹ In a recent polemical document, Comrade Hansen wrote: "To justify converting rural guerrilla war into a strategy, it was argued [in the majority resolution -- E.M. & M.K.] that the Latin-American ruling class, operating hand in glove with U.S. imperialism, left no other alternative open. Against the ferocious violence of the ruling class, nothing could be done except to turn to guerrilla struggle." (Page 4 of "A Contribution to the Discussion on Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America.")

To prove this peremptory claim, Comrade Hansen quotes a passage from the resolution which declares that the class enemy will not permit legal organization of a mass movement that progressively develops and grows without trying to repress it by violence. Then he exclaims triumphantly that Bolivia and Peru prove the contrary! Really, Comrade Hansen? Where, then is the revolutionary mass movement tolerated by General Velasco in Peru? Where then is the revolutionary mass movement that the army has not sought to repress by force, far from tolerating it, in Bolivia? It is clear that Comrade Hansen is confusing the alternative "military dictatorship of the gorilla type or military dictatorship of the reformist type," with the alternative "military dictatorship or bourgeois democracy." It is this last alternative

the resolution excludes, save in exceptional cases; and we will continue to exclude it. As for the first alternative, the majority document anticipated it in so many words, as is evident from the following passage:

"This does not exclude possible oscillations in the most disparate directions, including new ephemeral pseudoreformist attempts, political gambles, and even variants within the framework of military regimes (groups of officers are continually playing at "Nasserism" in several countries and the immediate import of military coups is not always the same in every given situation). But this will change nothing in the general, deep-seated tendency: in a situation of chronic crisis and prerevolutionary tensions, the ruling classes will inevitably be impelled to adopt brutal repressive measures and utilize despotic and terrorist political regimes. Since these classes often are not very solid as social forces and cannot realistically contemplate solving their problems with popularly based reactionary regimes on the fascist model, military regimes remain the most likely recourse." (Intercontinental Press, July 14, 1969, p. 718.) The least one can say is that this analysis has not yet been contradicted by the evolution in Latin America except -- temporarily -- in Chile.