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## **NUCLEAR DISASTER IN UNITED STATES**

# **INDOCHINA WAR**

### **SPECIAL FEATURE**

**Articles by Ernest Mandel, Tariq Ali,  
Livio Maitan, Camilo González, Steve Clark,  
Eduardo Medrano, Fred Feldman,  
Japan Revolutionary Communist League**

## Nuclear Disaster in United States

The worst accident in the history of the nuclear industry began at 4 a.m. on March 28 at the Three Mile Island power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 165 miles southwest of New York City. As we go to press there remains a danger that a large bubble of explosive gases that has formed inside the reactor will block cooling water to the hot, intensely radioactive core, thus triggering the ultimate nuclear disaster—a melt-down. Residents of the area have been alerted to the possibility of an evacuation order. Tens of thousands had already fled as of April 1.

The following statement on the Three Mile Island disaster was issued April 1 by Nora Danielson, U.S. Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, and Andrew Pulley, SWP candidate for mayor of Chicago. We have taken the text from a special edition of the 'Militant' published on April 2.

The Carter administration and the Democratic and Republican parties bear full responsibility for jeopardizing millions of lives in the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.

Government inspectors knew months ago about problems in the cooling systems of Babcock and Wilcox reactors, including the one at Three Mile Island. But the administration did nothing—except to hush it up. Just as the government has hushed up and lied about the hazards of nuclear power for decades.

So now the accident the public was always assured was "impossible" has happened. The horrible possibility remains that a meltdown or explosion could still send deadly clouds of radiation over the surrounding cities and countryside.

Even if this most terrible outcome is averted, no one knows how many people, including workers exposed in the plant itself, have been harmed by the radiation that has already escaped.

On April 1 Carter flew into Middletown, Pennsylvania, just long enough to proclaim that radiation levels are "quite safe for all concerned" and that the top priority of the authorities is "the health and safety of the people."

Yet the day before, speaking in Wisconsin, Carter vowed that nuclear power plants "will be continued."

The disaster at Three Mile Island proves that nuclear energy is totally unsafe, that

"Atoms for Peace" is a myth, and that all nuclear reactors and processing plants, both commercial and military, should be closed down immediately.

As one worker who lives in the shadow of the Three Mile Island plant said, "It's like living with a rattlesnake. Sooner or later it's going to bite you. You just don't know when."

State and federal officials; the Metropolitan Edison Company and its owner, General Public Utilities; the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and the scientist-hirelings of the employers have lied from the beginning about what is happening.

They are lying now. They contradict each other, they contradict themselves, and they refuse to give the American people straight answers. Scarcely a person now believes a word they say about this accident.

Thousands who live near the crippled reactor are showing how much confidence they have in the official promises of safety—they are fleeing the area.

From its very beginning in the 1940s, the development of nuclear energy has been cloaked in secrecy. The dangers have been either denied or downplayed.

Why the secrecy? Why the lies?

The capitalist class doesn't dare tell the truth about nuclear energy any more than they do about how they plan shortages and fix prices. To tell the truth, they would have to say:

"We took billions of dollars from taxes paid by working people to finance the research and development of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy."

"We knew all about the hazards. But we suppressed or censored reports on the likelihood of catastrophic accidents, cancer epidemics, birth deformities, and other

consequences we didn't want the public to know about.

"We fired scientists who got too nosy. We didn't hesitate to kill people like Karen Silkwood who threatened to blow the whistle on the nuclear danger."

"We need nuclear weapons to police the world for U.S. corporate interests."

"And there are big profits to be made from nuclear energy."

This is what the employers and their bipartisan representatives in Washington would say if they told the truth. But they don't.

In his Middletown speech, Carter declared he would take personal responsibility for "thoroughly informing the American people" about the lessons of the disaster. Democrats and Republicans in Congress are already talking about a blue-ribbon investigation.

We have no reason to trust those who have covered up the nuclear danger for all these years.

At the same time he promises to keep us informed, Carter has imposed an unprecedented censorship order barring the *Progressive* magazine from printing an article about the hydrogen bomb. The Democrats and Republicans are desperately pushing for more secrecy, not less.

The Socialist Workers Party says that the entire record from both government and private industry on nuclear energy—every secret study and hearing, every technical and financial detail, every medical record—should be opened up for public scrutiny and debate.

The labor movement should take the lead in fighting for this. Meanwhile nuclear power should be stopped cold.

Just as the doubletalk about what happened at Three Mile Island reveals the destructive and antidemocratic nature of capitalist rule, so do the disastrous implications of the accident. Three Mile Island is not an exceptional incident. It epitomizes the nightmarish prospects of capitalist society today.

The employing class and its insatiable drive for profits are taking us down a road to catastrophe:

Runaway inflation and mass layoffs can

## Special Issue on Indochina War

We are beginning in this issue a discussion on the conflicts in Indochina, on which there are a wide range of views in the Fourth International.

The initial contribution to the discussion is an article by Ernest Mandel, in reply to earlier articles in these pages by Steve Clark, Fred Feldman, Gus Horowitz, and Mary-Alice Waters.

We are also publishing in this issue reprints and translations of articles on

the China-Vietnam war and related topics from Trotskyist newspapers around the world.

These include *Socialist Challenge* (Britain), *El Socialista* (Colombia), *Combate Socialista* (Colombia), *Sekai Kakumei* (Japan), and the *Militant* (United States).

We will continue discussion and coverage of this important issue in the weeks ahead.



overnight shatter the lives of millions of working people.

Monopoly-rigged shortages of key commodities can trigger price explosions.

Young workers will be sent to die in other lands—not to defend their own interests, but those of the bosses.

Imperialist wars threaten to lead us to a nuclear holocaust.

This threat of catastrophe is sharpened by the fact that the capitalists in this country face stiffer competition from their counterparts in Western Europe and Japan. Since the 1974-75 depression, they have been on a stepped-up campaign to improve their competitive position by squeezing more profits out of workers in this country.

As every worker knows, they have launched a war on many fronts to accomplish this. It includes speedup, reversing on-the-job health and safety rules, forced overtime, higher taxes, and cutbacks in social services.

Wages are held down by Carter's 7 percent guidelines while prices soar at 15 percent a year.

Laws protecting the environment are rolled back under the pretense of fighting inflation.

The employers are out to weaken and if possible destroy the unions—the chief obstacle to their goals.

Part of this offensive is the rulers' attempt to prepare us to accept the use of American military might to defend their interests in other countries—especially where they are under attack now by the workers and peasants of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

The nuclear industry is part of the employers' war drive from top to bottom. The nuclear industry originated with the race to develop and use the atomic bomb during World War II. Today it services the entire nuclear arsenal, which the Pentagon sees as essential to its war aims.

So we are faced with seventy operating commercial reactors—each capable of repeating the crisis of the Three Mile Island plant—along with scores of processing plants, reactors, and waste depots directly related to military purposes.

The disaster at Three Mile Island will give tremendous impetus to the rapidly developing antinuclear movement—not only in this country but throughout the world. Millions, maybe tens of millions, more people are now convinced that nuclear power should be stopped.

Protests have already begun, and we can be sure the actions planned for later this spring will be much larger than originally expected.

The Socialist Workers Party is participating in and helping to make these actions as successful as possible. The solidarity the German antinuke demonstrators expressed this week in their slogan, "We all live in Pennsylvania!" should be the watchword for all of us.

The key to success for the forces organizing against nuclear power is to link up with those in the labor movement who are opposed to nuclear power and to win the entire labor movement to this fight. That's where the strength lies to make this fight victorious.

The antinuke resolutions adopted by Meat Cutters District 2, by the United Auto Workers in Ohio, by Steelworkers District 31 in Chicago-Gary—along with the formation of antinuke committees in some unions—show the growing sentiment inside the labor movement.

The struggle against nuclear power and all its hazards is part of the overall struggle against the capitalist catastrophe that threatens the entire working class.

That catastrophe can be prevented only if the working class organizes itself and its allies to take political power away from the capitalist rulers, who are willing to risk the fate of humanity in their drive for profits.

To carry out this struggle for power the working class will have to break from the war parties, the nuclear energy parties, the capitalist parties—the Democratic and Republican twins.

We need a labor party based on our own organizations, the unions. A labor party will be an antiwar party, an antinuclear party, a party that fights for the rights of Blacks, *latinos*, and women.

There is a force greater than nuclear power: the political power of the labor movement.

That is the power and authority of the overwhelming majority of the American people. Once it is mobilized to take control out of the hands of the profit-hungry minority, it can immediately close down all the nuclear plants and dismantle all the nuclear weapons.

Three Mile Island shows the urgency of the task. Nothing less than the survival of humanity is at stake. □

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# Evelyn Reed (1905-1979)

By Matilde Zimmermann

Evelyn Reed, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and one of the foremost exponents of the Marxist analysis of the origins of women's oppression, died of cancer in New York City March 22. She was seventy-three years old.

All her life, Reed was a rebel. She revolted against small-minded prescriptions as to what constituted proper behavior for a young woman in the 1920s and 1930s. She hated the poverty, suffering, and injustice produced by an economic system based on profit. She had nothing but contempt for the persons of wealth she met through her family.

And she later embraced revolutionary Marxism because it enabled her to understand her rage and pointed the way toward ending the exploitation, oppression, and hypocrisy she detested.

She was born Evelyn Horwit, on October 31, 1905, in Haledon, New Jersey. She thought the world of Haledon too small, and in her teens she escaped to New York City. After graduating from high school, she attended the Parsons School of Design and the Art Students League.

She was serious about her art and over several years studied painting under some of the best-known artists of the period—John Sloan, George Luks, and later Grant Wood. She was part of a free-wheeling, radical-minded crowd of artists and intellectuals in the New York City of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Reed's first overtly political act was to participate in a 1934 demonstration at Rockefeller Center against the destruction of revolutionary murals by the renowned Mexican artist Diego Rivera.

Reed had already developed a passionate hatred for the way in which capitalist society degrades and enslaves women and seeks to break their spirit. During her years as a young artist in New York, she also came to understand that merely breaking with conventional conduct and sexual conformity could not free women from the confines placed on them by this society.

In the mid-1930s, Reed married an aspiring writer named Osborne Andreas and went with him to his home town. But Clinton, Iowa, like Haledon, was not big enough by half. In less than three years, Reed fled back to New York City, got herself an apartment in Greenwich Village, and resumed her life as an independent artist. (The episode was not without political significance; in a 1941 divorce settlement, Reed sold back to Andreas her

shares of stock in a joint family enterprise. The \$3,000 she received was enough to finance the first printing of Leon Trotsky's last work, *In Defense of Marxism*.)

### With Trotsky at Coyoacán

Reed was first introduced to revolutionary Marxism in the late 1930s by a professor at New York University who was a sympathizer of the Trotskyist movement.



EVELYN REED

She was in her mid-thirties before she found a coherent explanation for the world she lived in and a realistic perspective for changing it. The prospect of liberation through the struggle for socialism gave essential meaning to her existence.

Excited about the Marxist view of politics, she asked what she could do to get involved.

Her friend suggested she help distribute the *Militant* newspaper.

Reed's response was typically direct. After discovering that the operator of her neighborhood newsstand was a Stalinist who turned purple at the mention of the *Militant*, she hurried over to the national offices of the Socialist Workers Party on University Place and bought fifty copies.

She particularly liked an article on unemployed artists and the Work Projects Administration. She persuaded a fellow painter to put the *Militant* on everyone's chair at the next assembly of the Artists and Writers Project of the WPA, neither of them anticipating the violent reaction this would elicit from the numerous Communist Party members and sympathizers.

The professor also introduced Reed to a student of his named Walter Rourke, a young member of the Socialist Workers Party. In 1939 Rourke was asked to go to Coyoacán, Mexico, to serve as a guard in the home of Leon Trotsky. Reed had been

to Mexico before to paint and decided to go again and set up a studio in Mexico City.

Reed began to frequent the Trotsky household and help out in various ways. George Novack recalls that it was in this connection he first heard about the woman who was later to be his companion and political collaborator for almost four decades.

After an attack on Trotsky's life on May 24, 1940, several SWP leaders went to Coyoacán to help organize additional security measures. Novack, who was raising money for the defense in New York, read a report they prepared and remembers the young woman artist was described as a rather off-beat, bohemian type, but very helpful.

It was in Mexico, under the influence and at the initiative of Trotsky, that Evelyn Reed decided to join the Socialist Workers Party. She discussed with Trotsky her personal plans, her place in the party, and her conflict with the sister who was supporting her. (Reed did not come from a rich family, but both her sisters became wealthy through marriage.)

After the assassination of Trotsky in August 1940, Reed for a time remained in Coyoacán, where she provided invaluable assistance and support to Natalia Sedova. During this part of her stay in Mexico, Reed painted some of her finest works, including a portrait of Natalia Sedova.

### Building the SWP

After Reed returned to New York City, she accepted the political assignment of working on the staff of the theoretical magazine, *Fourth International*. One of the editors of the magazine was George Novack, with whom Reed developed a political and personal relationship that lasted until her death.

In 1941 the SWP asked Reed and Novack to help out in Minneapolis, where the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and of the Teamsters union were under fire for their active opposition to the impending U.S. entry into World War II.

When the Roosevelt administration invoked the Smith Act for the first time, and indictments were handed down against twenty-nine leaders of the party and union, Reed and Novack agreed to return to New York to organize the Civil Rights Defense Committee. Reed served as executive director of the CRDC and organized its day-to-day work until all the Smith Act defendants were released from prison by February 1945.

Reed then joined the staff of the *Militant*, where she initiated a new and popular feature, a series of interviews with rank-and-file workers and ordinary victims of capitalist injustice. She would illustrate each story with her own sketch of the individual she had interviewed—one week a fired auto worker, another week two office cleaning women, then a poor Puerto Rican woman with four sons in the U.S.



Army, a Black sculptress, a striking newspaper worker, an Italian longshoreman framed up for petty theft.

As a *Militant* writer, she first adopted the pen name Reed, after the revolutionary journalist John Reed, who covered the Russian revolution.

#### Fighter for Women's Liberation

Evelyn Reed was most widely known for her writings on the origins and role of women's oppression. She was a historical materialist who made a substantial contribution to Marxism on this subject.

Her indignation at the regimentation, stifling, and abuse of women long predated her knowledge of socialist ideas. She had a deep appreciation of the conservatizing role of the family and of the way this institution perpetuates the subjugation of women. She railed against the distortions and denials of female sexuality.

She had a special personal hatred for the anti-abortion laws, because she had suffered through two illegal abortions in the 1930s that left her unable to have children. She vigorously participated in the campaign organized by the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition to repeal the reactionary abortion laws in the United States.

The method of Marxism gave Reed the opportunity for the first time to make sense out of the oppression she resented so bitterly. She saw the revolutionary implications of the fundamental materialist understanding that females were not subordinated and discriminated against before the rise of a hierarchical class society based on private property. She developed her own contributions to this basic theme



With Connie Weissman (holding "Militant") at 1967 antiwar demonstration.

and popularized it for a whole new generation of women's liberation fighters.

Reed never lost sight of the fact that it was Karl Marx and Frederick Engels who had elaborated the scientific method for understanding the causes of women's oppression. Once she became convinced that the working class had the power to change society, she devoted all her considerable energies to building the kind of revolutionary workers party that could lead the fight against inequality, exploitation, and oppression in all their forms. She understood the inseparable connection between the struggle for women's liberation and the emancipation of all humanity from the shackles of class society.

Her unwavering commitment to the SWP and confidence in it was the basis for the close relationship Reed always had with workers in the party and with working women in particular. She never missed an opportunity to defend the SWP against any and all detractors.

Reed was elected to the national committee of the SWP in 1959 and served the party in that capacity until 1975.

#### 'Woman's Evolution'

In 1951 Reed began the anthropological research that would eventually produce her pioneering work, *Woman's Evolution*. She and Novack were then living in London where they were able to participate as SWP observers in the work of the Fourth International. This provided Reed with the opportunity to spend time reading extensively at the Royal Institute of Anthropology in London.

It was almost two decades, however, before the results of her investigations on the origins of female oppression began to be published.

From 1954 to 1965—except for a brief stint in New York working on the 1960 SWP election campaign—Reed and Novack lived and worked in Los Angeles. These were difficult years for the SWP. The party was isolated, under heavy pressures, and in perpetual financial crisis.

Both Novack and Reed had to work at outside jobs to support themselves until, toward the end of their years in Los Angeles, Novack was able to devote full time to his writings on Marxist philosophy and history. But during these years, Reed wrote a number of articles for the party's theoretical magazine in which she began to expound her views.

In 1965, Reed and Novack agreed to return to New York City to help at the party center. By then, the financial problems were less acute, and funds became available to sustain Reed's full-time literary work. Only then was she able to begin systematic work on her book on the female role in the prehistory of humanity.

It was none too soon. Within a few years, the armies whom Reed's writings were especially designed to reach burst upon the scene—new fighters for women's liberation



Reed in Mexico in 1940.

who could be won to revolutionary socialism.

#### The Second Wave

No one was more enthusiastic than Reed about the spread of feminist ideas in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She spoke at one of the earliest conferences of the new movement, in Boston in the spring of 1969.

She spoke out strongly against the few people within the SWP who took a sectarian attitude toward the resurgence of the struggle for women's liberation and who advised the party to steer clear of what they scorned as a "petty bourgeois" phenomenon. She organized and taught the first class series for women who were beginning to lead the SWP's activities as part of the new movement.

In response to the hunger for scientific explanations of the social and economic roots of women's oppression, Reed quickly assembled some of her articles for book publication. *Problems of Women's Liberation* came out before the end of 1969.

The hot debates over how oppression developed have been more than a theoretical or historical question in the women's liberation movement. The notion that females have been subject to discrimination since the beginning of time leads logically to reactionary or utopian political positions on what women as a group should do today.

Reed polemicized against a whole series of prevalent false ideas and self-defeating strategies. The concept that biology has been women's destiny, and that nothing fundamental can be done about female oppression, since women will always be the childbearers. The theory that men, not class society, are the enemy. The idea that women form a social class, or at least a caste, whose role in reproduction is com-

parable to the working class role in production. The strategy that claims humanity can be liberated through a women's revolution against patriarchy or heterosexualism rather than through the overthrow of capitalism by the mass of male and female workers and their allies.

Reed jumped into the battle from the very first days of the movement. She outlined the materialist analysis in a series of talks she gave in 1970: a debate with Roxanne Dunbar at the Congress to Unite Women in New York City, and the first-ever women's liberation conference in the South, at Mt. Beulah, Mississippi.

She insisted that women were neither a caste nor a class but the oppressed sex. She argued that the fight for women's rights was not a substitute for the struggle to overthrow capitalism but rather had to be an integral part of the socialist revolution.

Reed never gave an inch to proponents of a dead-end "men are the enemy" approach. She insisted that we must keep our fire directed against those who profit from the institutions of class society, which are built on women's oppression. She also exposed the backwardness and bigotry of pseudo-Marxists who deny the depth of oppression women suffer and pretend that sex discrimination will disappear automatically in the course of a socialist revolution.

#### Reed the Internationalist

The fight for women's liberation, like the struggle to do away with capitalist rule, is international in scope.

Recruited to the SWP itself in Mexico, Reed was an internationalist long before she became known around the world as a Marxist theoretician. She identified with and worked to build the Fourth International as strongly as she did the Socialist Workers Party.

## Evelyn Reed Scholarship Fund Announced

In tribute to Evelyn Reed, the Socialist Workers Party has announced plans for a special scholarship fund in her name. The fund will be the first step in raising the money to establish a special school for selected members of the SWP so they can set aside time for intensive study of Marxism.

One aspect of women's oppression that Reed understood well from her own experience was the obstacles women especially face in gaining a thorough grounding in Marxism, and developing the self-confidence as political leaders that flows from such study.

Her self-discipline, determination, and broad capabilities stood as an example to many younger women.

The scholarship fund is designed to help finance in the near future the kind of school that will enable a new generation of women and men to deepen their understanding of Marxism in order to provide a solid foundation for the development of rounded political ability.

The fund will be launched at the New York memorial meeting for Reed.

Contributions may be sent to Evelyn Reed Scholarship Fund, 14 Charles Lane, New York, New York 10014. □

But it was the development of the women's liberation movement as a worldwide phenomenon in the 1970s that made it possible for Reed to help strengthen the Marxist current in the women's liberation movement outside the borders of the United States.

Reed's *Problems of Women's Liberation* has been published in eight languages, including Japanese. *Woman's Evolution* has already been published in Spanish and Swedish and is scheduled to be published in Danish, French, Italian, Turkish, and Farsi.

In 1973 Reed made a tour of Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Some of her meetings drew 5-600 women. In 1975, she did speaking tours of England in the spring and Ireland in the fall. The principal disappointment in the last year of her life was that her illness forced her to cancel a long-awaited speaking tour of Scandinavia and West Germany.

In the course of the 1970s, Reed spoke at more than 100 universities all over the United States and abroad, in addition to

countless media interviews and informal meetings with women both inside and outside the party. She was always available to talk about problems of life with the newest member of the movement and helped many arrive at a clearer perspective of struggle.

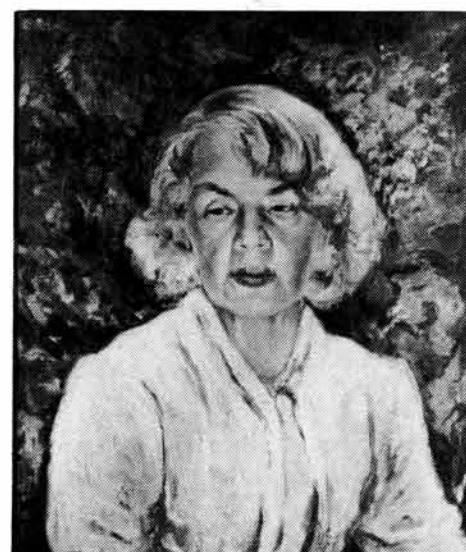
She was constantly on the go. Her seemingly unlimited store of energy made it hard for people to believe she was in her late sixties and early seventies.

In every speech Evelyn Reed gave, she sought to educate and inspire women with the facts about the creative and productive role females have played in history. She explained how and why women were responsible for the major advances in the productive capacities of humanity and laid the foundation for the development of all civilization.

Both the power of these ideas and the personal example Reed set served to inspire listeners to join the struggle for a world without exploitation and female oppression, a world in which the full human potential of all will flourish.



Speaking to a Tokyo meeting of 400 in 1973.



Reed's portrait of Natalia Sedova.



## Behind Differences on Military Conflicts in Southeast Asia

By Ernest Mandel

Different positions have arisen inside the Fourth International over the appreciation and political attitude towards the military conflicts that have occurred in Southeast Asia since December 1978. While these disagreements seem to center around what attitude one should adopt towards the invasion of Kampuchea (Cambodia) by the Vietnamese regular armed forces (there has been a unanimous condemnation of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam), their political implications with regard to further developments in relation to armed conflicts between ruling bureaucracies in workers states are not clear. This is potentially dangerous especially because of the possibility of armed struggle between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Moreover, the underlying theoretical questions are of such importance (and, in one case, of such novelty) that a thorough discussion of them has become unavoidable. In the present article, we deal essentially with positions expressed in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

### I. Was Pol Pot's Cambodia a Workers State (Albeit Extremely Bureaucratized and Despotic)?

Articles by comrades Mary-Alice Waters, Fred Feldman, and Steve Clark in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* try to justify the critical support given to the invasion of Kampuchea by the regular Vietnamese army on the basis of the argument that that country was not a workers state, and that, instead, the Pol Pot regime was "a capitalist counterrevolutionary government that threatened the Vietnamese revolution."<sup>1</sup> The historical analogies then immediately come to mind: Georgia, Finland.

More generally, in a military conflict between a workers state and a bourgeois state, revolutionary Marxists support the first against the latter, because of the need to preserve the superior socioeconomic system against the restoration of capitalism. This remains uppermost, regardless of the degree of bureaucratization which characterizes the given workers state. This has been the common programmatic attitude of the Fourth International since the experiences gained in 1939-40. Nothing, in our eyes, justifies any modification of this position.

Comrades Mary-Alice Waters, Fred Feldman, and Steve Clark base their case largely on the hypothesis that Pol Pot's Kampuchean regime was not a workers state. We reject that hypothesis as being contrary both to facts and to Marxist theory.

A civil war started in Kampuchea in April-May 1967 when the leaders of the Kampuchean Communist Party left Pnompenh to organize a guerrilla war against the bourgeois regime of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, that regime launched severe repression against communists and other left-wingers, and after the outbreak of spontaneous peasant revolts of Samlaut in the Battambang area, where landlords had tried to impose the payment of rent upon peasants who had had the free use of the land for centuries.<sup>2</sup>

This civil war broadened considerably when the massive United States air attacks and invasion of Cambodia unfolded in 1970, and after the coup by Lon Nol (Sihanouk's former military commander). It was closely intertwined with the civil wars in Vietnam and Laos, and with the war of national liberation by the

Vietnamese masses against U.S. imperialism, culminating finally in the overthrow of the Lon Nol regime by the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. While the Vietnamese CP-led forces played an important role in assisting the Khmer Rouge in this civil war, especially by thwarting several offensives against them by the U.S. imperialist forces and the South Vietnamese and Cambodian counter-revolutionaries, the Cambodian CP jealously defended its autonomy and operated in a manner which was more and more independent of Hanoi. This was demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the way in which it tried to destroy all the elements of the bourgeois state and of the capitalist class in one stroke after its April 1975 victory.

Against the advice of both Hanoi and Peking—the advice of Moscow was no longer listened to, especially after the Kremlin maintained relations with the Lon Nol regime while the latter was butchering Cambodian communists, workers, students, intellectuals and peasants by the thousand—the leaders of the Cambodian CP tried to introduce a "radical social revolution in all fields" in the shortest possible time (to use the formula with which the present rulers of Kampuchea describe the Pol Pot regime<sup>3</sup>).

A big part of the participants in the bourgeois state apparatus were physically eliminated (apart from those who escaped abroad). The great majority of the bourgeoisie down to the lower middle classes suffered the same fate. The urban population was dispersed. Private property and/or use of the land was severely restricted, if not radically suppressed. Peasants who had been the prototype of individual farming in Southeast Asia for centuries were forced into rigid collective farming (cooperatives):

Replacing a system in which farming had been essentially a family undertaking, the production solidarity groups became the basic unit of agricultural work. They were in turn organized into 30,000 agricultural cooperatives. Although the peasants cultivate small gardens for their fruit and vegetables, today private property in land basically does not exist.<sup>4</sup>

François Ponchaud indicates that beginning in October 1975, all means of production were collectivized in the cooperatives. In addition, beginning in December 1975, state farms were being created.<sup>5</sup>

The radicalism (or ultraleftist adventurism) of the Pol Pot regime went as far as virtually suppressing all forms of trade and money. Only the barest remnants of barter continued.

Kampuchea's economy and society had already been wrecked by the barbaric imperialist bombing and other acts of war. It was estimated that in the densely populated area around Pnompenh alone, the monthly equivalent of seven Hiroshima-type atomic bombs had been rained down by U.S. bombers in the six months ending in August 1973. The consequent disruption of agriculture and food production was catastrophic.

An unpublished International Monetary Fund study estimated that at the end of 1974, the total cultivated paddy land had been reduced by 75 percent and that paddy production in the Khmer Republic (i.e., those areas not liberated by the Khmer Rouge at that time) had fallen from an annual level of 3.8 million tons to only 493,000 tons. But even the latter figure is considered to be

1. *Militant*, February 23, 1979.

2. Malcolm Caldwell and Lek Tan, *Cambodia in the Southeast Asian War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp. 157-167; and François Ponchaud, *Cambodia Year Zero* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 183-184. Ponchaud indicates that to avoid arrest, two KCP leaders, Ieng Sary and Son Sen, had already gone underground in 1963.

3. See "Declaration of Foundation of the FUNSK" in *Le Conflit Vietnam-Kampuchea* (Hanoi, 1979).

4. George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter, *Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 71-72.

5. Ponchaud, pp. 113-114.

exaggerated by pro-Khmer Rouge sources. Massive starvation, malnutrition, and epidemics were rampant. Many of the deaths attributed, first by imperialist propaganda and later by Hanoi and Moscow, to Pol Pot atrocities were in fact due to the barbaric acts of imperialism and its local stooges.

But it is also obvious that the adventurist policies followed by the Pol Pot faction greatly contributed to the price paid in terms of human suffering for the change of regime in Kampuchea. Moreover, this policy made it impossible to quickly repair the damage caused by the imperialist destruction. The national economy and the very fabric of elementary social division of labor was disrupted further by the inhuman means by which private property was suppressed. Transport, medical supplies, hospitals, and a large part of the educational system were not only disrupted—they entirely collapsed for a whole period. The repression was extended against whole social groups including women and children. The victims of state terrorism certainly have to be measured in terms of hundreds of thousands.

The obvious parallel which comes to mind is the severity, scope, and extreme terrorism of Stalin's forced collectivization in the Soviet Union, summed up in his formula of "suppressing the kulaks as a class." The human toll exacted by this crime—not to speak of the long-term results in misery and shortage of certain foodstuffs in the Soviet Union—was immeasurable. Khrushchev estimated that during that period and the ensuing purges in the 1930s, Stalin and his henchmen killed 12 million people, while uncounted additional millions were deported. If anything, these figures underestimate the gruesome reality.

But it is one thing to say that an inhuman despot used barbaric methods—which we, of course, condemn fully and without reservation, and which are unable to further the building of a classless socialist society—in order to suppress private property. It is something else again to present this despot as a "counterrevolutionary capitalist." Unless we go over to the camp of the state capitalists or bureaucratic collectivists, we must recognize that the crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy against the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union had neither the purpose nor the objective effect of restoring capitalism or establishing a new class rule. It operated within the framework of a postcapitalist society—a society in transition between capitalism and socialism; i.e., a workers state. What is true for Stalin's terror is true for Pol Pot's terror too.

This is not in the first place a question of speculation but one of judging facts. If it is true that the bourgeois state apparatus was utterly smashed in Kampuchea (probably more totally so than in any previous social revolution<sup>6</sup>); if it is true that not only the bourgeoisie but that even the peasantry was expropriated; if it is true that no remnant whatsoever of capitalist property and production relations can be found in the Kampuchea of 1976, 1977, or 1978—then it is just impossible to refer to the Pol Pot regime or government as capitalist. A capitalist government or a bourgeois state which utterly destroys capitalism is an absurdity within the framework of the Marxist theory of classes and of the state. It is a concept which is in contradiction with all the basic elements of historical materialism.

One could argue that, because Kampuchea was an extremely backward country and because both the basic classes of capitalist society—the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie—were present only in a near-embryonic form, the classical criteria for establishing the class nature of the state can only be applied with great difficulty, reservations, and constant reference to the historic background and specificity of Kampuchean society. We fully agree. The tragedy of the Kampuchean revolution is an extreme and grotesque distortion of the tragedy of Stalinism reflected through extreme backwardness. *But it is a distorted repetition of*

*Stalinism, not of bourgeois counterrevolution.* Any false judgment on this matter will have serious consequences for one's analysis of the Soviet Union and other bureaucratically degenerated or severely deformed workers states too.

Presumably, in the minds of some comrades, the question of the class nature of the Pol Pot regime and of the Kampuchean state under that regime has been obscured by their not considering the problem of the class nature of the Khmer Rouge bureaucracy, and not studying its relation to the working class and to the bourgeoisie in that light.

The idea that that bureaucracy could in any way be compared to the bureaucracy of the Asian mode of production type of society is correctly rejected by comrades Feldman and Clark. We are living in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not in the early Middle Ages. But in the same context, the idea that the working class was totally suppressed and that to defend the concept that Kampuchea is a workers state means having a workers state without a working class, has to be rejected as equally absurd.

No contemporary state, not to speak of a contemporary economy, could exist or survive without airports, telecommunications, railroads, highways, port facilities (if it has an outlet to the sea, as Kampuchea has), repair shops, power stations, arms maintenance depots, a minimum of cement and other building-material production, a minimum of textile production, and some industrial production of agricultural implements. All this implies not only the existence but even the expansion of an industrial labor force. To present matters as though Pol Pot and his henchmen deliberately wanted to destroy the industrial proletariat or had actually destroyed them in Kampuchea is just nonsense.

In fact, as comrades Feldman and Clark themselves correctly state, the Kampuchean CP was intent upon industrialization, be it of a special type: i.e., in a special relationship with agriculture (an idea borrowed not from bourgeois ideologues, incidentally, but from Mao Zedong). Its number two leader, Ieng Sary, stated that in so many words before the General Assembly of the United Nations.

According to Hildebrand and Porter, who are apologists for the Pol Pot regime and whose information therefore should be treated with caution, 100,000 people had been allowed to return to Phnompenh by the end of 1975, part of whom were working in factories. By the beginning of 1976, nearly 100 factories around the country are said to have resumed production.<sup>7</sup> Other sources cite much lower figures. According to the October 13, 1978, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Pol Pot told a Japanese delegation that the population of Phnompenh had already increased to 200,000 and was intended to grow to 400,000.

Ponchaud provides similar information, insisting especially on the role of the communication and transportation workers.<sup>8</sup> The Yugoslav CP journalist Slavko Stovic, who visited Kampuchea in 1978, reports that 220,000 people were living in the Phnompenh suburbs.<sup>9</sup>

So the question boils down to this: what kind of industry was the Pol Pot bureaucracy starting to rebuild? A capitalist one or a noncapitalist one? This is not only a question of nationalization or non-nationalization of the initial industry. It is a question of the entire socioeconomic context.

Does this nationalization and industrialization maintain or lead to a revival of private property, private capital accumulation, the birth of a new capitalist class? Are the bureaucrats administering this industry accumulating private fortunes (be it through corruption, theft, or black market operations)? Certainly CP bureaucrats of Stalinist persuasion and origin *could* do that. The question is: *did* they do that in Kampuchea? Comrades Feldman, Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters don't bring forward a shred of evidence to support that hypothesis. The fact that "forced labor is exploited" is no more proof of the existence or survival of capitalism in

6. Comrades Feldman and Clark quote Ponchaud's book extensively. But they do not quote his conclusion on this key question: "On 17 April 1975 a society collapsed; another is now being born from the fierce drive of a revolution which is incontestably the most radical ever to take place in so short a time" (p. 214).

7. Hildebrand and Porter, pp. 90-91.

8. Ponchaud, pp. 101-103.

9. *Questions Actuelles du Socialisme*, October 1978.



Kampuchea than it was in the Soviet Union. The question is: does it lead to *capitalist* property and production relations, to generalized commodity production? No proof can be brought forward to substantiate such an assertion.

Therefore, it follows unavoidably that we are faced not with a capitalist, bourgeois, or "precapitalist" state bureaucracy, but with a bureaucracy tied to the working class not only through its (granted: extremely distorted) ideology, but also and especially through its specific form of remuneration and its basic relation to the means of production and ownership of property. We know that it is unpalatable to consider despots of the Pol Pot type as being in some way tied to the working class. But, frankly speaking, was it more palatable to consider Stalin's, Yezhov's, and Beria's bureaucracy as an extremely degenerated part of a workers state bureaucracy? Justifiable moral revulsion should not stand in the way of arriving at correct scientific definitions. Let us recall that the Kampuchea CP never did abandon its programmatic statements in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat, building communism, the leading role of the working class, and the need for international solidarity with workers of all countries.

In "A Short Guide for the Application of Party Statutes," published in 1975, the "long-range goal of the party" is stated as follows: "To lead the people in creating a socialist revolution and a communist society in Kampuchea. . . ."

In the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea adopted January 5, 1976, the first two articles state:

"Article 1. . . . The State of Kampuchea is the state of the workers, peasants, and all other toiling layers of Kampuchea. . . ."

"Article 2. All important means of production are the collective property of the people's state and the collective property of the common people. . . ."

Furthermore, Article 12 states: "Every worker is master of his factory."<sup>10</sup>

A pamphlet published in August 1973 by the Khmer Rouge stated that "the working class forms the vanguard" of all the "patriotic forces" engaged in the war; that it "has become a class fully capable of leading the revolutionary national and popular war of liberation to victory."<sup>11</sup> The same pamphlet states that "the revolutionary struggle of the people of Kampuchea is an integral part of the struggle of the workers and toilers of all the countries of the world, including those of the United States, against capitalist, neocolonialist, and imperialist oppression and exploitation. The workers, toilers, and people of Kampuchea have always shown a firm and active internationalist spirit. They have always firmly supported the struggles of the workers, toilers, and people of the world, including those of the USA, and manifested their militant solidarity with them."<sup>12</sup>

On September 10, 1976, on the occasion of the death of Mao, Pol Pot exalted the dictatorship of the proletariat as the heritage of "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung."<sup>13</sup>

All humbug and propaganda? Possibly. But doesn't the *content* of the propaganda tell us something about the class nature of the Kampuchean bureaucracy? Possibly petty-bourgeois demagogues could repeat such language. But can they implement it? And weren't these statements implemented to an important extent in Kampuchea?

The grave contradictions that face those who deny that the Pol Pot bureaucracy is an extreme form of a degenerated working-class bureaucracy—an extreme example of the degeneration of a Communist party of Stalinist origins—are graphically expressed in the official statements of the most violent opponents of the Pol Pot bureaucracy, the very people who toppled them from



In 1978 "Pol Pot said that the population of Phnompenh had already increased to 200,000."

power. Here is what they have to say about the Pol Pot clique:

A complex situation emerged: on the one hand, cooperation between Vietnamese and Kampuchean *revolutionists* [sic] continued; but on the other hand, the Vietnamese felt that the attitude of the revolutionary leadership of Kampuchea had changed.<sup>14</sup>

As late as September 1976, the official Hanoi propaganda organ *Le Courier du Vietnam* published an interview with Pol Pot, in which the revolutionary achievements of his regime and its deep ties with the revolutionary masses were celebrated. In fact, some form of collaboration between the Kampuchean and Vietnamese CP leaderships lasted for two and a half years after the April 1975 victory. The above-quoted 1979 pamphlet goes on to add that in September 1977 a chauvinist tendency definitely triumphed within the Kampuchean Communist Party.

But yet the founding declaration of the FUNSK, published in the same pamphlet, calls the Pol Pot faction "militarists, reactionary tyrants" and even "slaveowners" (*esclavagistes*). We know, of course, that in the Stalinist tradition communists of different factions can rapidly become "counterrevolutionaries" and even "fascists" as soon as the slightest deviation from the "general line" appears.

But comrades Mary-Alice Waters, Fred Feldman, and Steve Clark are faced with the same difficulty. The founders of the Khmer Rouge were obviously communists of Stalinist persuasion in their origins, members of the Indochinese and French CPs. When they broke with the Norodom Sihanouk regime, they were still communists, weren't they? When they organized and led to victory the guerrilla war, in close collaboration with the Vietnamese CP, they were still communist bureaucrats, weren't they? When did they become a "new bourgeoisie gestating in the state apparatus"? After the occupation of Phnompenh and other large towns? But that occupation coincided with a radical suppression of private property! A Stalinist turned into a capitalist (a fascist capitalist, for that, for seldom was there a more terrorist "capitalist" government than the Pol Pot one, if you want to characterize it as bourgeois) by . . . radically suppressing capitalist property and production relations: Isn't that a bit hard to swallow for a Trotskyist?

## II. What Are the Criteria for Defining a Workers State?

We said: Kampuchea is a border case, given the extreme backwardness of the country, compounded by the catastrophic results of the American bombing and the ensuing disruption of economic and social life. In and by itself, a difference on the exact

10. These quotes are taken from the Appendix to the French edition of Ponchaud's book. *Cambodge Année Zéro* (Paris: Juilliard, 1977), pp. 238, 241.

11. "La Classe Ouvrière et les Travailleurs du Kampuchea dans la Guerre Révolutionnaire de Libération Nationale et Populaire," pp. 3-4.

12. Ibid., p. 7.

13. Ponchaud, p. 136.

14. "Le Conflit Vietnam-Kampuchea" (Hanoi, 1979), p. 8. Emphasis added.

definition of the Pol Pot regime and the class nature of the state under that regime wouldn't be so serious, if it were not combined with the question of what criteria one uses in order to determine the class nature of a state. It is the use of wrong criteria which makes the position defended by comrades Mary-Alice Waters, Fred Feldman, and Steve Clark so potentially dangerous. For these have obvious implications with regard to our assessment of the class nature of many other workers states, and even with regard to our basic positions towards the class nature of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Let us first succinctly restate what has been the unchanged majority position of the Fourth International on this subject for at least a quarter of a century. A workers state exists when and if the previously existing bourgeois state machine has been smashed, the existing bourgeois class has lost its political and economic power, and when the economy based upon new production and property relations, of a noncapitalist nature, evolves according to laws of motion that are not those discovered by Marx in *Capital* as being characteristic of the capitalist mode of production.

This implies:

a. That we do not accept the possibility for any state to exist in the epoch of imperialism (i.e., in the world in which we are living in this last quarter of the twentieth century) which would be neither a bourgeois nor a workers state or some hybrid combination of both;

b. That we do not accept the possibility that in backward countries, semifeudal or large-scale property in land, exploitation of peasants through trade, banking, usury, etc., could be suppressed—i.e., that a radical agrarian revolution could take place—within the framework of a bourgeois state and with a capitalist ruling class.

c. That we do not accept that any bourgeois state could exist without the presence of a ruling bourgeois class, even if it is a weak one, whose existence and character has to be empirically proven in terms of the definitions given by Marx;

d. That we do not accept that capitalism can exist without private property, without generalized commodity production, and without the economy being governed by the laws of motion of that mode of production as laid bare by Marx.

Theses (a) and (b) flow directly from the theory of permanent revolution as formulated by Trotsky himself. Theses (c) and (d) follow from the overall analysis of capitalism by Marx. And from theses (a), (b), (c), and (d), it follows that where a radical agrarian revolution has occurred, where the existing bourgeoisie has lost state power and is no more a ruling class, where private property has been essentially suppressed, where the economy obviously does not operate any more on the basis of capitalist production and property relations and does not function any more according to the laws of motion of capitalism, a workers state has come into being, independently of the conditions under which this has occurred.

While it is true that there is, *historically*, a unity between the destruction of state power of the capitalist class, the disappearance of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class, and the suppression of private property and capitalist relations of production, there is no necessary synchronization between these processes. The Marxist tradition is clear on this subject. It starts with the *Communist Manifesto* itself:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible."<sup>15</sup>

The idea defended by comrades Waters, Clark, and Feldman that a workers state comes into existence only *after* the final abolition of the last remnants of private property in the means of production is completely alien to that tradition. This is strikingly confirmed by Trotsky's report to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern:

15. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 33. Emphasis added.

It is perfectly obvious that from the economic standpoint the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is justified to the extent that the workers' state is able to organize the exploitation of enterprises upon new beginnings. The wholesale, overall nationalization which we carried through in 1917-18 was completely out of harmony with the condition I have just now outlined. The organizational potentialities of the workers' state lagged far behind total nationalization. . . . Indeed, had we been able to enter the arena of socialist development after the victory of the revolution in Europe . . . we could have tranquilly taken hold only of the large-scale enterprises, leaving the middle-sized and small ones to exist for a while on the private capitalist basis. . . .<sup>16</sup>

The Waters/Feldman/Clark hypothesis includes an insurmountable contradiction from the point of view of the Marxist theory of the state. If the state is an instrument to uphold the rule of a given social class, how can it be used for the overthrow of that very class rule? For it is under the *given* state power, and with the use of the *given* state apparatus, that the later total abolition of private property takes place.

In Russia, to take the first example, no change in the structure of the state or in the nature of state power took place after the October 1917 revolution. If one argues that this state remained a bourgeois state until capitalist property was completely abolished in the autumn of 1918—why not until the abolition of the NEP in 1928?—then it was a bourgeois state that abolished the economic power of the bourgeoisie, an absurd proposition if there ever was one.

The same remarks apply to case of China. Comrades Feldman and Clark claim that the Chinese state remained bourgeois after the proclamation of the Chinese People's Republic in October 1949. But leaving aside the fact that one will not find a single Chinese capitalist who believes that he remained in power in 1950 or 1951 in his country, the extension of land reform and the generalized nationalizations of the subsequent years were obviously realized by the state power (the army, the government, the administration, the state apparatus) established in October 1949. How could a bourgeois state be used to abolish capitalism? Under the "pressure of the masses"? Under the "compulsion" of imperialist pressure? Aren't those the very revisionist theses of the Social Democrats, the Stalinists since 1935, and the Eurocommunists?

In order not to succumb to the temptations of "Trotskyism," Mao himself—like comrades Feldman and Clark—continued to deny that the dictatorship of the proletariat was established in China in October 1949, as it had been in Russia in October 1917. For that purpose, and in order to avoid the absurd thesis of the survival of a bourgeois state in China between 1949 and 1953, he had to uphold the equally revisionist theory of a state of the so-called "new democracy," part bourgeois and part working-class. Do comrades Feldman and Clark prefer the same way out, instead of recognizing the obvious—i.e., that the destruction of the bourgeois state leads to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished?

It is true that history has presented us with short phases of transition in which the question of which class really rules society is not clearly answerable. Periods of dual power are an example of this. But in each case, the class nature of the *surviving state apparatus* does not allow any doubt: it remains bourgeois. Therefore, it has to be rapidly abolished, lest the working class loses again the elements of class rule it is beginning to assemble.

One could assume that a similar short phase of transition occurred in Eastern Europe under Soviet occupation (we are not referring to Yugoslavia) in the years 1946-47. But the real relationship of forces was rapidly revealed. Without great difficulty, the occupying forces eliminated the surviving elements of bourgeois power essentially by military-bureaucratic means.

Comrades Feldman, Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters completely eliminated this elementary analysis of class power and the class nature of the state, in order to reduce the whole question—at least

16. "Report on the New Soviet Economic Policy and the Perspectives of the World Revolution," in *The First Five Years of the Communist International, Volume 2* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), p. 226.



in all those cases where a proletarian revolution did not take the classical form of the Paris Commune or the October Revolution—to a single criterion:

... the nationalization of property is not by itself sufficient to establish a workers state. The intervention of the workers—the only force in modern society capable of establishing and maintaining a progressive economic structure—is needed.

The nationalizations in Kampuchea came about not through mobilizations of the working class—even limited and controlled ones—but following the Khmer Rouge's crushing of the urban workers.

The expropriation of the capitalists *by the workers*, and the transformation of industry into public property, creates the possibility for the coordination of the means of production under a national (and ultimately international) economic plan.<sup>17</sup>

The formula "The nationalization of property is not enough to establish a workers state. The intervention of the workers is needed," can have a double meaning. Consistent with the method of historical materialism, it is a working hypothesis. It means: We assume that without the intervention of the workers, nationalization of property is not enough to destroy bourgeois class rule, because this will then grow again and again, like the heads of Hydra, whatever the blows you use to try to chop it off. This hypothesis has then to be tested by factual analysis. It has been tested in Eastern Europe, not to speak of Kampuchea. No bourgeois class, no private property revived, although "workers mobilizations" in most cases were nonexistent or extremely marginal. Although the abolition of capitalism occurred essentially through military-bureaucratic means, capitalism was indeed abolished.

But without the rigorous application of the method of historical materialism this same formula becomes a dogmatic schema: when the nationalizations do not occur through mobilizations of the working class, when the capitalists do not become expropriated by the workers, then, *by definition*, capitalism continues to rule, even if there are no capitalists, no capitalist laws of motion, no capital, and no money. A capitalism without capitalists, without capital,

and without money: the whole of Marx goes out of the window! We could then have two countries with identical property relations, identical relations of production, identical socio-economic systems, and identical laws of motion, the first of which would be a workers state and the second of which would be a bourgeois state, merely because of the historical conditions under which these identical systems had been established. Surely, for a Marxist, the *origins* of property relations are less important than their *contents*.

Once one accepts the utterly revisionist idea that one can have a capitalist state without capitalists, without a ruling capitalist class, without capitalist property and production relations, and without the economy obeying the laws of motion of capitalism, then 99 percent of the traditional Marxist case against the various theories of state capitalism—commencing with those of the Mensheviks and the Social Democrats, throughout those of the Bordighists, C.L.R. James, and Tony Cliff, up to those of the Maoists and Bettelheim—collapses. The miserable remnants of that case then hang on the single thin thread of the "origins" of nationalizations *and on them alone*. The razor-sharp factional minds of the state capitalists will find no difficulty in cutting through that thread.

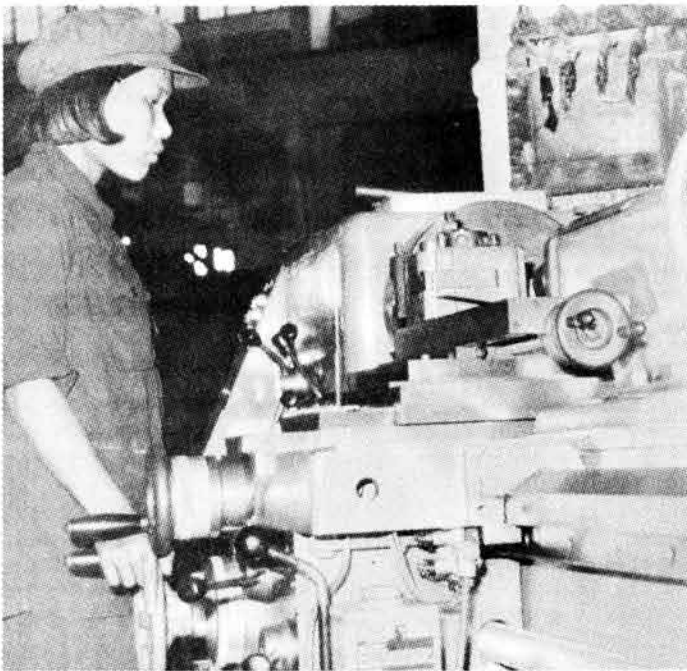
If Pol Pot has squeezed "extreme capitalist accumulation" of the "forced collectivization of the Kampuchean peasantry,"<sup>18</sup> didn't Stalin do likewise with the forced collectivization of the Russian peasants, which was an otherwise large and bloody affair? What then remains of the noncapitalist nature of the Russian state and economy after that "extreme capitalist accumulation" that occurred in Russia in 1929-1934? If in order to have a workers state one needs to have the bourgeoisie expropriated *by the workers*, how can one then have a workers state in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and North Korea where, by no stretch of the imagination, could these expropriations be interpreted as having been carried out by the workers themselves (a few street demonstrations by rigidly controlled workers *in support of* these expropriations are obviously something less than expropriations *by the workers*)? Ironically, a case could be stated in favor of the thesis that in Kampuchea there were actually more mass mobilizations

17. Fred Feldman and Steve Clark, "Pol Pot Regime—Was It a Workers State?," *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 26, 1979, p.183. Emphasis in original.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 184.



Victorious troops of China's People's Liberation Army in 1949. "Destruction of a bourgeois state leads to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished."



Kampuchean factory. "There is no evidence that Khmer Rouge in any way defended private property against workers' wishes for collectivization."

against the capitalists and landlords than in most of the Eastern European countries. Feldman and Clark themselves furnish some of the material that proves this.

Powerful mass mobilizations took place in Kampuchea against bourgeois rule in 1974-75 (including a general strike in Pnompenh in 1974). Again, the mass mobilizations, especially of the poor peasants, were rather important after the victory of the Khmer Rouge in 1975, as Feldman-Clark themselves admit. Indeed, the setting up of many of the agricultural cooperatives was done through mass mobilization.

Already before final victory, in the liberated zones, the KCP leadership had "apparently skipped directly into more advanced stages of collectivization."<sup>19</sup> The dynamic went in that direction, coinciding with the emergence of pre-state structures of a clearly noncapitalist nature. But after that came forced collectivization and mass deportations, obviously without the participation and against the wishes of the overwhelming mass of the toilers (as it was in Russia and other workers states).

But these two first waves of mass mobilizations are not enough for comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters to "prove" the existence of a workers state; the forced collectivization, on the other hand, is enough to disprove this existence. A sad case of dogmatic schematism in which these comrades have become trapped. For isn't it obvious that the first two waves of mobilizations were more than sufficient to destroy the bourgeois state, the capitalist property relations, and the existence of bourgeois class rule, so that Kampuchea thereby became a workers state? And that the forced collectivization and deportations were criminal policies applied by the ruling bureaucracy *within the framework of the already existing workers state*, as they had been in Russia under Stalin? From the above irony flows a supreme paradox. Under Pol Pot, comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters argue, there was a "counterrevolutionary bourgeois government" engaged in "extreme capitalist accumulation." The Vietnamese liberators then presumably introduced a workers state under Heng Samrin. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of March 2, 1979, Samrin granted an interview to the Finnish-based Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng, of the International Organization of Journalists, on February 3, 1979. According to the Hong Kong weekly:

19. *Communist Party Power in Kampuchea*, p. 18.

The discussion touched also on the shattered economy: he said heavy industry would be state-owned, but so far as handicrafts and other small industries were concerned, private entrepreneurs would be allowed to operate, though under state guidance.

Now, to turn from a policy of forced collectivization or extreme terroristic "war communism" to a policy of the NEP-type, probably makes sense under the conditions prevailing in Kampuchea today. We tend to approve such a turn—but this, of course, can only be understood within the framework of an already existing workers state. But to identify, as some do, the transition from 100 percent collective ownership to 75 or 60 percent collective ownership, i.e., a rather large-scale restoration of private property, as the transition from a bourgeois state to workers state . . . this is beyond reason, at least as reason is practiced by Marxists.

Here we already see the possible—and dangerous!—implications of comrades Feldman and Clark's amazing statement: "The Kampuchean working class had no stake whatever [!] in the nationalization of property, carried out without its participation, by the petty bourgeoisie in the Angkar."<sup>20</sup> Do they perhaps have some stake in the restoration of private property?

Comrades Feldman and Clark put a lot of stress in their argumentation on "precedents." They quote essentially three categories of these: Trotsky's well-known letter of 1932, concerning the possible clash between peasant armies and the urban proletariat in China; what actually occurred in China in 1948-1950; and what occurred in countries like Egypt, Burma, Mozambique, and Angola.

We have already dealt with China 1948-51. No amount of sophistry can camouflage the fact that state power passed in that period from one social class to another, that the Chinese capitalists lost their political and economic power (which does not necessarily imply that they have to lose all their private property—as a matter of fact they haven't to this very day), that this power passed into the hands of the Maoist bureaucracy, which was (and remains) a working-class bureaucracy, and that all the rest concerns policies (often treacherous, anti-working-class ones, granted, but so were Stalin's!) within the bureaucratized workers state established in October 1949.

The hypothesis formulated in Trotsky's 1932 letter concerns a very specific case of *class conflict*, which comrades Feldman/Clark eliminate from their reference: the conflict between a working class wanting to abolish capitalist property and a peasantry intent upon defending it (at least defending its own private property). The general framework of Trotsky's letter clearly establishes this. He writes of the opposition between socialization and private splitting up of property, the possible integration of the upper strata of the peasant armies into the bourgeoisie, and about large proprietors possibly emanating from the peasant wars.<sup>21</sup> How could the author of the theory of permanent revolution have argued otherwise, i.e., suddenly have turned against the very key premise of that theory—that incapacity of the peasantry to play a historically independent role from either the working class or the bourgeoisie?

But in the case of Kampuchea there is no evidence that the Khmer Rouge in any way defended private property against the workers' wishes for collectivization. Even the thesis of a "peasant army" (not in the sense of social composition but in terms of the objective social function of that army) becomes utterly preposterous in light of the evidence, confirmed by Feldman/Clark, that that army crushed the peasants as it did the workers (perhaps even more so). So the Khmer Rouge army was not a "peasant army" but the army of the bureaucracy. So we are back where we started: the question of the class nature of the Pol Pot bureaucracy.

The analogy with Egypt, Burma, Syria, Mozambique, and Angola is even more revealing. In none of these countries was private property ever abolished or constitutionally forbidden.

20. Feldman and Clark, p. 183.

21. *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Pathfinder, 1976), pp. 524, 526-7.



What were nationalized in most cases were the industrial, banking, wholesale trading, and large transport companies, sometimes even while leaving imperialist property intact. But these were from the start only a relatively small part of the national economy, given the backwardness of these countries. Private use of rural and urban land was limited but never abolished. It had been the main base of capitalist fortunes before the "revolution." It remained the main base for these after the political overturns.

A capitalist class never disappeared—only its internal articulations (the relationship of forces between its different components) altered. The large nationalized sectors therefore acted as huge breeding grounds for private capital accumulation. Huge private fortune reappeared and grew—not in the least because many capitalists received large-scale compensation for the nationalization of their properties. The stock exchange continued to function in Egypt throughout the Nasser period. It was therefore just a question of time before the "private sector" (not a petty peasant sector, but a large capitalist one) would reassert itself in a powerful manner—among other things because of "encouragement" received through symbiosis with imperialist countries and imperialist firms. This is what occurred in Egypt under Sadat. This is what will occur tomorrow in Mozambique and Angola if no social revolution destroys the bourgeoisie as a class. This is occurring in Burma and Syria right now.

But precisely in Kampuchea, as in all other workers states, this has not occurred and cannot occur without a social counterrevolution. This is precisely one of the key indicators of the class nature of the state and the ruling bureaucracy. It can steal, plunder, undermine, betray, whatever you will. But its privileges remain in the realm of standard of living, of consumer goods, and not in the accumulation of private fortunes and the private appropriation of the means of production. What is "accumulated" by the state are use values in the form of means of production—not exchange value embodied in commodities and money.

One could argue that the time that elapsed between the establishment of the Pol Pot regime and its overthrow was too short to allow final judgment on this question. Even if this is granted, there can be no doubt about the direction in which things were going: not in the direction of a restoration but in that of a suppression of private property.

Sections of the bureaucracy can become a nucleus of a new capitalist class (as they could in the Soviet Union as well), intent upon private capital accumulation, upon defending independent firms, enterprises, and capitals in competition with others. This has occurred in Egypt, Burma, and Syria, and will occur in Angola and Mozambique. It hasn't occurred in Kampuchea any more than it has occurred in Vietnam, North Korea, Romania, Hungary, or Poland. This is the way one can concretely note the difference between a bourgeois and a workers bureaucracy, between a bourgeois state with a large nationalized sector and a workers state even with a not unimportant private sector. In the first case, the socioeconomic dynamic is towards the revival and strengthening of private property and the bourgeois class. In the second case, the socioeconomic dynamic is towards their elimination and disappearance (or marginalization).

### III. The Concrete Context and Concatenation of the Interbureaucratic Conflicts and the Revolutionary Process in Asia and on a World Scale

The most dangerous aspect of the argumentation of comrades Feldman, Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters is that in their attempt to justify the invasion of Kampuchea by the regular Vietnamese army, they tend at several points to get carried away from the initial "principled" position ("we support a bureaucratized workers state against a bourgeois one") to a conjunctural, impressionistic type of analysis which comes dangerously close to justifying that invasion even if one considers Kampuchea a workers state.

The implications of such arguments are ominous. They could lead one tomorrow to justify, under similar conjunctural circum-

stances, an attack by the Soviet Union against China, or an occupation by the Soviet army and its satellites of Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania, or North Korea. It is not by accident that the governments of these five workers states were hostile to Vietnam's action against Kampuchea. Anybody who believes that they took this position because they are "stooges of imperialism" had better think again. What they were really saying was that they condemned Hanoi's action in Kampuchea because they didn't want to suffer the same treatment: "We say Kampuchea but we mean ourselves."

Comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters correctly draw a distinction between the reasons that, from the point of view of objective Marxist analysis, explain the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, and the reasons that explain Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978-January 1979. There was certainly nothing of a political antibureaucratic revolution unfolding in Kampuchea which Hanoi feared and wanted to crush—this in contrast to the Czechoslovakian situation in 1968, where there was an unfolding antibureaucratic movement which the Kremlin did fear and did want to crush.

But it is one thing to register that objective difference, and quite another thing to fail to note how this parallel is being made in the inner circles of the bureaucracy themselves. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* writes in its February 23, 1979 issue:

Sources said that immediately after the open breach between Phnompenh and Hanoi (which had occurred in December 1977) the Soviet leaders urged a swift Czechoslovak-type operation to remove Pol Pot from power.

In the light of such formulas it is easy to understand the worries of the above-named next potential victims of the doctrine of "limited sovereignty." We are astonished that comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters seem to be completely impervious to these fears. Their analysis becomes even more worrying when one reads formulas like those in the following:

In reality, the Vietnamese rulers acted neither out of imperialist ambitions nor from a desire to spread socialist revolution beyond their borders. Their goal was the narrow one of protecting Vietnamese borders against a tightening ring of military foes. Their great fear was the emergence on the Indochinese peninsula of an anti-Vietnamese regime in Cambodia closely linked to Peking with increasing prospects for ties to imperialism, including possible military ties.

... the military encirclement and economic and diplomatic blockade of Vietnam by U.S. imperialism continues in force.

Under these circumstances, the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and China—and the growing hostility by both to Vietnam—may well have contributed to convincing Hanoi that decisive action was needed to break the diplomatic and military noose it felt tightening around its neck.<sup>22</sup>

The Vietnamese rulers threw major military forces into the drive against Pol Pot's regime because they felt the tightening encirclement and the potential for eventual military probes by imperialism.<sup>23</sup>

The invasion of Vietnam by troops of the People's Republic of China is the bitter fruit of a counterrevolutionary deal between U.S. imperialism and the Stalinist Peking bureaucracy.<sup>24</sup>

Given the difficulties standing in the way of direct U.S. military intervention, Washington has enlisted the help of the Stalinist regime in Peking, which, in return for diplomatic recognition and the promise of major economic aid, has invaded Vietnam and launched a large-scale border war:

Peking's aim is not to conquer Vietnam, but to force Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea—that is, to do Washington's bidding.<sup>25</sup>

What is grave about this kind of analysis is that it could be so

22. Fred Feldman, "Behind Fall of Pol Pot Regime," *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, January 22, 1979, pp. 28-29, 31.

23. Mary-Alice Waters, "Hands Off Vietnam!" *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 26, 1979, p. 163.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

25. Gus Horowitz, "What Washington Is After," *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, March 5, 1979, p. 196.

easily repeated in other cases, in other parts of the world. If Peking is not acting for its own interests against the Vietnamese bureaucracy but in support of Washington's counterrevolutionary drive, couldn't one tomorrow explain that, after all, in its conflict with Moscow it is also starting to act as Washington's cat's-paw? And couldn't a preventive strike by Moscow against Peking then be interpreted as an act of justifiable self-defense by a workers state against the main imperialist power, which is threatening it ("encircling it") with the aid of the Deng Xiaoping gang?

If the establishment of an "anti-Vietnamese regime" in Kampuchea could put a "tightening ring of military foes" around the Vietnamese borders, couldn't the establishment of an "anti-Soviet Union regime" in Belgrade (e.g., after Tito's death), "with increasing prospects for ties with imperialism" put a "tightening ring of military foes" around the Soviet Union, and thereby justify a preventive military strike to "protect its borders"? Indeed, didn't Moscow claim that Dubcek threatened to establish an "anti-Soviet regime" in Prague, too? Wouldn't such a terrible occurrence justify measures of self-defense, including invasion, on behalf of the Kremlin?

And what about China? Didn't the Soviet Union—"in return for major economic aid" (actually granted on a much larger scale by imperialism than that promised to Peking)—realize a huge military build-up on the Chinese border, in order to further Washington's aim of rolling back the Chinese revolution? Don't there remain a couple of imperialist strongholds—South Korea and Taiwan—as a "potential for eventual military probes by imperialism"? Didn't Hanoi's line-up with Moscow make Peking feel "the diplomatic and military noose tightening around its neck," thereby "convincing Peking that decisive action was needed to break" that noose?

In fact, if the international discussion produced nothing more than assurances from comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters that they don't for a minute follow that kind of reasoning—which would "objectively" imply capitulation before the Stalinist bureaucracy and a covering up for its diplomatic and military maneuvers designed to reestablish its control over those workers states which have escaped its clutches—we would already be quite satisfied.

In order to justify their ready-made schemas, comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters have to engage in quite a bit of rewriting of history. They present the chain of events that led to the current military conflicts in Southeast Asia in a way that has scarcely more than an accidental correspondence with history. Contrary to the assertion of comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters, South Vietnam became a workers state, if not after the capture of Saigon by the armed revolutionary forces, then certainly at the moment of the formal unification of North and South Vietnam into a single state. It is simply impossible to pretend that the bourgeoisie remained in power in South Vietnam until the expropriation of the Chinese merchants of Cholon in spring 1978, when the two parts of the country had been united for more than two years. How can one have a single state that is both a workers state and a bourgeois one?

As early as December 1975, *Courrier du Vietnam* published the speech of a leading member of the Vietnamese CP, which stated categorically:

The South should not wait till all the tasks of the national, democratic, popular revolution have been accomplished before starting to solve the tasks of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism. It should, on the contrary, exploit all the favorable conditions and experiences of the North in order to begin immediately with the tasks of the new stage.

In September 1976, a unified central economic Five-Year Plan was introduced for the 1976-1980 period for all the thirty-five provinces of North and South Vietnam, covering all major branches of industry.<sup>26</sup> Was that unified plan, which began to be implemented in the beginning of 1977, not proof of the existence of a single workers state in the whole of Vietnam? Can one involve a "capitalist" economy and a "bourgeois state" in unified planning with a workers state and nationalized industry?

26. *Courrier du Vietnam*, October 1976.

Contrary to the assertions of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, it was Kampuchea, and not Vietnam, that, for at least three years, had been the main target of an international hate campaign, a campaign that has had hardly any parallel since the Spanish Civil War, if not since the October Revolution. The campaign against Vietnam was much milder at least until late 1978.

Again, contrary to the assertions of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, it was not Kampuchea but Vietnam, and especially Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, that made numerous openings to international and U.S. imperialism. It went so far as to apply for membership of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. In spring 1977, Hanoi "promulgated a foreign-investment code which was both liberal and flexible, providing for joint enterprises and wholly-owned foreign projects in export-orientated industries, plus generous tax concessions and the right to repatriate profits."<sup>27</sup>

In fact, some mild measures of international capitalist aid in favor of Vietnam were decided and implemented—e.g., by Japan, France, and Sweden—while they never were in favor of Kampuchea. It is true that these measures were generally too limited and that they were suspended after Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea.<sup>28</sup> But this is certainly no proof that imperialism had been systematically courting and using the Pol Pot regime against the Vietnamese revolution.

Contrary to the assertions of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, there was no new revolutionary upsurge by the South Vietnamese masses in 1978 seen as a threat by the counterrevolutionary Pol Pot regime or even by the Chinese bureaucracy. If anything, the South Vietnamese mass movement was and remains on a downward and not on an upward trend. The political activity of the South Vietnamese masses is certainly more limited than that of the Chinese masses. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the poor food situation, the scandalous corruption, the drafting of youth into the army and even with the invasion of Kampuchea. According to many sources (see among others the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of January 19, 1979), the morale of the southern Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea is low. There have even been desertions from the army.

Contrary to the assertions of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, Peking did not act on the command of or as a cat's-paw for Washington in Vietnam, but essentially for its own purposes—those of endeavoring to establish its zone of influence over all the Asian workers states and of preventing the Kremlin from gaining a stronghold on its southern borders. And while it is true that imperialism has tried to use this conflict for its own purposes—as it did with the Stalin-Tito rift, the Khrushchev-Mao rift, or the Brezhnev-Dubcek rift—this does not imply that such an exploitation represents the exclusive or even the main aspect of these conflicts. And contrary to the assertions of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, Hanoi didn't act in Kampuchea because it was being "encircled" by Pol Pot's "intrigues" with imperialism, but because it wanted an Indochinese federation under its own bureaucratic hegemony.

A good case can be made for the thesis that the possibilities of imperialist and capitalist intrigues and maneuvers in Kampuchea using the Thai dictatorship are not mainly the cause but the consequence of the Vietnamese invasion of that country—as is the increased possibility of a return to power of Norodom Sihanouk.

For sure, imperialism hasn't given up the goal of containing the Indochinese revolution, or even of rolling it back in its weakest sectors, Laos and Kampuchea. It maintains a mighty navy in the neighborhood for that purpose. It maintains military bases in Taiwan, South Korea, and elsewhere. It builds up the military strength of the Thai dictatorship and other reactionary ASEAN power regimes. It finances reactionary—i.e., procapitalist—

27. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 2, 1979, p. 17.

28. This aid was continued in the case of Japan (*Le Monde*, March 3, 1979), whose imperialist government also publicly condemned the Chinese invasion of Vietnam as "unjustified."



guerrillas in Laos and Kampuchea. It organized a successful blockade of Laos in 1976-77, which arrived at the point where Vientiane had to be supported by a Hanoi-Moscow airlift in order not to be completely cut off from vital supplies. (This blockade was subsequently abandoned.) In all these maneuvers, it needs the backing of Peking's "peaceful coexistence" policy, which it received in exchange for the modus vivendi arrived at through the Kissinger-Nixon visits. But imperialism acts mainly through its own instruments, not through Peking and certainly not through Pol Pot.

So, contrary to the analysis of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters, if there is a certain connivance between the Chinese bureaucracy and Tokyo and Washington in East Asia—which has to be seen in the context of such "secondary contradictions" as Moscow's consistent courting of the Taipei counterrevolutionary clique—nothing has changed in the *basic* aspect of the world situation, which is the consistent pursuing of mutual peaceful coexistence and collaboration by Moscow and Washington on a world scale. One just has to consider their close collaboration in maintaining the status quo in Europe and the Middle East, to name only two key areas of the world.

So from a world view, there is no difference between Moscow's and Peking's counterrevolutionary policy today. There is no reason to feel that imperialism is more "lenient" and "understanding" towards one than towards the other, or that it is looking for an overall alliance with Peking against Moscow. Both counterrevolutionary bureaucracies are major obstacles on the road to a victorious world revolution. In no way do they have a substantially different relationship with world revolution and world imperialism.

If one examines the stages through which the Pol Pot regime acquired its extreme nationalist and isolationist attitudes, one has to enumerate all the traumatic shocks that the Kampuchean communist bureaucrats received from their supposed allies. They were ignominiously abandoned and ignored at the Geneva talks by Moscow and Peking. They were a second time abandoned by Moscow when the Kremlin lined up with Lon Nol against them in 1960. They were a third time nearly thwarted when, in 1973, during the Paris peace talks, Hanoi (probably with the tacit support of Peking, although this is not proven) tried to impose upon them a coalition government with their deadly enemy, Lon Nol. Moreover, Hanoi cut down their aid and abandoned them to the B-52 bombings, in retaliation for their refusal to succumb to that pressure.<sup>29</sup> The Kremlin even went as far as abstaining in the United Nations on the question of their admission to that body.<sup>30</sup>

All this does not justify the nationalist, even racist anti-Vietnamese political course they pursued afterwards. But at least it explains it by reasons more credible than their allegedly "bourgeois" nature and their "intention" . . . to build capitalism in Kampuchea. A "workers state" trying to impose upon the Kampuchean "capitalists" a coalition government with the bourgeoisie, and the "capitalists" rejecting this with indignation and disgust—this is a bit hard to swallow!

It was the fiercely nationalistic and anti-Vietnamese attitude and campaign of the Pol Pot regime that led to the open break of December 1977. Pol Pot suddenly cut off diplomatic relations with Hanoi and publicly accused them of preparing an invasion of Kampuchea.<sup>31</sup> It was this breaking of all ties, in addition to the closer links of Phnompenh with Peking, and all their military implications, that made the Vietnamese leadership consider toppling Pol Pot and installing a new Kampuchean leadership and control over a *de facto* Indochinese federation—of the same type as the Vietnamese established in Laos. And it was from then on that the logic leading to the invasion of December 1978-



Liberation forces enter Saigon in 1975. "South Vietnam became a workers state, if not after capture of Saigon, then certainly at moment of formal reunification of North and South."

January 1979 unfolded, the border incidents and imperialist intrigues playing a secondary role in this infernal logic.

Certainly there was tremendous discontent in Kampuchea with the Pol Pot regime, and there were successive incipient attempts at uprisings against it. Certainly it would have been in order for the Vietnamese CP to support popular moves that expressed the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Kampuchean workers and peasants. By that method, a genuine new leadership of the Kampuchean CP could have become crystallized, which, while tainted by its Stalinist origins and still heavily bent towards later bureaucratization, could have at least played a role similar to that of the Nagy leadership in Hungary or the Dubcek leadership in Czechoslovakia, i.e., open the road for genuine mass mobilizations and thereby to a genuine political revolution.

But this is not at all what happened in Kampuchea. A military build-up by the regular Vietnamese army occurred starting in spring 1978.<sup>32</sup> The Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (FUNSK) was established only in December 1979, on the very eve of the blitzkrieg that led the crack armored divisions within a fortnight to Phnompenh, Battambang, and a takeover of all the cities of the country. Nobody can be so naive as to assert that this was only "fraternal help to an unfolding popular uprising." It was a full-scale military invasion, marginally supported by a few local forces.

Indeed, the Kampuchean masses, already dazed and atomized by the successive blows they received from the murderous attacks of imperialism first, the inhuman Pol Pot terror later, were so disoriented by the foreign invasion that even today, three months

29. See Patrice de Beer, "Vietnam: Tensions Internes et Rupture d'Equilibre," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 1979.

30. Ponchaud, p. 192.

31. Bogdan Szaikowski, ed., *Documents in Communist Affairs 1977* (University College Cardiff Press, 1977), p. 165.

32. See the article by Slavko Stavic in *Questions Actuelles du Socialisme*, October 1978, quoted above.

later, the newly installed regime in Phnompenh encounters great difficulties in building a normal administration—not to speak of mobilizing large-scale mass support. And the historical enmity between the “Vietnamese invaders” and “Kampuchean patriots,” on which the Pol Pot faction can now fully play, provides the political basis upon which the latter can organize its guerrilla forces. This fight against the new masters ruling in Phnompenh could become a long fight indeed, thus providing many openings for imperialist and counterrevolutionary intrigue. But again, this is mainly a result of the invasion and not the cause.

Likewise, the Vietnamese leadership seriously miscalculated (as did comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters) the possibility, not to say the probability, that the Chinese would take its Kampuchean adventure as a pretext for a large-scale military attack against Vietnam. As late as December 1978, “Hanoi [was] confident that China will not attack Vietnam militarily over Cambodia. . . . According to Hanoi-based diplomatic sources the Vietnamese leaders are supremely confident that the Soviet-Vietnam friendship treaty and the ever-present Soviet build-up on China’s northern border will prove a solid deterrent to any Chinese plan to intervene.”<sup>33</sup>

Well, it didn’t. One should equally express doubts as to whether Peking’s “supreme confidence” that Moscow will not retaliate militarily against the Chinese invasion of Vietnam is all that well-founded either. And the conclusion is obvious: these successive adventurist moves are utterly irresponsible from the point of view of the interests of the workers and peasants of Southeast Asia. They are utterly contrary to the cause of extending the Indochinese revolution.

As late as January 23, 1978, comrade Michael Baumann, writing in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, correctly stated: “. . . the armed conflict between Hanoi and Phnompenh plays into the hands of the imperialist propagandists.” Comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters would have been well-advised to stick to that line of reasoning.

If one wants to judge the real potential dynamics of the victorious Indochinese revolution, one has to look at the neighboring capitalist countries, in the first place Thailand, Malaysia, the other so-called ASEAN states, and Burma. One has then to note soberly that in the period following the victory of the Indochinese revolution in 1975, Moscow, Peking, Hanoi and Phnompenh did everything possible to calm fears lest the famous domino theory come true in Southeast Asia. All the ruling bureaucracies tried to ingratiate themselves with the Thai dictatorship and “normalize” their relations with it. And if the objective effect of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea can be judged in the light of this factor, it is clear that the situation of the Thai guerrillas has seriously deteriorated and not become any better due to the sudden popping up of a “new workers state” in Kampuchea. Perhaps this alleged new workers state didn’t pop up at this time, then, after all, but instead an existing workers state became rather weakened as a result of the prolonged guerrilla war that the invasion has triggered off, and that now enables imperialist and bourgeois counterrevolution to reenter the game?

To round out the complexity of the real situation in Southeast Asia and in Indochina—a situation that doesn’t correspond to the preconceived schemas of comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters at all—the semifascist Khmer Serai guerrillas—i.e., the *real* counterrevolutionaries in Kampuchea, the followers of ex-dictator Lon Nol—have just published a communiqué in which they make a positive judgment on the Vietnamese invasion and the newly installed FUNSK regime.<sup>34</sup> Their uppermost goal is to eliminate the remnants of the Pol Pot forces and to reestablish a bourgeois state in alliance with Sihanouk. On the battlefield things are not always what they seem to be for those addicted to the method of mechanically turning some imperialist propaganda upside down.

#### IV. Are Wars Between Bureaucratized Workers States Possible and What Should Our Attitude Be Towards Them?

In the February 19, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* comrade Mary-Alice Waters sternly denied the possibility of

any wars between bureaucratized workers states:

The danger is not a Chinese invasion of Vietnam, but the imperialist maneuvers that Peking is helping to cover up. . . .

If the Peking bureaucrats were angling for an opportunity to back up their ally Pol Pot by a military offensive against Vietnam, that would have been the time—not four weeks later. . . .

Of course, Peking’s military build-up along Vietnam’s border does create a danger of sporadic (!) outbreaks between Chinese and Vietnamese troops. But this is not the source of the war threat in Indochina today. . . .

Our spotlight must be on the Thailand-Kampuchea border, not the Vietnam-China border.

Hardly has the ink dried on that issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* than the war did break out—not on the Thailand-Kampuchea border but indeed, contrary to comrade Waters’s expectations, on the Vietnam-China border.

One could, of course, withdraw to the lame defense of saying that there has been no war between Chinese and Vietnamese workers states—only “border incidents” (as one can cover up the war between the Kampuchean and Vietnamese bureaucracies by denying that Kampuchea was a workers state). But such a line of defense only constitutes an unacceptable concession to the callous disregard for the lives of tens of thousands of workers and peasants by the ruling bureaucracies, lives lost not for the sake of liberation from exploitation and oppression, not for the sake of a struggle against capitalism and imperialism, but for the sake of fractions of the bureaucracies seeking to avoid “encirclement” (by other fractions of the bureaucracy), “teaching them lessons,” “punishing criminal aggressors,” and other nauseous “war aims”—taken straight out of the armory of absolutist, semifeudal, colonialist, and imperialist diplomacy. We have to say it loud and clear: these wars are criminal, irresponsible, and counterrevolutionary enterprises. They only help imperialism. The life of not a single soldier, worker, or peasant should be sacrificed for the particularistic, narrow and nationalist goals of self-aggrandizement of any faction of the bureaucracy, whichever it is.

We quote from comrade Waters’s article not for the purpose of scoring cheap debating points. Nobody inside the Fourth International foresaw wars between bureaucratized workers states, i.e., between ruling bureaucracies, a long time ago. We are faced with one of the most unforeseen turns of world events in the last decades. We have the responsibility to the vanguard of the international working class, and to the whole international labor movement, to explain them and to take a clear and unequivocal stand towards them.

There is, of course, full agreement inside the Fourth International on four basic concepts, which remain unchanged throughout and after the tragic events in Southeast Asia.

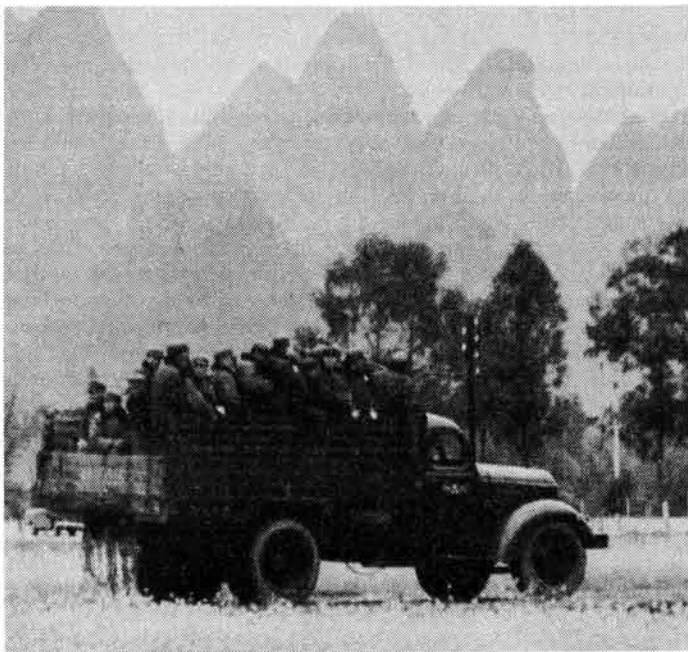
First, the basic danger of a *world war* does not spring from any of the economic or social “laws of motion” of the bureaucratized workers states, but from the irrepressible trend towards world expansion by capital, especially capital in the imperialist epoch. As long as imperialist capital survives in any major industrial country, it will not give up its drive toward dominating the world, towards reincorporating into its sphere of direct exploitation those countries that have escaped this through victorious social revolutions, and towards crushing the toilers of those countries who are currently engaged in trying to achieve social revolutions. This is and will be the only source of potential world war in the epoch opened by the end of World War II.

Second, the danger of a third world war is not imminent. In order to qualitatively increase its power to commit aggression—up to a full-scale attack against the USSR, Eastern Europe and the People’s Republic of China—imperialism must first radically alter the political relationship of forces inside the metropolitan imperialist powers, i.e., it must first inflict a crushing defeat on the world proletariat. As long as this has not occurred, it is unable to

33. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 22, 1978, p. 17.

34. *Le Matin de Paris*, March 5, 1979.





Chinese troops moving toward Vietnam.

impose upon them the madness of the risk of the nuclear annihilation of mankind.

Third, there is no basic economic reason for wars between bureaucratized workers states. True, the ruling bureaucracy, always eager to increase its power and material privileges, can profit from plundering foreign countries if it succeeds in including them in its sphere of influence without endangering "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism on a global scale, i.e., through a *modus vivendi* with world imperialism. But this is in no way structurally linked to the nature of the workers states' economies. The plundering of East Germany stopped by and large after the workers uprising of July 1953. Cuba is not plundered but subsidized by the Soviet bureaucracy—as is, increasingly, Czechoslovakia, since the 1968-69 "normalization." We have great doubts whether Peking "plundered" Kampuchea or is intent upon "plundering" Vietnam. And while the Vietnamese, desperately short of rice this year, might enviously eye the good rice harvest in Kampuchea, if their troops get bogged down by Kampuchean Khmer Rouge guerrillas, they will find that they most probably have to subsidize their new Pnompenh allies, rather than "plunder" them.

It is preposterous to believe that China needs "colonies to exploit," when it is desperately lacking the resources to exploit 80 percent of the natural resources known on its own native soil. It is likewise unproven that the Soviet bureaucracy wants to "colonize" China, when it does not even have the means to exploit the resources of its own Far Eastern Siberian territories and is inviting Japanese, German, French, and North American capital to assist in this vast endeavor.

Fourth, the inability of imperialism to launch *at present* a full-scale war of reconquest against the workers states does not imply its inability to try to destabilize them, to try to erode their strength, so that it can achieve a comeback in all those countries where the new social system is still relatively young and weak. It is certainly trying to do so in Indochina. It especially does not imply an inability to try to stop the spread of social revolution internationally.

If there is agreement on these four basic points, how can one then explain the danger of wars between bureaucratized workers states, or more correctly the danger of wars between the ruling bureaucracies of these countries? How is this danger correlated to the struggle between imperialism and anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces on a world scale?

We believe that this war danger can no longer be denied in light of unmistakably military conflicts between Vietnam and Kampuchea and, between China and Vietnam, and the real threat of a military confrontation between the Soviet bureaucracy and the Chinese bureaucracy. We have to try to explain these wars within the framework of the traditional revolutionary Marxist analysis of the specific social nature of the bureaucracies ruling in these countries. We believe that we are perfectly able to do so, without threatening to upset the inner cohesion and consistency of Marxist theory in general and that of the workers states bureaucracies in particular.

The roots of these potential conflicts are *political and not socioeconomic*. Or rather: their economic roots lie in the special way in which the hardened bureaucratic layers ruling these countries can guarantee and maintain the material privileges they enjoy. The guarantee and reproduction of these material privileges depend upon the exercise of a *monopoly of political and social power* by the bureaucracy. Any serious challenge to that monopoly, any form of public political "pluralism," even of an interbureaucratic nature, inevitably hastens the political awakening of the masses, which, as the examples of Hungary and Czechoslovakia most clearly show, could shatter the very basis of the bureaucracy's privileges in a short period of time.

Stalin embodied this principle of the monopoly of power—of monolithism—in the clearest, most consistent, and radical way. That is why he suppressed all political differentiation not only within the CPSU but within the Comintern as well. When the power of the Soviet bureaucracy spilled over the prewar frontiers of the Soviet Union into the so-called "people's democracies," he had to extend this very same principle of monolithism throughout these newly established workers states, including the one that had not been created through military-bureaucratic actions and manipulation by the Kremlin but through a genuine popular revolution, be it a bureaucratically controlled one—Yugoslavia. It was this drive (and not the fear of the effects upon the Soviet Union of a nonexistent mass movement in Yugoslavia in early 1948) that was the basis for the Stalin-Tito rift of 1948. A similar need for monolithism explains the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict in 1959.

Any form of autonomous political and ideological development in *any* workers state, independent of the immediate level of mass mobilizations there, is seen as a threat by the Kremlin to its rule, including to its rule in the Soviet Union. Any form of autonomous political and ideological development in *any* Asian workers state is likewise seen by Peking as a threat to its rule, ultimately inside China too. And *any* development of political and ideological autonomy in *any* Indochinese or neighboring country is likewise seen by Hanoi as a threat to its rule, including over Vietnam. In this, and in nothing else, lie the objective political roots of potential wars between bureaucratized workers states.

As long as the Soviet Union was the only existing workers state, Stalin could impose a servile obedient leadership upon any Communist Party, most often by direct diktat from Moscow, through a combination of corruption, regressive selection of leading cadres, and blackmail threatening public denunciation and its disastrous political and organizational consequences for a whole period. Later, threats and the open use of physical terror and murder were added to this in a number of cases.

When a certain number of Communist parties of Stalinist origin were installed in positions of state power after World War II, these methods were insufficient, given the qualitatively increased material resources at the disposal of each "national" bureaucracy. The Kremlin now had to resort to more direct methods of political control: military occupation; control over the "national" repressive apparatus, especially the army, the secret police, and a special network of informers; control over a key number of economic pressure points; and the imposition of policies upon the "national" bureaucracies that would leave them without any serious popular basis in their own country, thus making them

very much dependent upon the military "protection" of the "fraternal country."

These methods were, to different degrees, successful in most of those countries where the ruling bureaucracies had been installed in power through the Kremlin's military strength itself (the two most outstanding exceptions being North Korea and Romania). They were generally unsuccessful in those countries where, from the beginning, the "national" bureaucracy disposed of an autonomous material, political, and social power, having conquered power on the crest of a genuine popular mass social revolution, be it a bureaucratically controlled and manipulated one—Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam. Again, this is the root of the Tito-Stalin and the Mao-Khrushchev rifts, of the Vietnam-China conflict, and, why not, of the future Vietnam-USSR conflict.

We know that the ideological root of this process of disintegration of the Stalinist monolith—of the world crisis of Stalinism—is the theory of socialism in one country, and the closely related phenomenon of national-communist messianism ("our" country and "our" country alone—or in the first place—is the true bastion of world revolution). In that sense, our movement was theoretically and politically prepared through decades of struggle against these petty-bourgeois nationalist deviations from Marxism to understand the deeper reasons for political conflicts between different fractions of the bureaucracy spilling over into conflicts at state level between ruling bureaucracies. The overall correct positions that we adopted at the outbreak of the Stalin-Tito rift and of the Sino-Soviet conflict should help us to understand the dynamic of these state conflicts, leading up to wars between bureaucratized workers states. But we have to understand that these nationalist deviations from Marxism have material, social roots as well.

The methods used by Stalin in order to try to bring Tito's Yugoslavia to its knees were the typical methods of great-power bullying: economic blockade; concentration of big military forces on Yugoslavia's frontiers; a huge propaganda barrage inciting parts of the bureaucracy (especially in the army and police) to subvert the Tito apparatus. The purpose was the overthrow of the Tito leadership and the installation at the head of the Yugoslav CP of a faction subservient to the Kremlin.

The Tito leadership, being itself a bureaucracy and not a genuine representative of the Yugoslav proletariat, reacted in a typical—be it audacious—manner by trying to enlarge its popular basis, abolishing forced collectivization of the peasantry, establishing workers self-management in the factories, enlarging the scope of the workers' standard of living and civil liberties (with many limitations, of course, for it wanted to retain its own monopoly of political power at all costs!), and at the same time

maneuvering with imperialist and other bourgeois forces at the international level, and making not a few treacherous concessions to these hostile class forces (e.g., the support of the imperialist war in Korea).

A similar analysis can be made of the spilling over of the Mao-Khrushchev politico-ideological dispute into a full-scale conflict at state level. The Kremlin organized an economic blockade of China at the very moment when the Chinese economy was in a desperate state after the failure of the second round of Mao's "great leap forward," and at a time when the imperialist blockade of China was still in full swing. It refused all military support (especially a nuclear "umbrella") to China when the Pentagon was still busy considering how to "nuke the Chinks." It compounded its counter-revolutionary sins by concentrating more than half a million troops on the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia—indeed, more soldiers than it keeps in Eastern Europe!—including those armed with nuclear warheads directed at the nuclear bases of the People's Republic of China, at its Manchurian industrial centers, at the capital city of Peking, and at the metropolitan area of Shanghai.

The Chinese bureaucrats, caught between both threats upon their power base, reacted in a typical bureaucratic pragmatic manner. First, they withdrew to the line of "supporting oneself by one's own forces," i.e., rationalizing the desperate isolation they found themselves in. Simultaneously, they kept an equal distance from both "super-powers," engaging in "super-revolutionary" rhetoric. At the same time, they were looking for serious openings. The openings did not come from the Kremlin and its satellites. They came first from the European and Japanese imperialists, on the commercial and economic front. Then they came from Washington, through prudent moves of military disentanglement.

Peking responded enthusiastically, ready to sacrifice the Vietnamese revolution in exchange for these openings. The similarities to Stalin's attitudes, and Khrushchev's, under analogous circumstances, are too striking not to conclude that what was involved here was not some special deviation of the Chinese rulers, but general characteristics of the bureaucratic caste as such.

With hindsight we should have understood, at least from the middle 1960s, that a *potential* war danger was inherent in this transposition of the interbureaucratic conflicts to state levels and the use of all the classical paraphernalia of great-power diplomacy in these conflicts. But what is true is the fact that the actual transformation of this *potential* threat into *actual wars* marks a new stage in the degeneration of the bureaucracy.

With hindsight too, the military invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 can be seen as testing grounds of that tendency, although neither of them evolved into full-scale wars of the Vietnam-Kampuchea or China-Vietnam type. And obviously, while we understand this war danger today much better, we have to stress that, at least at the present level of the world relationship of forces, these will be *limited wars* (which does not necessarily mean that they can't take the form of long-term guerrilla wars) compared to the wars occasioned by long-term structural economic conflict of interests, e.g., interimperialist conflicts, colonial wars of conquest, national wars of liberation, or wars between different social systems (imperialism versus workers states).

There is no basic social reason why the Chinese leadership should be "allied to U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union." Its needs of modernization could be at least partially satisfied by the Soviet Union as much as by imperialism. In playing one against the other—as they already have with different imperialist powers—the Chinese bureaucrats would minimize costs of credits and maximize gains. Furthermore, modernization through cooperation with imperialism alone will impose increasing financial burdens upon the Chinese workers state, which, like the example of Eastern Europe and especially that of Yugoslavia show, have to be stopped at a certain ceiling lest they disrupt the planned economy as such. When that ceiling is reached, there arises a genuine material pressure in favor of "dividing the burden"



Vietnamese troops march toward border.



between Moscow, Frankfurt, Tokyo, and Wall Street. This is what happened in Yugoslavia. This is what happened in Poland and Hungary. It will happen in Peking too . . . if the Kremlin wants it to happen.

From this line of analysis there flows a decisive political conclusion. The Fourth International is opposed to wars between bureaucratized workers states. It considers them utterly reactionary and irresponsible. They only help imperialism and hinder the cause of world revolution. They are against the interests of the international working class and against the cause of the liberation of oppressed semicolonial and colonial peoples. We are against the invasion of Kampuchea by the regular Vietnamese army. We are against the invasion of Vietnam by the Chinese army. We are against any attack upon Chinese territory by the Soviet army and its satellites. We say: fight in common against imperialism and capitalism, not against workers and peasants of other workers states! And we add: if and when the workers and poor peasants of these countries will have the real political power to decide over war and peace, *such wars will never happen again!*

Certainly, the defense of the Vietnamese revolution is today one of the key tasks of the Fourth International. The question is: how, and by what means? We are convinced that the invasion of Kampuchea did not help but rather undermined that defense. There is no "liberal humanitarianism" nor an atom of "petty-bourgeois pacifism" behind this principled stand. (Although, to repeat it again, we find it morally repulsive and contrary to the elementary needs of raising working-class consciousness to identify legitimate concern for the lives of Kampuchean, Vietnamese, Chinese, or Soviet workers and peasants, a refusal to see these lives sacrificed for the sake of sordid interbureaucratic squabbles, with "liberal humanitarianism.")

We are neither opposed to armed mass insurrection, nor to wars of national liberation, nor to fraternal aid—including military aid—by a victorious revolution to the rising workers and peasants of other countries. Our opposition to wars between bureaucratized workers states is based upon a correct understanding of the very nature of the hardened bureaucratic castes engaged in these wars, of their relations with world revolution and the world proletariat.

We reject out of hand the idea that *any* faction of the bureaucracy in any way whatsoever has the "historical" mission or "objective function" to "centralize" the interests of the so-called "socialist camp," i.e., the bureaucratized workers states in their totality, in confrontation with the imperialist and capitalist forces either regionally or globally. The whole historical record, on which our analysis of the bureaucracy is based, proves precisely the opposite. Each of these factions of the bureaucracy—the Kremlin one as much as the Peking one, and, alas, also the Hanoi one—systematically *sacrifice the general* interests of the world proletariat and the oppressed peoples, the general interests of world revolution, to the *particularist* narrow conservative self-interests of defending *its own* power and privileges, regardless of what happens elsewhere.

In fact, the Soviet bureaucracy as well as the Chinese bureaucracy, the Vietnamese leadership as well as the Pol Pot one, are conducting the conflict ideologically in the narrowest terms: whipping up chauvinistic—if not racist—hatred against "the Mongols," "the Viets," "the Han," and so on. With this despicable nationalism is combined a callous celebration of the "tens of thousands of Chinks," of the "Viet aggressors," "exterminated" in the war, without a single consideration for the fact that workers are shooting workers, peasants are shooting peasants, and none are shooting imperialists, capitalists, or landlords. To see only clever statecraft, or diabolical maneuvers by imperialism, behind this scandalous spectacle is just covering up for Stalinism. Behind this are the ultimate fruits of the petty-bourgeois nationalist poison of "socialism in one country."

We likewise reject out of hand any conjunctural approach to the question, which consists in pointing out that "in a given situation" a given bureaucracy is "objectively" more (or less) counter-revolutionary than another one. Such impressionistic considerations not only are condemned to be bypassed by events from one



"Speculations of what really went on during Deng's US visit are largely beside the point."

day to another. (Remember the theoreticians who drew all kinds of conclusions from the temporary alliance between Stalin and Hitler!) They sin profoundly by subordinating the structural similarities between *all* workers states to considerations based upon conjunctural practices. Any serious blow against the People's Republic of China today would be a blow against a workers i.e., a blow for the restoration of capitalism in China, and not a blow against "an ally of U.S. imperialism." The same is true of any serious blow against any workers state without exception.

It is not very smart to mentally rearrange one's analysis of the world situation around the bizarre proposition that Washington's main purpose today is to "roll back" the Indochinese revolution out of Kampuchea. It seems rather obvious that the strategic goals of keeping control over Middle East oil, preventing a socialist revolution in Western Europe, and maintaining Latin America under its domination, loom much larger in its eyes. But in order to further these key goals, it needs close collaboration with the Kremlin much more than with Peking—which can't deliver any goods in these areas. Why should Washington deliberately jeopardize its own vital interests by ganging up with Peking against Moscow, merely for the purpose of reconquering the Kampuchean market?

As for the Kremlin, its propaganda machine is running along the following lines: You dirty Chinese hegemonists, you are undermining détente, you are trying to collaborate with Washington in order to prevent us from better collaborating with Washington. And you Western governments, your sending arms to the Chinese is stupid because in the long run they will be used against you.<sup>35</sup> All of this is a far cry from a world situation allegedly dominated by U.S. imperialism's frantic attempts to go on to the offensive with Chinese help against the Vietnamese revolution.

In fact, most bourgeois analysts insist that Washington is giving preference to the SALT II treaty with Moscow, over and above any benefit it could obtain from the interbureaucratic conflict in Southeast Asia and from closer links with Peking.<sup>36</sup> And the bourgeois governments of the ASEAN countries, while satisfied because the dynamic of the Indochinese revolution is weakened by these conflicts, are worried as much by the Chinese

35. On this last point, see *Izvestia*, December 12, 1978.

36. *International Herald Tribune*, February 1, 1979; *Financial Times*, February 28, 1979.

military buildup as by the Vietnamese one.<sup>37</sup> They have good reasons for this—and a sound class instinct. For, independently from conjunctural alignments and realignments, the class nature of the various states (and armies) will decisive in the long run in determining their role in world politics.

More generally, imperialism can and will try to use the interbureaucratic conflicts to gain advantages and to change the relationship of forces and stop the spread of revolution. But its basic historical goal remains not to weaken Moscow against Peking or vice versa, but to restore capitalism. For that purpose, the class nature of *all* the workers states remains a formidable obstacle, regardless of their conjunctural opportunist and treacherous maneuvers.

Much has been made of the fact that Washington knew about Peking's attack against Vietnam beforehand, and either gave the green light enthusiastically, or failed to give the red light, or was so divided in its reactions that Deng could feel encouraged to act.<sup>38</sup> But these speculations of what really went on in Washington during Deng's visit or in Peking during Blumenthal's trip are largely beside the point. Everybody in the Fourth International agrees on two positions: After its grave defeat in 1975, U.S. imperialism is, *for the time being*, unable to intervene directly in Indochina. It can only seek to reenter the scene by exploiting the conflicts between the Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Kampuchean leaderships.

The differences revolve around the following two points: Did the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and the Chinese intervention in Vietnam facilitate these imperialist maneuvers? We answer yes in each case and have strong evidence in support of this analysis. Comrades Feldman/Clark/Waters answer "no" in the first, and "yes" in the second one. But the evidence for the "no" is very shaky, to say the least.

And the bigger difference is whether in the China-Vietnam conflict Peking acts basically for imperialism—whether Stalin acted for imperialism by attacking Tito, whether Tito acted for imperialism by resisting Stalin, whether the same judgment can be made about the Khrushchev-Mao conflicts, which imperialism could and did exploit, but which they neither generated nor controlled.

We especially reject any "lesser evil" policy as applied to

37. *Le Figaro*, March 12, 1979.

38. *Die Zeit*, March 2, 1979; *Washington Post*, February 19, 1979.

various shades and fractions of the bureaucracies. Inasmuch as we are dealing with countries in which the bureaucratic rule has become hardened and institutionalized—i.e., can only be removed by a political revolution—no bureaucratic caste of another workers state can seriously be seen as being able to further, not to say initiate, such a political revolution. This is politically and socially inconceivable. It would be identical to expecting it to commit suicide. The task of overthrowing each of these privileged bureaucracies is a task to be solved by the workers and poor peasants of each of these countries, not through an invasion by a foreign regular army.

Finally, the question of our principled opposition to any invasion of any bureaucratized workers state by the army of another bureaucratized workers state is closely linked to a correct understanding of the uneven historic, economic, social, political, and cultural development between different workers states, i.e., of the dangerous dynamics of the national question *after* the victory of socialist revolutions, a dynamic which revolutionary Marxists have not yet fully understood and mastered.

How can one forget that China was for more than a century a semicolony, plundered, dismembered, and humiliated by imperialist powers, among which Lenin explicitly included tsarist Russia? How can one forget that the Chinese empire for nearly 2,000 years tried to subjugate the smaller country of Vietnam? How can one forget that Vietnamese emperors in turn threatened the independence of even smaller Kampuchea through repeated aggression and wars of conquest for many centuries? To believe that it is sufficient to realize a socialist revolution—while maintaining huge differences in standard of living and levels of economic development between different workers states—for all the suspicions, the ideological and political consequences of these centuries-old situations to disappear as through magic from the consciousness of millions of people little-versed in Marxism, is to believe in miracles. It is much preferable to be a bit more realistic, to take these suspicions into consideration and to carefully abstain from any act that could stimulate new and long-lasting waves of nationalism. Be it only for this reason, we have to condemn both invasions out of hand!

Lenin, we must note, understood that aspect of the question perfectly. Already in his report on the new Party Program in 1918 he stated categorically that the workers state had to grant self-determination (i.e., independence) even to countries remaining under bourgeois rule, if by acting otherwise the class differentiation between the bourgeoisie and the workers would become

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obscured and slowed down as a result of nationalism in these countries. And in the final codicil to his Testament he stated:

A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.

In respect of the second kind of nationalism we, nationals of a big nation, have nearly always been guilty, in historic practice, of an infinite number of cases of violence; furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it. . . .

That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or "great" nations, as they are called . . . must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality with obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question. . . .

. . . the harm that can result to our state from a lack of unification between the national apparatuses and the Russian apparatus is infinitely less than that which will be done not only to us, but to the whole International, and to the hundreds of millions of the peoples of Asia, which is destined to follow us on to the stage of history in the near future. It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities.<sup>39</sup>

In the interest of world revolution and of defending the international solidarity of toilers, we had better take these warnings of Lenin deeply to heart!

The *only* exception to the above-stated general rule that we could visualize today would be a situation of full-scale general war of imperialism against the workers states. If in such a situation—in which the survival of the workers states as such would be immediately threatened—one or two of the ruling bureaucracies allied themselves *militarily* to imperialism, operations by the armies of the other workers states on the territories of these countries would then be justified. But even in that case, all the above-mentioned considerations should be taken into consideration—especially the fact that *we* would call upon the workers of these few countries to themselves overthrow the treacherous bureaucrats ruling them. The victory of such a political revolution would be a thousand times preferable to a foreign invasion and occupation—even in the framework of world war—which would have numerous negative consequences for the survival of the workers state as such.

We must add that we still believe such an eventuality to be extremely unlikely—and that we completely refuse to identify a situation of "preventive moves in view of a potential war danger" (which might exist for half a century or more!) with a situation of an actual world war.

Imperialism makes a lot of political and ideological capital out of the recent crimes of the bureaucracies in Southeast Asia. It will make even more capital out of them tomorrow. It will try to utterly confuse and disorient the international working class and the freedom fighters in the semicolonies by shouting at the top of its many voices—some well-paid, some rather eloquent, some reaching deep into the organized labor movement—that events have shown that Marx was wrong when he thought that wars would disappear with capitalism; that Lenin was wrong when he had written into the first constitution of the Soviet Union that war was structurally tied to capitalism and, likewise, peace to socialism; that Marxism and proletarian internationalism are bankrupt when armies marching under the Red Flag with the hammer and sickle are fighting each other.

We have to answer that imperialist offensive head-on. We have to denounce its hypocrisy and diversionist character. Compared to the victims of the past and present imperialist wars, the tragic victims of what is happening in Southeast Asia are and will remain a tiny minority. Compared with the threats that the existence of imperialism poses for the very survival of humanity,



Khmer Rouge soldiers on patrol in June 1978.

the interbureaucratic military conflicts remain a secondary aspect of world development.

But we cannot answer the imperialist propaganda machine adequately by denying or minimizing the extent of the bureaucracy's crimes. The analogy with the bourgeois "human rights offensive" is eloquent here. Any line of defense against that offensive of the type "imperialism is really responsible for all that" or "you are exaggerating the extent of the slave-labor camps in the USSR under Stalin" was condemned to collapse sooner or later. It actually helped the imperialist propaganda machine. We have to look reality squarely in the face. We have to speak out what is. Only the truth is revolutionary.

The truth is that the wars started by the different bureaucracies in Asia are unspeakable crimes of the bureaucracy against the working class and socialism that have to be condemned as such. They have to be explained as having nothing to do with socialism, like the Moscow Trials had nothing to do with socialism. Not Marx, or Lenin, or socialist revolutions are responsible for these wars, but the privileged bureaucracies that, in the last analysis, are the results of the survival of capitalism on an international scale and have to be overthrown by political revolutions.

What stands vindicated in the light of these bloody events is not the hypocritical stance of blood-smeared imperialism, but the principled struggle of the Left Opposition, of the Fourth International against the bureaucracy, against "socialism in one country," against petty-bourgeois nationalism, for proletarian internationalism, for world revolution and socialist democracy, for a united front of all workers states against imperialism. This is the only principled line of defense. It is also, in the long run, the only effective one.

39. V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1975), pp. 135, 137-38.

March 15, 1979

## The Murder of Proletarian Internationalism

[The following two articles appeared as the centrespread feature in the March 15 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the weekly newspaper sponsored by the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International. The introduction below is by *Socialist Challenge*.]

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Sixty years ago this month, delegates from 35 revolutionary organisations responded to an appeal signed by Lenin and Trotsky and gathered in Moscow. The Communist International was born.

Twenty-four years later its death was formally announced by Stalin and it was cremated without any fuss or pomp. In reality it had died long before that, and with it had been buried all the internationalist aspirations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The murder of proletarian internationalism four decades ago recently reaped its bitter harvest on the battlefields of Indochina. What went wrong?

## The Burial of the Comintern

By Tariq Ali

The theoretical basis of internationalism was deeply embedded in the consciousness of the entire Bolshevik leadership. One important fact determining the insurrection in October 1917 had been Lenin's belief that a revolution was imminent in Germany.

The revolution in Russia was seen by all Bolsheviks as the harbinger of proletarian revolutions throughout Europe.

The notion of "building socialism in one country" appeared bizarre even six years after the revolution. In 1924 Stalin wrote:

"The overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian government in one country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. . . .

"Can this task be accomplished, can the final victory of socialism in one country be attained, without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries? No, *this is impossible*.

"To overthrow the bourgeoisie, the efforts of one country are sufficient—the history of our revolution bears this out. For the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia, are insufficient.

"For this the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are necessary. . . ."

The formation of the Communist International was, therefore, a vital necessity not just for the oppressed of the world, but also for the Russian workers.

There could be many criticisms of some of the tactics adopted by the Comintern in

its early years, but its aim was never in doubt. The Comintern was created to unify revolutionaries throughout the world, to use the strengths of the Russian revolution in order to aid the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism on a global scale.

The message which emerged from the Soviet leaders was concise and clear: if you want to help the Soviet Union, then make the revolution in your own countries.

The first four congresses of the Comintern were held annually from 1919 to 1922. Following Lenin's death, the sharp split inside the Russian party, and the victory of Stalin, they became less and less frequent.

The sixth congress, which decided to label social-democrats as "social-fascists," was held in 1928; the seventh and last congress was held in 1935. This latter embarked on the strategy of popular fronts, a grotesque caricature of the early Comintern positions on the united front. The logic was obvious.

From 1933 onwards the Comintern disappeared from Stalin's speeches and writings. There was one mention in March 1939 when he denounced as slanderous the allegation that the CI was fomenting revolutions. Then in 1943 he announced its dissolution, stating that it would "put an end to a calumny."

In reality the Comintern had ceased to be a revolutionary force after the fourth congress. It was increasingly being misused by the dominant faction in the Russian party.

Inner-party disputes in the CPSU determined the line in China in the 1920s. The defeat of the 1927 uprising in Shanghai

was a serious blow for the working class in China and Russia.

By the 1930s the contours of presentday Soviet foreign policy had been firmly established. The defeat in Germany had been utilised to ram the theory of "socialism in one country" down the throat of every Communist Party.

The main task confronting Communist parties throughout the world was, according to the Stalinised Comintern, to ensure the existence of the Soviet Union. How? Here Stalin stood Leninism on its head.

The tactics of CPs were to be determined not by the need to overthrow the bourgeoisie in their own countries, but by the narrowly defined interests of the Soviet state. Thus the CPs were to align themselves with the bourgeoisie of their own countries if the local ruling class was on good terms with the Soviet Union.

The zig-zags carried out by the Communist parties and their unquestioning loyalty to the Soviet state and its bureaucracy reflected a form of perverted internationalism. It destroyed them as revolutionary parties, however.

In France, in 1936, the CP helped to defuse a strike wave of revolutionary proportions; in Spain the CP organised a civil war *within* the working class by liquidating forces on its left; in Greece Stalin disarmed the partisans at a crucial stage. After the war the French and Italian CPs loyally accepted the agreement at Yalta.

Where revolutions were made they were carried out by parties which broke empirically with Stalin: Yugoslavia, Vietnam, and China are the best examples.

The dominant characteristic of Soviet foreign policy became that of defending the status quo. For this was the best way of preserving the stability of bureaucratic rule.

Peaceful co-existence was first practised by Stalin, then by Khrushchev, and finally by Mao, with devastating results for the international workers movement. The internationalism of Lenin was replaced by the national chauvinism of the bureaucracy.

In order to defend this regime the bureaucracy was quite capable of moving outwards. The assimilation of Eastern Europe, with the establishment of regimes modelled on the Stalinist monstrosity in Russia, was required to consolidate its military and political position in Europe. It was necessary to contain imperialism.

Secondly, the fact that the bureaucracy presides over a society in which capitalism does not exist compels it towards an objec-



tive tension with imperialism.

So, although Soviet foreign policy has no revolutionary content whatsoever, it is a fact that the Soviet Union provided vital military and economic aid to the Cuban revolution. An extension of that was the decision of the Russian leaders not to oppose the Cuban intervention in Angola.

There can be little doubt that the Soviet Union is the only major power which provides military aid designed to bring down the settler regimes in southern Africa. The important point is that it is quite happy to assign the accomplishment of this task to African nationalists.

The Kremlin is totally uninterested in aiding the building of even pro-Moscow

Communist parties in the region!

Even where it is possible to create new Cubas (in the positive sense), the Kremlin advises caution and seeks to smother all spontaneous mass initiatives. Angola, South Yemen and Afghanistan are all states that are proclaimed by the Western press to be "communist."

In fact they are curious hybrids: isolated by imperialism, held at arm's length by Comecon, but constructing powerful state apparatuses with the backing of the USSR and East Germany.

All three states are in vital strategic areas. If they went the way of Cuba they would considerably weaken the imperialist hold in the region. But until now they have

been used, in differing degrees, as instruments of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy.

It is a tragedy that sixty years after the Comintern was founded there is not the slightest trace of internationalism in the actions of those parties which once belonged to it.

On an international scale today the sole repository of the traditions of the early Comintern is the Fourth International founded by Trotsky in 1938.

Those of us who belong to it can be justifiably proud at upholding the banner of proletarian internationalism. But a gulf still exists between where we are and where we aim to go. □

## How Can There Be Wars Between Workers States?

By Livio Maitan

Countries, which claim to be Marxist-Leninist, and where capitalism has been overthrown, are and have been involved in military operations or even partial wars against countries of the same social character.

This raises at least two questions: What are the causes of these conflicts? Is it possible that in future other conflicts of this kind will develop and take on the dimensions of a war unlimited in time and space?

Trotskyists characterise a series of European and Asian countries (not to mention Cuba, which is a very specific case) as transitional societies. But at the same time they specify that these societies have all suffered a profound bureaucratic degeneration or deformation.

This bureaucratisation consists of two basic elements: the absence of socialist democracy allowing the effective participation of the masses—and in the first place the working class—in political leadership, and the construction of "socialism" within the limits of a single country.

In other words, if certain structural elements are absent or are completely deformed, the society being built *concretely* takes on very specific characteristics, and it is inevitably drawn into a different dynamic from that of a society actually advancing towards socialism.

The absence of socialist democracy means that the working class and the mass of working people in general are excluded from political leadership. It means, for instance, that decisions on war or peace can be made without the masses being able to express their will and make it count.

The building of socialism in one country means that the national state—inherited from the bourgeoisie—becomes the framework of socialist construction. This is even necessary and preferable according to the

theorisations of half a century (from those of Stalin/Bukharin in 1924 to those of the Communist parties today) and in the practice of the existing workers states.

This is a *central* element. The national state as such is presented as the foundation of the transitional society: in fact, it is the source of the bureaucracy's power.

Can one say that this has economic roots? Only in a mediated form, in the sense that the bureaucrats conceive of economic construction within this national framework.

But the source of bureaucratic power is control over the state apparatus—and the party apparatus which is essentially integrated into the state. That is why the basic motivation is a political one, which flows from the logic of a state constructed within a national framework, inherited from capitalism.

Conflicts between workers states are inevitable once one accepts such a framework and such a logic—once one denies what, for Marxism and as far as working class interests are concerned, is the absolute prerequisite for real socialist construction: an international economic unity which involves from the start the breaking down of existing national limits.

These conflicts can be fuelled by, among other things, different or even opposed economic interests. This was the case in the immediate post-war years in relation to the mixed societies between the USSR and the countries of Western Europe; and it could arise now in the event of certain specific choices made by Comecon.

But the fundamental causes are to be found on the *political* level: what international policy should be adopted in a given period, what agreements made and what alliances sought, what form of military preparation and defence should be chosen.

An example is the decisive importance at the start of the Sino-Soviet conflict of the

problem of detente and relations with the United States (at the time the positions held were the opposite of what they are today) and the question of nuclear weapons (the Chinese refused to accept Moscow's thesis that the USSR was and should remain the nuclear shield of the entire "socialist world").

From the viewpoint of "socialism in one country" it becomes logical to accept and even to advocate a division into spheres of influence; and therefore to become preoccupied with the defence—and eventual extension—of these spheres. Border questions in turn acquire an importance which far exceeds their intrinsic significance.

*In fact a terrible logic is unleashed which can escape the control of the bureaucratic leading groups themselves and carry them further than they would wish.*

How can such disputes, based on the existence of different "socialisms in one country," become transformed into armed conflicts?

On the basis of what has already occurred, one can outline three possibilities:

1. A bureaucratic leadership intervenes militarily when it considers that there exists a short-term danger of capitalist restoration in another workers state, whose leadership seems incapable of confronting the danger.

As we know, that was Moscow's justification for its interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. But in fact this theoretical hypothesis has yet to be translated into reality.

2. A bureaucratic leadership intervenes with its army to prevent or destroy mass antibureaucratic movements taking on a dynamic of political revolution. This is what happened in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In these cases what occurred was more exactly civil war, where a "foreign" bureaucracy intervened against both the

masses and sections of the native bureaucracy, because Moscow considered that the latter were incapable of warding off the threats to the bureaucratic regime itself, or were involved in an extremely dangerous dynamic of concessions.

3. Bureaucratic leaderships engage in military conflicts without there being any danger of capitalist restoration or political revolution because of the logic of competing interests of "socialisms in one country"—in other words, the defence or extension of spheres of interest, the maintenance of control by one country over another which seeks to win greater independence for itself, etc.

This is what happened with the Sino-Soviet conflict, especially in the present phase and with the current conflicts in Asia.

This article does not aim to draw conclusions as to political orientation or to advance precise slogans. What it is concerned to underline is that the logic of socialism in one country—just like the bureaucratic denial of socialist democracy—has to be fought from a revolutionary position, from the perspective of a political revolution for the overthrow of the ruling bureaucratic caste.

This does not exclude the adoption of temporary tactical positions in response to particular attitudes or moves by this or that section of the bureaucracy.

But, from the strategic point of view, revolutionaries must fight—today more than ever—against all the bureaucratic regimes, whatever their specific characteristics and whatever the ideological/political justifications they put forward. □

## Position of the Colombian PST

# China Out of Vietnam!

By Camilo González

[The following article appeared in the March 1 issue of *El Socialista*, the weekly paper of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Colombia. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

Humanity has seen manifestations of barbarism, reaching unimaginable extents, as a result of the exploiters' lust for wealth throughout the ages. Without going back too far, we can recall the Second World War and the colonial wars, in which the imperialists have given proof of their capacity for destruction.

Vietnam itself, until 1975, was the scene of a series of struggles between the Vietnamese people and various imperialist countries.

But now we are witnessing something completely different—not a confrontation between nations as a result of the contradictions of capitalism, but rather a major war between workers states. The occupation of Vietnamese territory by China and the war that has been unleashed on the northern border of Vietnam form part of a new process of military confrontations between proletarian states, between forces, armies, or guerrilla units that claim to be in favor of eliminating the exploitation of man by man.

### China's Criminal 'Lesson'

As this article is written, the international news media reports that a massive military offensive by the Chinese army against Vietnam is being prepared, as a new step in the escalation that began February 17. A number of provincial capitals, including Lang Son and Lao Cai, are being occupied by the invading troops. If we go by the figures given by the two sides, the number of communist workers killed—Chinese and Vietnamese—already surpasses 30,000. Everything indicates that we are seeing the beginning of aggression by one of the most powerful workers states against a small country that is also seeking to build socialism.

The Chinese leaders argue, as Deng Xiaoping said during his U.S. tour, that they are "teaching Vietnam a lesson" for having sent troops to Cambodia to participate in the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime, a close ally of Beijing.

Thus we are confronted with two inter-

connected events. The first was the Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia with 100,000 troops to support the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (FUNKSN) in the overthrow of Pol Pot. In this act Vietnam counted on the favorable attitude of the USSR. Now, forty days after that intervention, we are faced with the occupation and "declaration" of war by China against Vietnam.

### Bureaucratic Ultrationalism

Today, the workers of the world are asking themselves: Why are these battles, aggressions, and occupations occurring among workers states? The only valid answer is the one given by revolutionary Marxists: The central reason lies in the bureaucratic and ultranationalist degeneration or deformation of the workers states, in particular of the USSR and China.

The ultranationalism of the bureaucracies has long expressed itself in the abandonment of the basic principles of Marxism and proletarian internationalism, leading the workers states to subordinate the interests of the proletarian revolution to those of the immediate welfare of their own nations. It is the revisionist claim to be building socialism in one's own country—be it China, the USSR, or another—in isolation from the problems of the rest of the workers states and from the course of the world revolution.

This bureaucratic nationalism has manifested itself in different forms. It was this typically Stalinist conception that led the USSR to invade Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. More recently, as a result of their having abandoned internationalism in favor of collaboration with the capitalist classes, we have seen the USSR supporting the Videla dictatorship in Argentina and China offering its collaboration to the bloody Pinochet regime.

China's aggression against Vietnam represents a new, tragic link in this chain, all the more serious inasmuch as the war threatens to involve the two most powerful workers states. It is also worse because China is seeking military support from imperialism.

For the Chinese bureaucracy, the "lesson to Vietnam" is justified above all as a way of dealing a blow to Soviet "hegemonism and expansionism" in Indochina. The Chinese CP leadership has for some time upheld the false theory that the USSR is social-fascist and represents a more dan-

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gerous enemy than imperialism. This is why the turn to the West on the part of the bureaucracy headed by Deng—besides being an attempt to solve China's economic problems—has involved seeking a political and military alliance with the United States against the USSR.

#### **China Out of Vietnam!**

The event on which the workers movement and revolutionary forces on a world scale are now obliged to speak out is above all China's aggression against Vietnam. Our demand is: Stop the aggression! Immediate withdrawal of all Chinese troops from Vietnam!

The biggest beneficiary of this criminal aggression by China against Vietnam, and of the sharpening of contradictions between China and the USSR, is imperialism. It is taking advantage of the situation in order to recover some lost ground and regain the initiative against the workers movement in the capitalist countries and against the proletarian revolution in general. The recent U.S. defeat in Indochina, which reflected the antiwar sentiment among the American people and which further weakened Yankee hegemony within the imperialist system and against the USSR, presents an obstacle to direct U.S. military intervention. But on the other hand, we see a stepping up of the ideological and diplomatic campaign by the imperialists against socialism as an alternative for the masses of the capitalist countries, and against the workers parties and national liberation movements.

The aggression by China against Vietnam and the confrontation among workers states provide openings for the imperialist counteroffensive.

In this situation, revolutionary Marxists point to the necessity of a united front of the workers states and the international workers movement against imperialism. This in turn serves to expose the criminal policy of the bureaucracies.

To the policies of aggression and confrontation among workers states, we Trotskyists also counterpose the call for the working masses of those countries and of the world to fight for political revolution and for the formation of a democratic federation of the workers republics that now exist.

#### **Immediate Withdrawal of Vietnamese Troops From Cambodia! Let the Cambodian Workers and Peasants Decide for Themselves!**

The intervention of the Vietnamese army in Cambodia in no way justifies Chinese aggression against Vietnam nor diminishes the need to condemn it. Nonetheless, that intervention must be judged in light of the interests of advancing the

socialist revolution in Indochina and around the world.

The fall of Pol Pot was the result of two factors:

- The regime established in April 1975 under Pol Pot, a regime that had defeated imperialism, took the form of a despotic dictatorship. It imposed a total militarization of the economy, massive depopulation of the cities by bloody and violent methods, and a policy of social transformations sustained by a permanent "war economy" and by Chinese aid.

These circumstances made possible the formation of an opposition headed by former commanders of the anti-imperialist army. The FUNKSN was formed in December 1978 with the participation of about 20,000 Cambodian exiles in Vietnam and with direct Vietnamese assistance. It is this front that today constitutes the new government of Cambodia, having overthrown Pol Pot with the decisive support of the Vietnamese army.

- Nationalist confrontations between Vietnam and Cambodia have been going on for some time. The revolutionary victory over imperialism in 1975 failed to eliminate such confrontations and open the way for economic integration and cooperation between the two states. Nor were the transformations in Cambodia and South Vietnam accompanied by steps toward the Federation of Socialist States of Indochina. Instead, the nationalist confrontations became more acute. They now take place within the framework of the unfolding struggle for position in South-

east Asia between the two great working-class powers—the USSR and China—and their allies.

Vietnam has proclaimed the need for a federation of socialist republics of Indochina, but the way they have sought to achieve this constitutes an obstacle to and an attack on the actual formation of such a federation. This is because Vietnam's policy is to put its national interests above everything else, and to play the role of an agent of the Soviet bureaucracy's foreign policy. The presence of the Vietnamese army is in direct conflict with Cambodian self-determination.

The defeat of the Pol Pot government was a necessity in Cambodia and Indochina, but it can lead to a deepening of the revolutionary process only insofar as the masses of Cambodian workers and peasants are the principal actors in the process and take up the reins of power themselves. Instead, the FUNKSN has established a government that seems to depend fundamentally on support from the Vietnamese army, which remains as the gendarme in Cambodia.

We do not have at our disposal the analytical means to characterize the class content of the Cambodian state and economy. But independently of that we raise the slogan: Immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia! We say this in order that the workers and peasants of Cambodia might decide for themselves, without the intervention of armed forces from any of the workers states. □

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## U.S. Imperialism—the Main Instigator

By Eduardo Medrano

[The following article appeared in the March 30 issue of *Combate Socialista*, the organ of the Partido Socialista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Socialist Party), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Colombia. The translation and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

Three things must be clearly grasped if the present events in Indochina are to be understood;

1. With the overturn of capitalism in southern Vietnam in April 1978, U.S. imperialism revised its policy toward Indochina as a whole. Its hostility toward the Vietnamese revolution—which had never ceased since its expulsion from there in April 1975—was intensified. For its part, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing (Peking), almost simultaneously with Washington's "turn," began to openly harass the Hanoi regime for its own reasons.

2. The imperialists and the Chinese bureaucrats feared that the triumph of the rebel Kampuchean forces supported by Vietnamese troops might deepen the social revolution taking place in southern Vietnam and extend it to Kampuchea and other parts of southeast Asia, such as Thailand. This was what brought about the reactionary alliance of the United States and China against Vietnam.

3. The conflict between the opposed social systems of Kampuchea and Vietnam—their differing nature and prospects—was a central factor in the lineup of forces in the war that defeated the Kampuchean regime of Pol Pot with Vietnamese aid.

Let us look at some details of this panorama.

### Kampuchea and Vietnam— Both Workers States?

The Vietnamese—who expelled the U.S. imperialists and overthrew the Thieu regime in April 1975—initiated in July 1976 a process of anticapitalist measures. This culminated in April 1978 in the liquidation of capitalism in southern Vietnam. At that time it became possible to integrate the southern economy into the bureaucratized workers state in the north. Under the regime's control, mobilizations of the workers and the youth unfolded in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), the principal industrial and commercial center of southern Vietnam. Thirty thousand enterprises were nationalized, surplus goods were expropriated, and a nationalization of the

agricultural industry was carried through. Land was distributed and the Vietnamese monetary system was unified.

From this process in the south, a workers state arose throughout the length and breadth of Vietnam, based on the expropriation of the capitalists and the nationalization and planning of the economy.

### A Different Road in Kampuchea

The Lon Nol dictatorship, supported by U.S. imperialism, was overthrown in April 1975. The regime that came out of this did not push forward the mobilization of the toiling masses to build a more advanced social system. Quite the contrary: The Pol Pot regime, considering the urban working masses its enemy, evacuated and dispersed the working class into the countryside and liquidated the process of agrarian reform that had been under way through the initiative of the peasants.

A deep recession struck the economy. The most vile repression imaginable became generalized throughout the towns and countryside. Child labor was made universal. Education and all cultural activity was done away with. The working day was lengthened, while consumption was held to a minimum in order to maximize accumulation of a surplus that served only to fatten the purses of the petty bourgeoisie ensconced in the state apparatus. The most intimate aspects of citizens' lives came under the regime's supervision.

Rather than bring about the appearance of a workers state, such measures closed off all possibilities of progress for Kampuchean society.

### The Imperialist Response

Among the first signs of a change in Washington's attitude toward Vietnam because of the qualitative change in the south was its new opinion regarding the Pol Pot dictatorship. Before, Carter had called that regime "the worst violator of human rights." But now it came to be viewed as a possible buffer against the expansion of the Vietnamese social revolution. In turn, the Pol Pot regime faced growing economic and political difficulties internally, the armed response of the Vietnamese to its border provocations, and the growth of rebel forces. It thus began to turn toward imperialism and its neocolonial clients.

The Chinese leaders, who were quite closely linked to Pol Pot and company, of course had no objection to such a turn on

Pnompenh's part. The Chinese Stalinists had attempted to dissuade the Vietnamese from overthrowing Thieu in 1975, and they viewed with foreboding the revolutionary changes in southern Vietnam in April 1978. For them the elimination of capitalism in the south was a destabilizing factor in Indochina and an obstacle to their alliance with U.S. imperialism.

The Beijing leaders wasted no time in opening hostilities against Vietnam. Denouncing the expropriations in the south as racist measures, they fostered discontent in order to get the Hoa—people of Chinese origin who had lived in Vietnam for five or more generations—to abandon their homes for fear of terror. Beijing then began threatening to invade Vietnam.

For its part, the Pol Pot regime—once so outspokenly antiforeign—now sought to ingratiate itself with the imperialists. In October it opened its doors to the imperialist press; established trade relations with Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia; extended an invitation to UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim; and redoubled its anti-Vietnam propaganda and its border attacks on Laos and Vietnam.

The Thai regime, facing growing internal opposition, looked favorably on Pol Pot's changes and began making eyes toward Beijing. Chinese planes were granted permission to fly over Thai territory in order to supply the Kampuchians.

Imperialist powers such as Japan and Australia watched Pol Pot's moves and began to move toward establishing commercial relations with Kampuchea. The changes in Vietnam were causing them concern as well. In the judgment of the Australian government, it was essential "to preserve [Kampuchea] as an independent buffer between non-communist Thailand and communist Vietnam."

It was clear that a new military encirclement of Vietnam was in preparation.

In those circumstances—mounting Chinese threats, border attacks from Kampuchea, and so on—the Vietnamese leadership had to make a sharp turn toward the Soviet Union. Vietnam joined the Comecon, the Soviet economic bloc, and in November signed a twenty-five-year defense and aid pact with Moscow.

That was too much for U.S. imperialism. The reprisal was not long in coming. Diplomatic relations with the United States, which had been going forward, were frozen indefinitely by Washington. The neocolonial regimes in the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore refused to establish trade relations with Vietnam, despite Hanoi's efforts to make it clear that it would oppose any revolutionary struggle in those countries in exchange for such relations. Pham Van Dong offered guarantees during a tour of those countries, but to no avail. In December the Vietnamese foreign minister announced in Tokyo that the United States was raising



three new issues before allowing normalization—Vietnam's ties with the Soviet Union, its dispute with Cambodia, and the Vietnamese refugees.

There was no little alarm in Washington over the pact between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The full reestablishment of relations with China was one of Carter's moves to counter that blow. "If the Soviet Union tries to expand its naval and air capabilities with a base in Cam Ranh Bay [in southern Vietnam], the United States should consider a move to set up some kind of security relationship with China," an "authoritative source" in Washington was quoted as saying in the February 25 *New York Times*.

The Chinese aggression against Vietnam and Carter's attitude toward it were perhaps the first fruits of that "security relationship."

### Fighting for Its Life

In light of these developments, it is possible to evaluate correctly the present conflicts in Indochina, and, in particular, Vietnam's participation in the overthrow of Pol Pot. Two things must be noted regarding the latter. With the hostile moves by the United States and China under way—for various reasons—the improvement in diplomatic relations between those two countries convinced the Vietnamese leaders that they had to try to break through the diplomatic and military encirclement at its most vulnerable point—the Pol Pot regime.

The Vietnamese leadership's fear was not groundless; what they faced was quite a sophisticated reinforcement of the military noose and economic and diplomatic blockade against their country. They faced the strengthening on the Indochinese peninsula of an increasingly anti-Vietnamese regime in Kampuchea that was becoming more and more closely linked, even militarily, to China and the United States.

In bringing down Pol Pot, the Vietnamese leaders acted in a defensive and bureaucratic way. They were not seeking to extend the revolution beyond their borders, nor did they defend their state by calling for mobilizations of the working class around the world in their support. Their actual objective was to defend the Vietnamese workers state militarily from the encirclement that was arising around it, and in this way defend their interests as a privileged caste, through joint military action between the Vietnamese forces and the Kampuchean rebels.

For the same reasons, Vietnam has a treaty with Laos that permits the stationing of 25,000 Vietnamese troops there. The Laotian government, formed in 1975 by the Pathet Lao rebels, is fighting against right-wing guerrillas trained and provisioned by the CIA and the Thai regime.

In helping to overthrow Pol Pot, Viet-

nam was *fighting for its life*, just as it is doing today against the Chinese invasion. Washington's demand that in exchange for the withdrawal of Chinese troops Vietnam must withdraw its own from Kampuchea is designed to transform the victim into the criminal in the eyes of world public opinion. The calculated and half-hearted request for a cease-fire made by Blumenthal in Beijing fools no one about the fact that in practice Carter viewed China's aggression favorably during Deng's stay in the United States.

The real source of the war is Washington. China—and in this it coincides with Carter—seeks to pressure Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea. But China differs with Carter inasmuch as it does not seek to conquer the Indochina peninsula or reintroduce capitalism into Vietnam. That would directly affect its own survival. Of course, China is seeking terrain in order to negotiate with Vietnam the fate of Kampuchea and hold back anticapitalist advances there. In that way, China seeks to improve its relations with imperialism.

At the same time, Beijing's criminal actions against Vietnam not only affect the immediate victim but also constitute an attack by the Stalinist bureaucracy against the Chinese workers state itself. This is because the attack on Vietnam isolates China from its only true defenders—the exploited and oppressed around the world.

It is U.S. imperialism that seeks to dismantle the social conquests of the Vietnamese revolution and prevent their extension to Kampuchea. The first step toward achieving the latter goal must be to get the Vietnamese troops out. The imperialists cannot do this themselves because of the political limitations they face, so they have encouraged an ally to do it.

The imperialists seek to cover up their responsibility in the conflict by launching an ideological offensive. This has succeeded in confusing the main forces on the left around the world; the Colombian left has been no exception.

### Confusion on the Left

For example, the weekly *Alternativa* in its March 5 edition absolved U.S. imperialism of any blame and presented the conflict as a struggle involving "Russians against Chinese, Chinese against Vietnamese, Vietnamese against the other inhabitants of Indochina." The most this magazine dared to do was recognize that imperialism "continues to make its influence felt" throughout Asia. So unfortunately, the international bourgeoisie's rabid campaign to smear socialism by presenting the Stalinist bureaucracies and their actions as examples of socialism has found fertile soil in Enrique Santos Calderón's weekly. For *Alternativa* the imperialist offensive against the working class worldwide and especially against the Viet-

namese revolution does not exist. According to them it is only a matter of a "war between socialisms."

Nor has such confusion failed to affect certain Trotskyists. The March 1 issue of *El Socialista*, the organ of the PST,<sup>1</sup> carries an article signed by that organization's political secretary that also exonerates the imperialists. The article declares peremptorily that it is not a question of "a confrontation between nations as a result of the contradictions of capitalism, but rather a major war between workers states."

For the PST political secretary, all that the imperialists are doing is "taking advantage of the situation"; they are not the ones directly responsible. What's more, for Camilo González the Chinese attack on Vietnam only provides "openings" for the "imperialist counteroffensive." Poor imperialism—according to this journalist it is relegated today to a secondary role, now that humanity has entered a new era: "military confrontations between proletarian states."

The position of the Communist Party is erroneous and reactionary. The February 22 issue of *Voz Proletaria* carries an article by Alvaro Vázquez, who launches an hysterical attack on China as the "number one enemy of world peace." He portrays Beijing as seeking to "throw the world into a new conflagration." The immediate source of this idea is to be found in the CP's February 19 declaration, which points to the Chinese attack on Vietnam as a "new colonialist aggression by Beijing," thus confusing the aims of the imperialists with those of the Stalinist Chinese bureaucrats.

In centering their fire on China, all these leftist critics fall into Carter's trap (and that of *El Tiempo* and *El Siglo*).<sup>2</sup> Carter tries to portray the conflict as a struggle among "Asian communists" so that Washington's campaign against Vietnam and the workers of the world can continue to unfold without obstacles.

Our slogan is not "Vietnam out of Kampuchea." In the last analysis it is the Kampuchean masses who must decide on that question. (It was they who welcomed with open arms the Vietnamese troops that were fighting Lon Nol in 1970.)

Our slogans are: U.S. out of Indochina now! Stop the imperialist campaign against the Vietnamese revolution! In that framework, we demand: Chinese troops out of Vietnam now! Let the Soviet Union provide whatever the Vietnamese need, without conditions! □

1. Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party), also a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Colombia. For a translation of the article by Camilo González that Medrano refers to, see page 352.

2. Two Colombian bourgeois dailies.

## Socialist Revolution in Vietnam

By Fred Feldman

[The following article appeared in the April issue of *International Socialist Review*, monthly magazine supplement to the *Militant*.]

\* \* \*

The Vietnamese revolution reached a new watershed last spring with the mass mobilizations that completed the abolition of capitalist property relations in the southern part of the country. This marked the consolidation of a workers state encompassing all Vietnam with a population of 48 million. It was the first extension of socialist revolution since the Cuban masses toppled capitalism almost twenty years ago.

The new stage of the Vietnamese revolution sent shockwaves throughout Southeast Asia, a resource-rich region vital both economically and militarily to U.S., European, and Japanese imperialism. In Laos, the position of the Pathet Lao government brought to power in 1975 by worker, peasant, and student mobilizations, was strengthened against rightist armed bands.

In Kampuchea (Cambodia), the capitalist Pol Pot regime, which increasingly looked toward U.S. imperialism as an ally against the Vietnamese revolution, was toppled by an alliance of the Vietnamese army and Kampuchean rebels.

Most other countries in Southeast Asia—Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, and the Philippines—remain under the thumb of imperialism. These countries have a combined population of 285 million. Their corrupt officials and generals at the service of the capitalists and landlords are fearful that the overthrow of capitalist exploitation in Vietnam will inspire the workers and peasants of their countries to follow suit.

### Imperialists Tighten Noose

Washington and its allies responded to the spring mobilizations and expropriations by stepping up economic and military pressure on Vietnam. The imperialists launched a propaganda barrage around the issue of the "boat people"—most of whom were the expropriated merchants and usurers, their families, and their friends.

In hopes of proving its capacity as a stabilizing force for imperialism in Southeast Asia, the Peking regime placed itself at the service of the U.S. rulers. It joined in the refugee campaign, canceled all aid to Vietnam in June, and last month staged

the brutal invasion of Vietnam's border regions. The Chinese regime's conflict with Vietnam provides a smokescreen behind which the U.S. rulers are stepping up assistance through Thailand to counterrevolutionary forces in Laos and Kampuchea.

Last year's advances in the Vietnamese revolution stand in stark contrast to the reactionary course adopted by the capitalist Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea before its fall in January (see "Revolution and Reaction in Cambodia," by Fred Feldman and Steve Clark in the February 26, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*).

The impact of the Vietnamese revolution on working people in Asia and around the world, and the determination of the imperialists to contain and drive back this revolution, can only be understood by tracing its origins and course.

The overturn of capitalism in South Vietnam is the most recent conquest of one of the deepest popular revolutions of the twentieth century. It was powered by repeated mobilizations over more than thirty years by the worker and peasant masses. This explains why Vietnam is viewed by the imperialists and their satellites as "the greatest threat to stability in Southeast Asia."

### Four Factors

The course of this revolution—from its beginnings in World War II to the present conflicts in Indochina—has been determined by the intertwining of four factors.

Most decisive has been the deep-going mobilization of the masses, including the urban working class and poor, in the struggle against imperialist domination, capitalism, and landlordism. Their heroic struggle has inspired solidarity among working people around the world.

Second is imperialism, the Vietnamese revolution's irreconcilable foe. French, Japanese, and then U.S. imperialism have poured tremendous political, military, and economic resources into unsuccessful efforts to smash the revolution. While it has taken defeats of historic scope at the hands of the Vietnamese, imperialism has never given up the struggle to retain a foothold of capitalist power in Indochina. It still aims to reverse the revolutions that have taken place there.

The third factor is the Vietnamese Communist Party, which has been at the head of the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation since the end of World War II. This is a Stalinist party.

At the time of its founding, the party's

class-collaborationist program and practice were modeled on that of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. As the anti-imperialist struggle unfolded, the VCP also came to express the special interests of the bureaucratic hierarchy that took shape in the liberated zones.

Since the overturn of capitalism in North Vietnam in the late 1950s, the VCP has consolidated its power as a privileged bureaucratic caste.

Oriented for most of the years since World War II toward the peasantry rather than the workers, the VCP was and remains petty bourgeois in composition as well as in program and leadership. It followed the Stalinists' class-collaborationist strategy of using the mass movement of the workers and peasants as a bargaining chip for persuading the imperialists to accept, and the native ruling classes to participate in, a coalition government on a capitalist basis.

As with other Stalinist parties, its basic policy has always been to achieve stability for its own privileges and power.

The Vietnamese CP's class-collaborationist policy required it to try to constrict the struggle within capitalist bounds, to block its extension to other countries, and to suppress all democratic decision-making by the masses, who continually tended to overstep the limitations set by the Stalinists.

But the irreconcilable drive of the imperialists to crush the Vietnamese struggle, and later the workers state from which the CP leaders derive their privileges, often forced the VCP to go further than its Stalinist leaders wished in relying on the mobilization of the workers and peasants as a means of self-defense.

The fourth key factor is the role of Moscow and Peking. The examples of the Russian and Chinese revolutions provided powerful impetus to the Vietnamese workers and peasants, impelling them toward socialist solutions to the problems they faced.

But both the Moscow and Peking rulers represented bureaucratic castes interested in the preservation of their own privileged positions. They feared the Vietnamese revolution as a threat to the international status quo, and thus to their own hopes of attaining stable diplomatic and economic deals with Vietnam's imperialist enemies.

The Stalinist castes in the Soviet Union and China used the miserly aid they provided the Vietnamese as a lever for prying from the Vietnamese leaders further concessions to imperialism—even when this endangered the position and the survival of the Vietnamese CP.

This pattern of treachery has continued right down to the present, as shown by the U.S.-inspired invasion of Vietnam by the Peking regime and the Kremlin's refusal to massively aid Vietnam to repel that invasion.



To end French rule, to liberate the South from U.S. domination, and to abolish capitalism and landlordism, the Vietnamese masses have had to overcome not only the ferocious opposition of U.S., French, and Japanese imperialism, but the obstacles placed in their way by the VCP and by Moscow and Peking.

On several occasions, the imperialists counted on deals with the Stalinists, hoping to freeze, roll back, and ultimately crush the revolution. Each time, however, the pacts have foundered on the fierce determination of millions of Vietnamese women and men to win national independence and liberation from capitalist exploitation. The success of the Vietnamese masses in overcoming the obstacles in their way has made the Vietnamese revolution a special target of imperialism's hatred—and fear.

### Decades of Imperialist Rule

From 1888 to the opening of World War II, Vietnam was directly ruled by French imperialism. The earlier precapitalist monarchy was transformed by the domination of French capitalism in agriculture and industry. Maintaining the facade of an imperial court at Hue, the French forged ties with the Vietnamese landlords and officials. Although many of them chafed at the plunder of the country and their humiliating status as second-class citizens in their own land, they also saw imperialist backing as the last line of defense against the workers and peasants.

In 1940, Japanese troops occupied Vietnam. In 1941, the Vietnamese Communist Party, headed by Ho Chi Minh, initiated the Viet Minh, an alliance of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists directed at fighting Japan. The Viet Minh did not call for independence, but favored reforms within the framework of French rule.

In March 1945, the Japanese rulers saw defeat approaching. In hopes of making matters more difficult for their imperialist competitors, they granted formal independence to Vietnam, designating Bao Dai as emperor.

At the beginning of August 1945, Truman, Churchill, and Stalin—the heads of state of the victorious allies—met in Potsdam. Stalin sought to preserve the wartime alliance with U.S. and British imperialism into the postwar period. He offered to use the prestige of the Soviet Union and the Kremlin's influence over Communist parties to maintain the capitalists' grip on Western Europe and the colonial world. The Potsdam agreements proposed military occupation of Vietnam by British and Chinese Kuomintang troops, preliminary to the restoration of French rule.

But something else happened in August 1945 that upset the apperception for the imperialists and their Stalinist allies: revolution broke out in Vietnam. This was among the first of the colonial revolutions

that exploded at the end of World War II, and one of the biggest.

Hundreds of thousands of workers and poor people marched in Hanoi and Saigon. Peasants seized the land and meted out justice to landlords and other rural oppressors. Workers seized factories. Arms were distributed. A network of people's committees spread over the country, as the colonial governing apparatus collapsed.

The workers and peasants looked to the Vietnamese Communist Party to lead them to independence. Its authority stemmed from participation in the struggle against Japanese imperialism and its ties with the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, which the masses identified with the revolutionary conquests of the Russian workers and peasants.

The VCP, however, went all-out to implement the promises Stalin made at Potsdam. It established a coalition government in Hanoi under Ho Chi Minh that included capitalist parties. Although Ho Chi Minh later indicated he had been willing to keep Bao Dai as emperor, popular opposition forced his abdication. Ho then included Bao Dai in the cabinet.

The government issued a declaration of independence on August 19. It could not have done anything else, given the scope of popular mobilizations around this slogan.

But the new government tried to protect the interests of the imperialists, the landlords, and the capitalists. By doing so, the VCP hoped to convince the French colonialists to tolerate the coalition government.

"All those who have instigated the peasants to seize the landowners' property will be severely and pitilessly punished," said Nguyen Van Tao, a leading Stalinist. "Our government . . . is a bourgeois-democratic government, even though the Communists are now in power."

The Viet Minh called on the people of Saigon to hail the British troops when they disembarked on September 1. Dozens of Trotskyists who opposed this were massacred by the VCP, including the popular Trotskyist leader Ta Thu Thau. People's committees and nationalist formations that tried to organize against the British landing were suppressed.

### British and French Step In

Shortly after arriving, the British troops carried out a coup, arrested Ho's representatives in Saigon, and returned the South to French rule. American ships carried thousands of French soldiers to join the occupying forces. And on September 12, according to CBS correspondent Bill Downs reporting from Vietnam in 1945, U.S. troops were used to crush a demonstration.

Now restricted to the North, the Stalinist-led coalition government continued its retreat.

The Chinese Kuomintang troops in the North did not prove as cooperative as the

British forces in the South in restoring French rule, although their commanders directed a thorough job of plunder. They disarmed French fortifications, made no effort to disarm the Vietnamese, and put up no obstacles to the consolidation of the new government. The Chiang Kai-shek government's hopes of influencing developments in an independent Vietnam played a role in this, but just as important was sympathy for the Vietnamese revolution among rank-and-file Chinese and soldiers and officers.

The French government pressed Ho Chi Minh to allow French forces back into North Vietnam. On March 6, 1946, Ho signed an agreement allowing 25,000 troops under French command to occupy the North and accepting the status of a province in the French Union—the new name for the French Empire. Thus, the Stalinists repudiated the declaration of independence. Ho Chi Minh promised this "compromise" would bring independence "perhaps within five years."

The coalition government carried out joint police operations with French troops against opponents of the pact.

But the French imperialists now saw no need to share power with the VCP. The postwar upsurge of the French working people was under control, thanks to the participation of the French CP in the capitalist de Gaulle government. With the mass movement in Vietnam in retreat, the French armed forces launched an all-out attack. In November 1946 Haiphong was shelled by French warships, killing more than 6,000 persons. A month later, the French government occupied Hanoi, indiscriminately murdering thousands of civilians.

Forces loyal to the coalition government who survived the bloodbath fled to the countryside.

The Vietnamese revolution had been dealt a savage defeat.

As in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, this setback was not inevitable. The mobilized workers and peasants had the power to drive out the imperialists, and end landlordism and capitalism.

But their misleaders turned the country over to the French colonialists. It took the Vietnamese workers and peasants nearly thirty years of war to regain the ground lost due to the betrayal of the August 1945 revolution by the VCP.

### The Struggle Renews

The defeat dealt the Vietnamese revolution, despite its severity, was not definitive. The weakened French imperialists could not consolidate their conquest. The Viet Minh, having retreated to the countryside, found tens of thousands of peasants ready to fight. The French were soon faced with a massive rural revolt and never regained control of most of the countryside. The peasant war lasted for eight years, culminating in the defeat of the

French at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.

The capitalist allies whom Ho Chi Minh had cultivated during World War II and the 1945 revolution recognized the implications of such a deepgoing peasant struggle. One by one they went over to the French or simply withdrew their backing. Bao Dai withdrew from the Viet Minh and accepted the title of emperor from the French occupiers in 1949.

Nonetheless, the Viet Minh repeated its promise to preserve capitalism once in power. Only in 1953 did it even yield to peasant demands for an extensive land reform.

In the last days of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the U.S. rulers—who had been providing 78 percent of the cash for the French war effort since 1950—moved to intervene directly. President Eisenhower considered asking Congress for a mass bombing expedition of 500 planes, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, against the Viet Minh.

But coming only months after the end of the unpopular Korean war, the opposition of American working people to such a move (expressed in Gallup Polls reporting opposition to intervention at ten to one in March 1954) forced Washington to relent. Even the British government, fearful of its own workers, opposed direct intervention.

The victory gave the Viet Minh military predominance throughout Indochina. But once again the Vietnamese people were robbed of the full fruits of their hard-won victory.

#### 1954 Geneva Conference

The Soviet and Chinese Stalinists gave some aid to the Viet Minh and recognized its government during the long guerrilla war. The shift from Stalin's initial support to French rule came in response to imperialism's cold-war drive, which peaked in the Korean War.

During this period, Moscow and Peking fostered armed struggles led by Communist parties in Malaysia, Burma, India, and Indonesia. They did so as a means of relieving imperialist military encirclement, and pressuring the U.S. rulers into accepting "peaceful coexistence" (the Stalinists' term for the international policy of class collaboration).

Having failed to crush the revolution militarily, the imperialists by 1954 turned to Moscow and Peking for help.

At the Geneva conference on Indochina held in July 1954, Moscow and Peking provided an example of what the imperialists might hope to gain through "peaceful coexistence." They put heavy pressure on Viet Minh negotiators to offer a de facto division of the country at the seventeenth parallel.

"A number of members of the Vietnam delegation have declared openly that pressure from Chinese Communist Premier Chou En Lai and Soviet Minister Vyacheslav Molotov forced their regime to accept

less than it rightfully should have obtained here," Tilman Durdin reported in the July 24, 1954, *New York Times*.

In line with the agreement, Viet Minh military forces regrouped in the North, where the Viet Minh established a government at Hanoi. In the South, a caretaker regime under Bao Dai was installed. According to the agreement, elections would be held in March 1956 to unify the country.

All objective observers—and even highly prejudiced ones such as President Eisenhower—agreed that the Viet Minh would have won a fairly conducted election by a handy margin.

#### Viet Minh Policy

Although the Viet Minh government in the North—which became the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)—had little capitalist support, it rejected the idea of overturning capitalism and landlordism to establish a planned economy.

Instead, Ho Chi Minh staked his hopes on peaceful reunification with the south through the 1956 elections. The Viet Minh government tried to demonstrate that it could protect bourgeois property in a united Vietnam.

The French government considered taking up Ho's offers of collaboration. "Under the guidance of Premier Pierre Mendès-France, France planned 'a precedent-setting experiment in coexistence'; she would grant the Viet Minh full control over Vietnam by adhering strictly to the Geneva Accords, and then work closely with Ho Chi Minh 'to preserve French cultural influence and French capital,'" reports Alfred McCoy in *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

The French rulers would have used the time bought by such maneuvers to seek means of re-establishing a more "reliable" government in Vietnam, while simultaneously protecting French capital from U.S. competition.

But the Eisenhower administration had different plans. It refused to sign the accords but promised to abide by them. Actually, it had no intention of allowing the scheduled elections.

It replaced the French puppet Bao Dai with a U.S. protégé, Ngo Dinh Diem. U.S. imperialist domination was consolidated further when Diem's U.S.-built and U.S.-financed army crushed the pro-French Binh Xuyen gangsters, who had previously controlled much of Saigon, in May 1955.

The U.S. rulers also began construction of a network of U.S. military bases in Vietnam.

Armed to the teeth by the U.S. imperialists, Diem pronounced the goal of reunification through eventual conquest of the North. Taking advantage of the withdrawal of Viet Minh forces to the North, he sought to exterminate anyone suspected of Viet Minh sympathies.

Under the guise of "land reform," Diem

tried to roll back the division of the land carried out under Viet Minh auspices in much of the South. Peasants were ordered to pay back rent from 1946 to landlords, who suddenly returned from the French Riviera or similar watering holes.

In line with this course, Diem canceled the scheduled elections.

#### Social Transformation in North

The failure of its strategy for reunification threatened to discredit the Stalinist-dominated regime in the North.

Popular discontent with the lack of progress in living standards, shortages, corruption, and economic disorganization—coupled with continual military threats from the South—pressed the regime to consolidate its position through a sharp left turn.

By the end of 1955, all French-owned businesses had been nationalized.

The Hanoi rulers began to act as a workers and peasants government, initiating a sweeping new land reform at the end of 1955 benefiting the poorest and landless peasants. The result was a massive upheaval that broke the back of landlord power in the economy.

In mid-1956, the regime appears to have tried to impose collectivized farming and large increases in food deliveries to the state. It ran into massive peasant resistance, culminating in a peasant uprising at Nghe An Province, which was bloodily repressed. The Stalinists retreated from forced collectivization, and only in 1959 did cooperatives—in which the peasants still held title to their land—become predominant in agriculture.

At the time of the Nghe An uprising, protests by workers in the coal mining regions and in the suburbs of Haiphong were reported. Workers at Hong Quang protested low living standards. Radio Hanoi listed a promise to raise wages for workers as among the concessions granted by the regime to quiet the disturbances.

By September 1957, the regime was describing the country as in "the transitional period to socialism." After the decisive mass struggles of 1956 and 1957, the remaining centers of capitalist ownership were soon done away with. Virtually all industry had been nationalized by 1960.

As this process went forward, the regime felt compelled to make concessions to demands for more freedom from the intelligentsia and Communist Party members. This was partly inspired by the partial relaxation of police-state controls in the USSR after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956.

The critics challenged the prevalence of privilege and corruption in the regime, expressed sympathy with the Hungarian and Polish uprisings against bureaucratic misrule, and demanded the "right to have tendencies."

Such criticisms posed the threat that the process of overturning capitalism would



escape the bureaucratic caste's control, draw in the workers and peasants, and lead to an antibureaucratic revolution and the establishment of workers and peasants democracy.

This would have led quickly to the loss of the substantial privileges the ruling bureaucratic caste was accumulating. These ranged from sizable income differentials, to special stores and expense accounts catering to the needs of well-placed "cadres"—as the party and state officialdom called itself.

Frightened by the specter of workers democracy, Ho Chi Minh cracked down. A campaign of "reeducation" was begun, in which prominent Communists such as Tran Duc Thao were accused of spreading "Trotskyist" ideas and compelled to recant. Other dissidents were jailed.

#### Impact in South Vietnam

The overturn of capitalism in the DRV deepened the class polarization that was being spurred in the South by Diem's reactionary drive. The sweeping land reform in the North made a deep impression on peasants who saw Diem's troops restoring the southern landlords to their former dominance.

Large-scale resistance broke out in the South in 1957. Led by former Viet Minh cadres who had not gone north, it won wide support from the peasants, particularly minority nationalities and religious sects. At first these efforts were opposed by the Hanoi regime as "premature." This position could not be maintained long, however, given the depth of antilandlord and anti-imperialist sentiment both in the South and in the DRV.

By 1960, the VCP had taken leadership of the movement through the southern-based People's Revolutionary Party, and the National Liberation Front had come into being. It included the PRP and other petty-bourgeois nationalist forces. Many citizens of the DRV who had been born in the South volunteered to join the struggle.

The Vietnamese Stalinists, however, made no adjustment in their fundamental class-collaborationist strategy, which they dubbed "people's war." They concentrated on organizing a peasant army and rejected mobilizing the workers and poor people of South Vietnam's sizable cities, who had a record of militancy going back to the 1930s.

The peasant army was seen as a powerful tool for pressuring the "progressive" bourgeoisie into accepting a coalition government friendly to the DRV and for compelling the U.S. imperialists to acquiesce in such an alliance. To encourage bourgeois support, the National Liberation Front offered to guarantee capitalist property relations, protect the land of "patriotic" landlords, and hold off reunification with the North.

The VCP's strategy, however, did not prevent massive urban struggles from



Viet Minh forces march into liberated Hanoi in 1954.

Der Spiegel

further undermining the proimperialist regime. Determined to fight, the workers and their allies mobilized behind whatever leadership provided an opening for struggle—Buddhist *bonzes* or trade-union officials, students or Catholic priests.

In 1963, the working people of Saigon, Hue, Danang, and other cities brought on the fall of Diem with strikes and demonstrations led by Buddhists and students. A year later, a general strike in Saigon helped bring down one of Diem's successors, Nguyen Khanh.

By this time, well over 10,000 U.S. "advisers" were fighting in Vietnam. But the urban upheavals and the defeats dealt to the Saigon army by NLF guerrillas led U.S. imperialism to greatly escalate the war. Massive bombing raids were carried out against the North and in NLF-held areas of the South. When the bombing ended eight years later, more tons of bombs had been dropped on Vietnam than in all theaters of World War II.

The first units of what became an American expeditionary force of 540,000 were sent in. Eventually, they were joined by troops from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and South Korea.

The impact of the Vietnamese struggle on the region was already being deeply felt.

In Laos, a national liberation struggle had developed in close association with the Vietnamese revolution under the banner of the Pathet Lao, led by the Laotian Communist Party. In an effort to freeze this struggle, the imperialists yielded in 1962 to Pathet Lao demands for a coalition government. The Pathet Lao agreed to accept a minority position in the government.

However, the escalation in Vietnam was accompanied by a U.S. shift in Laos. Massive bombing raids against the Pathet Lao and its Vietnamese allies were carried out with the complicity of "neutralist" Premier Souvanna Phouma. Pathet Lao leaders were forced to withdraw from the capital city, Vientiane, and resume the civil war. This was the beginning of the nine-year "secret war" in Laos carried out under the direction of the CIA and U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan (now ambassador to Iran).

But even with massive air, naval, and ground forces behind the Saigon regime, the urban and rural masses continued to fight back. Protest demonstrations of war veterans, trade unionists, students, women, and Catholics remained a regular feature of city life. This ferment barred any of Diem's successors from establishing the full totalitarian control that they sought. This was true, even though more than 250,000 political prisoners packed the country's jails.

#### Tet Offensive

In February 1968 the people of Saigon, Hue, Danang and other cities rose up to support the Tet offensive, an all-out assault on the Saigon regime by National Liberation Front forces. After weeks of fighting, U.S. forces were able to dislodge the NLF forces from the cities. But the U.S. imperialists and their landlord-capitalist puppets had been dealt a grave blow from which they never recovered.

The breadth and persistence of the struggles waged by the working class and urban poor of Vietnam represented a continual pressure on the petty-bourgeois Stal-

inist leadership of the VCP. While weakening the political grip of imperialism and tying down its occupation forces, and thus relieving pressure on the liberation forces, these struggles undermined the VCP's prospects of establishing a stable coalition government with bourgeois politicians on the basis of capitalist property relations.

Because of these struggles, the Vietnamese revolution did not take shape as a conquest of the cities by peasant-based armies from the countryside, despite the VCP leaders' projection of this strategy. It was a broad upheaval of the oppressed of the city and countryside.

This stands in marked contrast to the course of the revolutionary struggle in Kampuchea. There the proletarian forces remained small in numbers, weak and unorganized. The Khmer Rouge leadership was able to effectively exclude them from any decisive role in toppling the imperialist-backed Lon Nol regime.

#### International Antiwar Movement

Far from containing and rolling back the Vietnamese revolution as they had hoped, Washington ran into stubborn opposition not only from Vietnamese workers and peasants, but from American working people as well. A massive antiwar movement took hold in the United States, including among the rank-and-file soldiers in Vietnam. President Lyndon Johnson was forced out of office by this upheaval. It prepared the way for Richard Nixon's downfall, as well.

The impact of the war on Indochina also deepened. When a CIA-backed coup against Prince Sihanouk in Kampuchea brought the firmly pro-U.S. Lon Nol regime to power, the U.S. and Saigon armies launched a massive invasion of that country in May 1970. In response, the VCP—which had supported Sihanouk's landlord-capitalist government—was forced to take the lead in organizing a peasant army to fight the United States, Saigon, and Kampuchean rightist forces. The Vietnamese revolution thus drew Kampuchea as well as Laos into a general struggle of the Indochinese peoples for national liberation.

#### Only Cuba Rallied Support

Moscow and Peking kept their aid to a minimum, although even this minimum was vital to the ability of the DRV and the liberation forces in the South to survive the brutal U.S. assault. A factor in compelling the Stalinist regimes to keep some aid flowing was the internationalist stance of the revolutionary Castro government in Cuba. Havana offered to send troops to Vietnam, provided aid despite Cuba's limited resources, and tried to open a second front in Latin America against U.S.-dominated regimes.

But Moscow and Peking continued to place top priority on reaching a live-and-let-live agreement with the imperialists at

the expense of the world revolution. Soviet Premier Kosygin went to Glassboro, New Jersey, for a cordial get-together with President Johnson in 1967, as ever more U.S. troops occupied Vietnamese soil. On November 26, 1968, Mao's regime issued a call for improved relations with U.S. imperialism on the basis of "the five principles of peaceful coexistence." Ending the assault on Vietnam did not rank among the "five principles."

In 1972 pressure from the Moscow and Peking rulers was decisive in impelling the Vietnamese leaders to accept another compromise—the Paris Accords of January 1973.

Mao lavishly welcomed Nixon in Peking in February 1972 while the bombing in Vietnam was at its height. In June Nixon was scheduled to go to Moscow.

In the intervening weeks, Vietnamese liberation forces launched a massive offensive that threatened to defeat the Saigon army. Nixon responded by ordering a naval blockade and mining the harbors of North Vietnam. More than 5,000 air raids were carried out against North Vietnam in three months.

Brezhnev acceded to the blockade—effectively reducing aid to Vietnam. He also made it clear that Nixon was still welcome in Moscow. Pressure grew on the Vietnamese to yield ground or face—without powerful allies—the pulverizing weapon of U.S. imperialism.

Without openly criticizing Mao or Brezhnev, Vietnamese officials used the Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan* to indicate anger at the Soviet betrayal. As a peg, they used an oily television address by Nixon in Moscow in which he proclaimed his desire to save the world's children from the scourge of war.

"It is obvious that in order for the children of the world to be able to avoid being massacred and to live in peace," *Nhan Dan* commented, "the adults will have to oppose the American imperialists and not recoil in the face of their threats."

In the end, however, Hanoi and the NLF were forced to yield to the pressure, proposing a compromise that eventually became the Paris Accords of January 1973. As a warning to the Vietnamese people of what lay in store if they dared resume the struggle, Nixon interrupted the talks to launch massive saturation bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong during the Christmas holiday season.

#### Paris Accords of 1973

The accords did not contain the NLF demand for the abolition of the Saigon regime and the establishment of a coalition government. They called for a ceasefire that left the Saigon government and army intact and in possession of all the cities. A Council of National Reconciliation and Concord was to be formed by the Saigon regime, headed by Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu; the liberation forces; and some

bourgeois opponents of Thieu, dubbed the "third force."

It would settle all differences.

In exchange for DRV-NLF acceptance of the survival of Thieu's regime, the U.S. bombing of Vietnam and mining of its harbors was halted. Most remaining U.S. troops were withdrawn (their number had been steadily reduced since 1970 in an effort to defuse the antiwar movement in the United States). The Saigon government agreed to release its 200,000 political prisoners. The U.S. rulers promised to provide \$3.25 billion in aid to the DRV to help it carry out the massive task of reconstruction of the bombed-out countryside and cities.

As they had done when the country was divided in half by the Geneva Agreement in 1954, the DRV-NLF leaders did not frankly tell the masses that they had been compelled to make grave concessions. On the contrary, they hailed the accords as an "epochal victory" and predicted that all of Vietnam's problems would be solved in its framework.

The VCP also did not act to undermine the corrupt and hated Saigon regime by leading the struggles of urban working people, refugees from the countryside, and students against repression, poverty, and unemployment. Instead, it pressed for a coalition government that would include forces from the Saigon regime. It hoped the council projected by the accords would be a step in this direction.

As part of carrying out its class-collaborationist commitments under the Paris Accords, the DRV and NLF leaders put heavy pressure on the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea to come to a similar agreement with Lon Nol. The dominant wing of the Khmer Rouge—including Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan, later premier and president of "Democratic Kampuchea"—refused, advocating a fight to the finish with the Lon Nol regime.

The DRV and NLF responded to this refusal by severely cutting their aid to the Khmer Rouge and withdrawing many of their troops from eastern Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge fought on, facing until August 1973 the most concentrated U.S. bombing of the entire war.

The Pol Pot-Ieng Sary wing of the Khmer Rouge used the dispute with the Vietnamese as a pretext for beginning a purge of elements suspected of being "pro-Vietnamese." And they introduced new repressive measures into the districts where their control was strongest, such as the expropriation of peasants' land and forced population transfers.

But the U.S. rulers and the Thieu regime were adamantly opposed to a coalition government with a leadership linked to a profound revolutionary upheaval in the South and a workers state in the North.

The projected council never met. No prisoners were released. And the U.S. government reneged on the promised aid.



Hoping that the threat of renewed U.S. intervention would pressure the DRV leaders into withdrawing their support to the southern struggle, the Thieu regime launched offensives aimed at retaking rebel-held territory. At first the liberation forces retreated, hoping to forestall a decisive clash.

Nixon wanted to resume bombing North Vietnam in mid-1973 in order to step up the pressure. The depth of antiwar sentiment and the Watergate scandal stayed his hand, however.

In July 1974, after Thieu's attacks had continued for more than a year, officials in Hanoi informed reporters that the third Indochina war had begun.

#### Fall of Thieu Regime

In March 1975, combined NLF-DRV forces launched their first major counteroffensive in the central highlands. The offensive coincided with an uprising of the Montagnard people in the region. Montagnards led an assault that liberated the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot on March 14.

At this point, the ranks of the Saigon army began simply refusing to fight. Many went over to the liberation forces, more headed home, and a few—the scum who were the lumpen core of Thieu's forces—carried out an orgy of murder and looting against civilians.

Seeing an opportunity to bring the long and costly war to an end on its own terms, the DRV poured its forces into South Vietnam to occupy Kontum, Hue, Danang, Dalat, and other cities. Everywhere they were welcomed as liberators. Provisional regimes based in part on popular committees were established.

*Christian Science Monitor* correspondent Daniel Southerland reported April 3: "It was almost as if a pattern were set by the recent fall of the city of Da Nang. . . . Suddenly no one is in control. Government soldiers begin looting. National Liberation Front cadres go to work spreading rumors and calling for an uprising. Prisoners are let out of jail. An internal collapse occurs, and Communist-led troops move in almost without having to fire a shot."

"Internal collapse," of course, is the capitalist press's term for popular revolution.

The U.S. imperialists were not ready to admit defeat. Gerald Ford proposed the use of troops "to protect American lives." Naval forces were deployed off the coast of Vietnam. And trial balloons were sent up by the Pentagon suggesting that 90,000 troops would be needed to "rescue" Americans and Vietnamese from the "Viet Cong bloodbath" predicted in the U.S. capitalist media.

But the trial balloons sank like lead because of the immovable hostility of the American people to further military intervention in Vietnam. The U.S. government



began evacuating the 20,000 military "advisers" who had been kept with Thieu's forces after the signing of the Paris Accords.

The NLF-DRV leaders did not completely give up hope of forming a coalition government reflecting the new relationship of forces. On the contrary, they continued to call for this and until the last days of April, offered to negotiate a settlement with Thieu's successor, Duong Van Minh. But "Big Minh," despite his reputation as a "third force" neutralist, called on the Saigon forces to gather for a last stand. Only when the NLF-DRV forces called for a general uprising and prepared to storm the city did Minh's forces surrender.

#### 'Our Embassy Now!'

As the last U.S. embassy personnel departed by helicopter from the roof of the building on April 30, 1975, the Saigon masses burst through the embassy door, sacking and burning it. "It's our embassy now," said a laughing Saigon army soldier.

Most other buildings deserted by the Americans were sacked.

Other parts of Saigon went untouched as workers, students, youth, and NLF cadres took on the task of maintaining order.

A few hours later, a DRV tank smashed through the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon, while columns of NLF-DRV troops moved into the city. Soldiers riding tanks shouted, "Hello, comrades," to onlookers and even to foreign reporters.

"Within hours," the May 1 *Washington Post* reported, "the streets of the city took on a festive air." Little wonder. A century

of imperialist domination and military occupations and nearly twenty years of civil war, had come to an end. A courageous people had won a historic victory.

The victory of the National Liberation Front and Democratic Republic of Vietnam over the U.S.-backed Saigon regime on April 30, 1975, was hailed in the cities by workers, students, and refugees from the villages. Support broadened as it became evident that tales of an impending "communist bloodbath" were imperialist fabrications.

Measures such as the release of more than 200,000 political dissenters imprisoned by the Washington-created dictatorship, and the introduction of a free rice ration for the needy, were understandably popular.

#### Popular Uprising

Control of the Saigon region was placed in the hands of an eleven-member Military Management Committee. In order to get a new administration established, the new regime called on May 3 for the creation of "revolutionary committees" throughout the country.

"There are committees everywhere," commented a correspondent in the June 1, 1975, *Washington Post*. "Sanitation committees, food committees, security committees. . . ."

"Everywhere there are signs of massive political mobilization as students and youths hold meetings before the National Liberation Front flag. . . ."

"In the suburban residential areas, where the social classes often are mixed together in a haphazard fashion, former men of influence see positions of power passing into the hands of the working class, who suddenly have become well connected."

The Saigon workers (there were 300,000 industrial workers in the city) went into action in the last hours of the old regime and the first days of the new. Often led by NLF cadres, workers organized committees to protect factories from sabotage and theft by the fleeing capitalists and their agents, and to operate abandoned factories.

On May 2 a reported 3,000 workers seized the offices of the proimperialist labor federation. The Military Management Committee announced that a new federation would be launched.

#### Factory Takeovers

Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani reported:

In the first days the situation in the factories of Saigon was still confused. A declaration by the new authorities has assured owners that "manufacturers and dealers will have their goods safeguarded and will be able to continue activities profitable to the national economy and to the life of the population." But in some establishments the workers had announced a takeover, and in some cases had even held the first people's trials against the bosses.

Other factories, like the one that produced "eagle" batteries and in which Thieu's wife had been a shareholder, had been seized by revolutionary management committees of workers and employees, after the owners had fled with the Americans.

Technically speaking, and in accordance with a formula approved by the military authorities, this meant "taking charge until the return of the legitimate owners." But since the owners would never return, it was an early form of nationalization.

Something similar had also occurred in some small factories operating with mixed Chinese-Vietnamese capital.

The new government took possession of 70 percent of the country's industry—abandoned by its owners, expropriated by the workers, belonging to Saigon regime officials or to U.S. firms. In the remaining 30 percent the owners' only hope was to win government backing in the tug of war with the workers' committees.

Some spokespeople for the liberation forces seem to have been infected initially by the revolutionary enthusiasm of the city population and the army ranks. Radio broadcasts proclaimed reunification an accomplished fact and declared the nationalization of all factories, farms, and businesses. Such declarations were quickly countermanded by the higher-ups in the new government.

Another radio broadcast decreed that Saigon would henceforth be named "Ho Chi Minh City". This was later modified to give the new name "popular" status, while retaining the name Saigon for most purposes. After reunification in July 1976, Ho Chi Minh City came into official usage.

#### **Vietnam and Kampuchea**

To maintain control over the popular movement and establish a new administration with a popular base, the NLF-DRV leaders had to adapt their course to popular sentiments. They were careful, however, to grant no political decision-making power to the popular committees that took shape. They imposed control over these bodies through VCP and army cadres, and set sharp limits on the scope of permitted debate.

Nonetheless, the neighborhood and factory committees did much more than provide the regime with a means of containing the popular mobilization. They also enabled the workers and urban poor to take immediate measures to better their lot.

The popular mobilizations in Saigon—matched, from all indications, in other cities of Vietnam—stand in dramatic contrast to the counterrevolutionary drive that followed the Khmer Rouge victory in Kampuchea a few weeks earlier. There, the dominant wing of the Khmer Rouge drove the workers and poor out of Phnompenh and other cities at gunpoint, crushing the workers and their other allies for the time being as an effective anticapitalist force.

Even the possibility of establishing a workers and peasants government did not open up again until the reactionary Pol Pot regime was toppled last January.

The existence of the workers state in North Vietnam, the universal recognition of reunification in some form as a goal, the breadth of the mobilization of the city masses, and their class-struggle traditions—all these weighed against any such brutal reversal of the revolution in South Vietnam.

But grave difficulties nonetheless confronted the Vietnamese people. Vietnam—North and South—was a war-ravaged country.

#### **Imperialist Devastation**

Millions of tons of U.S. bombs had pounded the rural areas of South Vietnam and virtually the entire DRV, leaving 26 million bomb craters. Thousands of unexploded bombs were embedded in once-fertile soil. Tens of thousands of acres of rice paddies and forests had been sprayed with poisonous and cancer-causing defoliants.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians and war veterans had been crippled and maimed. Comparable numbers of orphans had to be cared for.

Putting an end to drug addiction and prostitution—social evils that took on massive scale in the South under U.S. auspices—was an enormous task of human rehabilitation.

The U.S. occupation had distorted the southern economy. Millions of peasants had been forced from their homes by U.S. bombings and search-and-destroy missions. Huge numbers of people made their livings in the swollen Saigon bureaucracy, in the army, or by providing services to the U.S. occupiers. With the collapse of the regime, unemployment soared from 1.5 to 3.5 million.

The cancellation of all U.S. aid programs and the economic blockade that Washington quickly imposed on trade with the new regime exacerbated all these difficulties. Many Saigon factories, previously dependent on raw materials from the United States, now had to shut down or cut back operations.

Instead of launching a massive international effort to reconstruct Vietnam, the bureaucratic castes in Moscow and Peking used the war's end as a pretext for cutting their aid programs. This was also a way of signaling Washington that the castes bore no responsibility for the Vietnamese leaders' decision to press on to a victory, which Nixon's détente diplomacy had been designed to prevent.

Peking demanded payment for vitally needed rice shipments, while Moscow refused grants to Vietnam in favor of interest-bearing loans.

#### **A Class-Collaborationist Answer**

The economic blockade imposed by impe-

rialism and the tight-fistedness of Hanoi's erstwhile allies in Peking and Moscow have been the major factors in slowing Vietnam's recovery from the devastation of war.

Vietnam's working people were and are well aware of the impact of these problems. Their initial moves to take over the factories signaled their tendency to solve these problems through establishment of a workers and peasants government that would pursue rapid reunification on a socialist basis with the DRV.

They sensed that only a nationalized and planned economy—freed from the grip of capitalists, landlords, usurers, and big merchants—could distribute the scarce necessities of life equitably and mobilize resources to begin the reconstruction of the nation. At the same time, they also recognized that this mammoth task could not be fully accomplished without massive economic and technical help from abroad.

But the Vietnamese Stalinist leaders—in line with the class-collaborationist course they had tried to pursue through thirty years of revolution—had a different strategy. They decided to apply the NLF program, which promised to preserve capitalism and delay reunification.

Their primary goal was to convince U.S. imperialism to come through with the \$3.25 billion in reconstruction aid promised the DRV in the Paris Accords. They also aimed to win new Japanese, French, Swedish, and U.S. aid, trade, credits, loans, and investment—especially in developing Vietnam's offshore oil resources.

#### **Kissinger's Bait**

In a news conference held April 29 as the landlord-capitalist regime in Saigon was being consigned to history's garbage heap, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger dropped hints that aid might be proffered to a regime in the South that forestalled reunification and preserved capitalism:

Question. Do you now favor American aid in rebuilding North Vietnam?

Answer. I could say that no, I do not favor American aid for rebuilding North Vietnam.

Q. How about South Vietnam?

A. Well, with respect to South Vietnam, we will have to see what kind of government emerges; and indeed, whether there's going to be a South Vietnam.

Kissinger did not regard the fate of South Vietnam as sealed with the victory of the liberation forces, nor did he accept the U.S. defeat as definitive.

But Washington's goal was not "peaceful coexistence" with the new regime, regardless of the illusions Kissinger hoped to keep alive in Saigon and Hanoi. His aim was to influence the future course of the VCP leaders in a procapitalist direction, while probing for openings to weaken the Indochinese revolution and get U.S. imperialism into position to ultimately crush it.

Forced to retreat from the level of direct



military intervention, the U.S. imperialists (through instruments such as the CIA) continued to give backing to the landlord capitalist regime in Thailand and to armed rightists in Laos and Kampuchea. And they began to probe Peking's willingness to exert military and diplomatic pressure against Hanoi in exchange for economic and diplomatic deals with Washington.

The VCP leaders took Kissinger's bait. In seeking U.S. aid, which the Vietnamese people desperately needed, the VCP leaders did not try to mobilize the sympathy and solidarity they had won from millions of working people and youth the world over to force the imperialist powers to loosen their purse strings.

Instead, they set out to convince Ford, Kissinger, and their successors that the new rulers of South Vietnam were aiming neither at social revolution in the South nor at spreading revolution to other countries in Southeast Asia.

This procapitalist policy was also intended to give the leaders time to cool and contain the revolutionary upheaval that had accompanied the anti-imperialist victory.

#### A Procapitalist Course

Most Vietnamese had assumed that reunification was an accomplished fact with the victory of the liberation forces. This feeling was reinforced by the instant fusion of the VCP of the North with its southern counterpart, the merger of the DRV army with the NLF troops, and the shift of thousands of DRV officials to the South. Yet the VCP rejected swift reunification.

UPI correspondent Alan Dawson reported May 30, 1975, that North and South Vietnamese officials had concluded that reunification was at least five years away.

On June 6, 1975, the Provisional Revolutionary Government replaced the Military Management Committee as the governing body in the South. The PRG had been established on June 10, 1969, as a magnet for bourgeois forces who might be willing to join a coalition government. None had accepted the offer.

Although the Hanoi leaders remained the ultimate authority, the decision to formally hand power to the PRG amounted to preserving the fiction of a coalition government. This government consciously sought to protect for the time being the property of the remaining capitalists, merchants, and "patriotic" landlords. A policy decision had been made not only to preserve two governments in the North and South, but two contradictory social systems, as well.

VCP Secretary Le Duan confirmed this decision in a May 15 speech. Declaring that the North faced the task of continuing "socialist construction," he projected the creation of "a fine national democratic



Millions of tons of U.S. bombs pounded both North and South Vietnam.

regime, a prosperous national democratic economy" in the South.

In reality, the talk about "national democratic" economy was slick demagoguery aimed at persuading working people to accept capitalist economic predominance in the here and now, while promising socialism in the indeterminate future.

Most remaining Vietnamese capitalists, concentrated in light consumer goods industries, were encouraged to reopen and continue as owner-managers. On September 2, Pham Van Dong called on "national capitalists who were formerly held down by foreign competitors" to join in building the economy.

And Hynh Tan Phat, chairman of the PRG Council of Ministers, added, "We want to open up our country on terms favorable to us and this means encouraging certain foreign investments."

The French firm of Michelin was urged to begin replanting its vast rubber plantations, the bulk of which had been put out of action by U.S. bombers.

The results of PRG policy in one Saigon suburb were described in the April 25, 1976, *New York Times Magazine*:

[Son My Tay] has a score of industrial plants, including four cotton mills, a sugar refinery, a producer of native drugs and an ice-making factory. . . . Except for one plant, all the industries in the district were privately owned under the former regime, and still are.

The Saigon merchants retained their powerful position in the economy. These merchants had traditionally "controlled almost the entire import-export network, almost all road transportation, and had monopolized commerce in rice, meat, fabrics and other basic necessities" (according to Fr. Tran Tum Tinh, quoted in the June 21, 1978, *Guardian*).

The procapitalist policy of the PRG met some resistance. Tiziano Terzani wrote:

The problem of maintaining foreign ownership and keeping foreign technicians in the factories at least for a certain period, was felt strongly by the cadres in the center of Le Van Duyet street (headquarters of the government-sponsored trade-union federation). In their discussions with workers' committees, which often put forward radical and maximalist positions, they advised prudence and caution. . . .

When a worker in the course of a discussion asked why the bosses shouldn't be expropriated immediately, Loc (a trade-union official) replied:

"Now's not the moment. Just now it's a question of re-educating the owners."

#### An Antidemocratic Regime

The VCP leaders proclaimed an era of "national reconciliation" between landlords and peasants, workers and capitalists. But this reactionary class-collaborationist pipe dream never came into being. As had happened after the Paris Accords of 1973, "national reconciliation" broke down along class lines. The fundamental conflict was between the workers and their allies on the one hand, and the procapitalist forces (the most powerful being U.S. imperialism) on the other.

Carrying out this class-collaborationist policy and maintaining the privileged position of the VCP "cadres" necessitated a totalitarian political structure that left no room for workers and peasants democracy. This was a structure modeled on the antidemocratic regime in the North.

The right to form parties that supported the revolution while criticizing the VCP leaders was barred. Freedom of the press was nonexistent. A Stalinist-style strait-jacket began to be imposed on literature and art. Political decision-making was concentrated at the apex of the bureaucratic apparatus; the masses had no vote.

On occasion, however—especially in the areas of culture and personal freedom—the

regime has been forced into partial retreats before mass desires for wider freedom.

Even the most hostile bourgeois commentators who have visited the South admit with surprise that people express criticism or even hostility to the regime quite openly.

The fact that a totalitarian lid has not been totally clamped down on the South is no tribute to the democratic tolerance of the VCP leaders. Rather, it signifies that the fighting spirit of the southern masses—which grew up over thirty years of struggle—has not yet been beaten down.

#### A Vietnamese 'Gulag'?

Perhaps as many as 200,000 Saigon-regime politicians, high government officials, and army officers were confined in "reeducation centers." Many of them were guilty of real war crimes, although no trials were ever held. From all available reports, executions have been rare.

Later, some bourgeois politicians who had opposed the Thieu regime were also incarcerated because of their opposition to an anticapitalist course.

Many of these prisoners have since been released, although "reeducation centers" still hold an undetermined number of persons.

The Vietnamese prison system has become a centerpiece of the imperialist propaganda campaign against Vietnam. The "reeducation centers" are declared to be a "Vietnamese gulag." Unfortunately, some petty-bourgeois radicals have swallowed this imperialist propaganda, which builds a mountain of lies around a molehill of truth.

Since the Vietnamese people have no say over who is to be imprisoned or why—this power being reserved to the commanding heights of the VCP—the "reeducation centers" have an intimidating effect on the population, making it easier for the Stalinist rulers to impose their policies.

And the underlying concept of "reeducation" is the Stalinist totalitarian concept that the VCP's positions are, by definition, the only correct ones. Those who disagree must "reeducate" themselves—or else.

But for the most part, those imprisoned have not been workers and peasants critical of the regime, if all reports in the Western press are to be believed. Most are the former beneficiaries of the U.S.-imposed regime and the opponents of revolutionary measures that the VCP leaders have been obliged to undertake. In this sense, the "reeducation centers" represent a Stalinist—rather than revolutionary socialist—attempts to deal with actual or potential counterrevolutionary threats.

Without further evidence, however, they can hardly be compared to Stalin's gulag. There millions of the most class-conscious toilers were imprisoned and executed in an effort to stamp out the burning embers of the Russian revolution.

The capitalist propaganda about Viet-

nam seeks to convey the impression that the new regime is more repressive than its U.S.-supported predecessor. This is part of a new effort to justify the U.S. war against Indochina. The rulers count on people forgetting what Vietnam under U.S. imperialist domination was really like—200,000 political prisoners held in tiny "tiger cages," torture centers, and prison islands; vast numbers of peasants, suspected of pro-NLF sympathies, held in "strategic hamlets" surrounded by barbed wire and machine-gun turrets; the CIA's Phoenix Program, which executed 20,000 suspected opponents of the regime; and the fact that the regime required an occupation force of 550,000 U.S. troops and genocidal saturation bombing of the countryside to hold onto power.

That the new regime faces less widespread opposition than its predecessor is not the result of pervasive repression. The old regime had more numerous repressive forces, with far more destructive instruments at its disposal. The new regime survives because the worker, peasant, and plebeian masses support the basic social measures that have been carried out since 1975.

The publicists of the Vietnamese "gulag" also find propaganda on this theme a useful means of covering up the very real capitalist "gulags" in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

The Vietnamese rulers used their prestige as leaders of the successful struggle against U.S. imperialism and the absence of any alternative anticapitalist leadership to impose tight control over the workers and peasants movements. But workers committees were not dissolved, factory owners never regained their former authority, and VCP leaders continued to come under heavy pressure to take anticapitalist measures to get the economy moving.

The regime carried out a delicate balancing act—sometimes leaning on the capitalists and merchants to oppose demands of the workers, while at other times looking for support from workers against uncooperative capitalists.

Attempts to revive the economy by seeking the collaboration of the imperialists and local capitalists failed. The U.S. rulers maintained their economic blockade and brutally rejected all appeals for aid. Other imperialist powers such as Sweden and Japan provided only a trickle of assistance.

And the South Vietnamese capitalists and merchants went on a profiteering binge.

By the end of August 1975, the government felt obliged to change its course. Popular anger at rocketing prices and artificial shortages of necessities had reached a high point. Huynh Tan Phat, head of the PRG's Council of Ministers, stated:

We have plenty of difficulties, and our enemies have exploited these to sow dissension and direct

discontent against us over prices and food shortages. We have to admit that we have no real organization to run economic affairs—nor did the puppet regime have such an organization. . . .

Everything was in their [the compradors'] hands. They disrupted the markets, artificially created shortages, and sent prices spiraling upwards, and there was little we could do about it. They controlled everything from the purchase, transport, and distribution of virtually all commodities. . . . Obviously, it was in the interests of the compradors to see our regime fail and probably they even dreamed of the possibility of it being replaced by a reactionary regime.

On August 30 banks were nationalized. Early in September, security forces raided the homes of a score of the wealthiest families in Saigon's Cholon district. Substantial hidden stores of goods were seized, and the property of these "comprador capitalists" was confiscated. A major currency reform was also enacted in an attempt to strike at the capitalist pocket-books.

These moves were supported by a mass demonstration. Thousands of workers and plebeians gave voice to their anger at capitalist price-gouging and plunder.

#### Workers & Peasants Government

In the aftermath of this crisis, the Political Consultative Conference on National Reunification was held in Saigon in November 1975. This conference called for elections in April 1976 to a single National Assembly, thus establishing a single government for the whole country. The reunification timetable had been greatly speeded up under the pressure of the class struggle in Vietnam.

The conference also set the goal of "consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat" in the South, although no decisive measures were proposed to advance this.

These events marked a fundamental shift in the direction of the government the VCP had installed in the South. Initially proclaimed as a "national democratic," i.e., capitalist, regime guarding capitalist property relations in the South, it now leaned on the social forces with a material stake in pursuing rapid reunification—the workers, peasants, and urban poor masses. Southern Vietnam now had a workers and peasants government.

The elections to the National Assembly held April 25, 1976, were a typical Stalinist fraud. Candidates were elected from a single slate, and no individual campaigning was permitted. The army daily *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* declared, "Our National Assembly is a unified bloc that will have absolutely no factions representing private or regional interests, no conflicting viewpoints or opposition organizations."

#### Reunification

Meeting at the beginning of July, the assembly elected a single government for the whole country—basically maintaining the key figures from the DRV regime. Thus



President Ton Duc Thang, Premier Pham Van Dong, Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, and Truong Chinh, president of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly of the DRV, retained these posts in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as the unified country was named.

Shortly thereafter, a five-year economic plan was decreed for the whole country.

The deformed workers state that had been established in North Vietnam thus formally extended its political apparatus and control to the South. In doing so, it came face to face with the contradiction between the planned economy that existed in the North and the capitalist economy that continued to exist in the South.

"Partly as a result of the gradualist approach, partly because of a serious lack of trained managers, it is still the market forces that dominate the [southern] economy," wrote journalist Nayan Chanda in the April 30, 1976, *Washington Post*.

The contradiction was a glaring one. Experience was to demonstrate to the VCP leaders that while they could *proclaim* a single economic plan for two different and opposed economic systems, they could not actually implement such a plan.

Such a contradiction could be resolved in only one of two ways—either the economic forms of the North would be extended southward, or real reunification and the possibility of any real economic progress would remain a fiction.

The latter course, preserving a large capitalist layer in the midst of a deepening economic and social crisis, would have provided a base for imperialist-inspired maneuvers and assaults, threatening the gains of the 1975 revolution and the workers state in the North as well.

At the meeting of the National Assembly, Le Duan promised that the regime would follow a determinedly anticapitalist course.

In the South we must immediately abolish the comprador bourgeoisie and the remnants of the feudal landlord classes, undertake the socialist transformation of private capitalist industry and commerce, agriculture, handicraft, and small trade through appropriate measures and steps, combine transformation with building in order actively to steer the economy of the South into the orbit of socialism, and integrate the economies of both zones in a single system of large-scale socialist production.

#### New Mobilizations Needed

An article in the November 12, 1976, issue of the *Militant* commented on these developments:

Such a policy would represent a turning point for the Vietnamese revolution, the abolition of the primacy of capitalism in the social and economic life of the Southern masses. It would mark a new qualitative advance, following upon the expulsion of the capitalists from political power on April 30, 1975.

To accomplish changes of this scope, the regime will have to mobilize the Vietnamese workers and poor peasants on an even larger

scale than was done during the campaign against the "compradores" in September 1975. Only the working class is capable of taking command away from the capitalists in the factories, counteracting their resistance, demoralizing their remaining followers, and providing a popular base for a new social order.

For this reason even the most bureaucratic and antipopular Stalinist regimes such as those established by the Red Army in Eastern Europe after World War II, have had to rely to some degree on workers' mobilizations in overturning capitalist property relations.

This presents problems for the Lao Dong [VCP] leadership, however, for their regime in the North rests on the exclusion of the workers from political power. Consciously modeling their political structure on the bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet Union and China, the Vietnamese leaders have sought to protect the privileged position of the ruling bureaucratic caste. The Stalinist leaders, compelled by circumstances to move toward carrying out a social overturn in the South, fear that the workers will not accept bureaucratic control in doing away with capitalism, but may challenge the supremacy of the bureaucracy itself. This fear contributes to their delays and hesitations.

#### Capitalist Pressure Grows

The hesitations were prolonged. The division of the land among the poor peasants accelerated. And French-owned firms, most notably the Michelin rubber plantations, were expropriated without compensation in 1977. As it became clear to the French bosses that the anti-imperialist course of the revolution was deepening, Vietnam's diplomatic relations with France deteriorated. And the French capitalist press launched a campaign to discredit the revolution, using real and purported human rights violations as a pretext.

Some Vietnamese-owned factories were nationalized, and more were placed under joint state-private ownership. All new industrial enterprises were government-owned.

But the effort to attract imperialist aid, trade, and investment continued, although to little avail. "In the spring of 1977," reported the February 2, 1979, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hanoi "promulgated a foreign-investment code which was both liberal and flexible, providing for joint enterprises and wholly-owned foreign projects in export-oriented industries, plus generous tax concessions and the right to repatriate profits."

But neither the planned economy of the North, nor the feeble capitalist economy of the South that was linked to it, were attractive to the imperialist banks and corporations. And the U.S. economic blockade remained tight.

In the decisive area of trade for South Vietnam, the merchant capitalists of Saigon's Cholon district remained in command. They marketed most consumer goods, much of the products of the nationalized factories, and were powerful competitors with the state for the rice produced by the peasants. They retained their wealth,

their political connections, and their social cohesion.

Writing in the April 30, 1976, *Washington Post*, Nayan Chanda commented on the merchants' speedy recovery from the measures adopted in the summer of 1975:

despite some tough measures against big-business operators of Cholon . . . many of the business community have apparently survived the currency reform last September by quickly dispersing their holdings. Nor has it been possible to unearth their hidden stocks of goods.

After an initial lull of a few months, Cholon is again doing a brisk business. Hoarding and blackmarketing, combined with a general shortage of goods this country has imported in the past, have caused prices to rise. Saigon's industry, which depended heavily on imported raw materials, is now in the doldrums. . . .

Chanda described Cholon as "a capitalist heart beating within the socialist body of Vietnam."

The scope of capitalist economic power blocked the real integration of the southern economy into the planned economy of the North. Separate currencies continued to be used in the two zones, reflecting their opposed economic structures.

#### Capitalist Political Pull

Furthermore, the economic power and wealth of the merchants and remaining capitalists enabled them to forge close ties with the state administration in the South. Officials sent from the North to organize the bureaucratic apparatus often developed cozy and profitable ties with the business community.

Corruption alienated popular support and became a threat to the government's control of the administration in the South. Over time, these redoubts of capitalist economic and political power—which Washington was obviously watching carefully—could have come to pose the threat of a U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary assault. The Stalinist policy of preserving capitalism in the South was fostering a deep class polarization that undermined the very stability the bureaucratic caste was desperately seeking.

In a 1976 article in *Hoc Tap*, an organ of the VCP, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh had written that the corruption and tyrannical behavior of some officials had "more than slightly tarnished the prestige of the Party, State and Army in the eyes of the people."

According to Nayan Chanda, writing in the March 3, 1978, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, an anticorruption campaign was "launched with added urgency in the south, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City, where the danger of moral degeneration of the cadres is greater—as is the need to keep the party's image untarnished."

Since last July when the Ho Chi Minh City party committee adopted resolutions to combat corruption (according to an official, during the congress the party received 10,000 letters from

the local population making complaints and suggestions), a sizable number of veteran party cadres and officials have been jailed, including directors of a nationalized company and of Saigon's port and the chairman of a people's committee in the city.

A stream of popular demands in the North and South for more food and clothing led the regime to reorient its economic planning toward consumer goods and agriculture, rather than heavy industry. This unrest also placed the regime under added pressure to rationalize distribution.

Matters were brought to a head when droughts and flooding devastated farmlands in 1976 and 1977. The resulting reduction of the rice ration deepened popular anger at the thriving blackmarket and hoarding rackets in Cholon.

### An Anticapitalist Struggle

The top VCP leaders became increasingly convinced that the U.S. rulers were not going to invest in or aid the capitalist economy of the South as long as it was linked to the workers state in the North. On the contrary, the imperialists were using the political, economic, and social weaknesses that resulted from postponing anticapitalist measures to step up economic and military pressure against Vietnam.

In the face of repeated Vietnamese offers, Washington continued to reject any diplomatic or economic relations with Vietnam. And its satellites in the region, while establishing diplomatic ties, maintained a hostile stance.

The capitalist regime of Pol Pot in Kampuchea stepped up its border war with Vietnam and broke off diplomatic relations with it. Rightist guerrillas in Laos intensified their activities. And the Peking regime, eager to curry favor with Washington, began to beef up its military forces on the border with Vietnam. The prospect of growing military tensions helped impel the Vietnamese regime to bring order into the economy and consolidate its popular base by unleashing the masses under its direction against the remaining capitalist power centers.

A politburo member, Nguyen Van Linh, was removed from his post as chairman of the committee for the transformation of private industry and trade. "He, in fact, has been held responsible for not being able to reform the capitalists faster," declared Chanda. And a "large-scale weeding out of corrupt cadres was effected by idealistic youth groups under the eyes of soldiers," he reported.

An April 13, 1978, editorial in *Nhan Dan* summarized the consequences of the previous policy. "The experience of the past three years showed that despite restrictions 'the capitalist economy continued to rule the roost,'" it said.

The new stage opened with a March 23

decree abolishing 30,000 commercial and business enterprises in South Vietnam. Businessmen in the Cholon district of Ho Chi Minh City were the main target of these measures.

Writing in the May 26, 1978, issue of *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Chanda described how this decree was implemented:

Tens of thousands of youth volunteers, communist cadres and security force members were mobilized to close all businesses and make a thorough search to prepare inventories of goods held in shops or businessmen's residences. After the inventory was made, guards were posted in front of every shop to prevent dispersal of goods pending takeover by the government."

On April 16 the regime once again mobilized its supporters to close down illegal operations in Ho Chi Minh City's open-air markets, centers of blackmarket operations. These measures effectively placed the government in control of large-scale wholesale and retail trading operations.

On May 3 a single currency was established for the whole country. Overnight, the illegal hoards of money accumulated by traders, speculators, usurers, and counterfeiters became worthless paper.

### A Workers State

These moves were aimed at large-scale capitalist traders, possessors of enormous economic power. A sizable layer of small shopkeepers, street vendors, and other traders still functioned legally in Vietnam—North and South. And a declining number of industrialists also continued to share in the ownership of factories—although they had now lost the option of selling their goods to private traders.

By smashing the remaining bastions of capitalist economic power, however, the mobilizations had made possible the extension of the planned economy that had existed in the North. Thus real planning could begin for the whole country. This marked the consolidation of a workers state throughout Vietnam.

These initial measures were followed by others—such as the nationalization in December of large-scale farm equipment—aimed at furthering the mobilization of the poor peasants against the remaining landlords, rich peasants, and other rural exploiters. The regime projected collectivization of agriculture as its ultimate goal.

The overturn of capitalism in South Vietnam occurred under the command of the petty-bourgeois Stalinist ruling caste that had dominated the North for two decades. Having found it impossible to govern after three years on the basis of capitalist property relations, they had no alternative but to mobilize the workers and poor of the city to topple those property relations and establish new ones that were in the interests of working people.

Despite the misleadership of the VCP, the overturn of capitalism is a conquest of

the working people of Vietnam. The process of social revolution—beginning with the factory occupations that accompanied the fall of the Saigon regime on April 30, 1975—was accomplished at each step through the mobilization of the workers and their allies.

Expropriations carried out in this way differ qualitatively from the nationalizations carried out by the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea or by any other capitalist regime.

Whereas Pol Pot's nationalizations fostered the growth of new capitalist layers under extreme crisis conditions, the overturn in Vietnam marked the establishment of the proletariat as the ruling class through the expropriation of its class enemies.

To reestablish capitalist relations in Vietnam would have required massive imperialist intervention and a bloody civil war to overcome the determination of the working people to guard their conquests.

### Imperialists Fear Overturn

As part of the current imperialist propaganda campaign against Vietnam, correspondents blame the overturn of capitalism for the continued poverty, shortages, unemployment, and economic dislocations in Vietnam.

Thus Henry Kamm wrote in the March 4 *New York Times*:

But Vietnam's domestic design to make the south like the north, politically and economically, has been the greatest source of strain. . . . Hanoi has aggravated all problems by a determined program of nationalization of industry and commerce, collectivization of agriculture and vengeful political and economic retribution against former soldiers, civil servants, and Vietnamese of Chinese descent.

By soldiers and civil servants, Kamm means the cops, top military officers, and corrupt bureaucrats of the old regime. By "Vietnamese of Chinese origin" he means the capitalists and their friends and hangers-on. These beneficiaries of the old regime are leaving Vietnam today, as their Cuban, Chinese, and Russian counterparts did after socialist revolutions in those countries. They are taking advantage of the fact that Vietnam (like Cuba and Yugoslavia) is one of the few workers states that permits relatively free emigration.

To Kamm, these are "South Vietnam's most competent people." He spews out class hatred for the worker and peasant masses who toppled the proimperialist regime that brought these enemies of progress their power and privilege.

Kamm delicately omits to mention the U.S. economic blockade, and U.S. imperialism's wartime efforts to pulverize Vietnam—the conditions that really do aggravate all of Vietnam's problems today, including hunger.

The preservation of capitalism in South Vietnam was blocking efforts to repair the



ruins wrought by imperialist war, leading the southern masses toward the brink of political and economic catastrophe.

The U.S. imperialists know that anticapitalist measures mean economic progress, not decline, for Vietnam.

That is why they are exerting might and main to weaken Vietnam, so as to minimize these gains. Washington is aiding reactionary forces in Kampuchea and Laos. And it is pressing China to exert maximum military pressure on Vietnam's northern border. The imperialists are terrified that the inspiration of Vietnam's socialist revolution will spread—as indeed it is already doing in Laos, Kampuchea, and Thailand.

### A Giant Step Forward

The limited anticapitalist measures taken before spring 1978 had already produced improvements in the life of Vietnam's workers, peasants, and poor people—improvements that were bound to be noted by the exploited and oppressed masses in other Southeast Asian countries. Unemployment in the South was reduced from 3.5 million to 1.5 million (in the North, it is virtually nonexistent).

Nayan Chanda wrote:

Thanks to a campaign for adult education and community schooling for children, the literacy rate has risen appreciably. Notwithstanding shortages of equipment and medicine, a cleanliness and vaccination drive has prevented major epidemics. International agency officials say they are impressed by the purposefulness and devotion with which a rudimentary health service has been set up in the South.

What a contrast to the regime of Henry Kamm's "most competent people," which never made a dent in illiteracy and disease. What a contrast to Pol Pot's reactionary drive against the workers and peasants, which resulted in the near-abolition of public education and medical care.

The overturn of capitalism in South Vietnam makes possible the equitable food distribution under conditions of scarcity. It was a precondition for further advances in all public services for the masses, the improvement of the difficult conditions in the new economic zones, the sharp reduction of unemployment, advances toward industrialization, and growth in the size, weight, and cultural level of the working class. The key to progress in all these fields is the pooling of the country's resources and labor power, and their planned use.

### Peking's Reaction

Peking, too, denounced the overturn of capitalism in southern Vietnam. It pictured the measures as a racist move against people of Chinese origin in Vietnam—who number 1 to 2 million. The Chinese Stalinists began a high-powered campaign to panic a large proportion of these people into leaving the country.

The campaign was reminiscent of the efforts by U.S. imperialism and the Catholic hierarchy to spark a mass exodus of Catholics from North Vietnam after the Geneva Accords of 1954.

Peking then barred most of the Chinese who wanted to leave Vietnam from entering China—thus helping U.S. imperialism lay the groundwork for its current propaganda about the "boat people."

Despite the Chinese charges, there has been no evidence of persecution of Chinese in Vietnam.

*Nhan Dan*, the VCP's Hanoi daily, answered the Peking regime's charges by asking:

Must the socialist transformation of private industry and commerce—a universal law of socialist revolution which has been applied in China—stop in Socialist Vietnam before the wealth of a number of capitalists of Chinese origin (and Vietnamese capitalists too!) [is confiscated], even though this wealth was wrung from the sweat and tears of the Vietnamese working class and people, including quite a few Vietnamese of Chinese descent?

Peking's motivation in taking this counterrevolutionary stand was to demonstrate to U.S. imperialism that the Chinese bureaucratic caste is a force for capitalist stability in Southeast Asia. By upsetting the status quo, the overturn of capitalism in Vietnam—like the April 30, 1975, victory of the liberation forces—was seen as endangering Peking's hopes for a class-collaborationist deal with the U.S. imperialists.

It is not only the Vietnamese revolution that has been strengthened by the overturn of capitalism in South Vietnam. Despite the Peking rulers' stand, the prospects of the Chinese revolution were enormously brightened by the latest measures. Imperialism's ability to weaken or strike at the Chinese revolution was dealt a blow. The same is true for the Soviet Union, despite the disgraceful stinginess of Brezhnev and his cohorts toward Vietnam.

### Need for Democracy

To make the most of the possibilities now opened for social advance, the workers, peasants, students, and poor people of Vietnam need to democratically plan the economy through their own committees. They need the right to form parties and tendencies, and to speak, write, and think as they choose. Only in this way can they root out corruption and mismanagement and develop an economic plan that really serves the working people.

The ultimate solution to the grinding poverty that a century of imperialist exploitation inflicted on Vietnam lies in extending the revolution—to Laos, Kampuchea, and Thailand first of all, but most decisively to the heartland of capitalism in Japan, Europe, and the United States.

The VCP and the ruling bureaucratic caste that it represents oppose both workers and peasants democracy and the

internationalist course needed to advance the Vietnamese revolution. To preserve its privileged position, the caste must suppress democratic rights.

Meanwhile the VCP's strategy aims at a class-collaborationist deal with U.S. imperialism. In exchange, they are prepared—as much as the bureaucrats in Moscow or Peking—to help U.S. imperialism dampen revolutionary fires in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

That's why the VCP delayed the overturn of capitalism for three years—weakening Vietnam's economic position and providing time for the imperialists to prepare an offensive against the Vietnamese revolution.

### Hanoi Still Seeks 'Détente'

The 1978 overturn of capitalism in the South marked no fundamental change in Hanoi's strategy. Quite the contrary.

The Hanoi rulers began a concerted campaign to convince the imperialists, the Thai rulers, and other capitalist regimes that they had no desire to foster similar overturns elsewhere.

That's why the Vietnamese rulers have asked to be admitted to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—that thieves' den of semicolonial governments devoted to defending U.S. imperialism's interests in the region.

Pham Van Dong used his tour of Southeast Asia last fall to underline this stance. He disavowed support for the peasant masses who are fighting the dictatorship of Gen. Kriangsak Chamanand in Thailand. Dong even offered Kriangsak an "anti-aggression and anti-subversion" pact—an implicit offer to trade an end to Kriangsak's support to Laotian rightists for Dong's opposition to anti-imperialist fighters in Thailand.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Dong placed a wreath on a monument to soldiers who died fighting Communist-led peasant rebels against British domination. Dong termed the rightist soldiers "fighters in the cause of peace and freedom." There could be no clearer way of offering the Malaysian government Hanoi's help in overcoming growing peasant and worker discontent.

Such actions undermine the defense of Vietnam against imperialism. They help stabilize landlord-capitalist regimes, which are determined to help imperialism wear down and, if possible, reverse the Vietnamese revolution.

Dong got the cold shoulder in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. Despite his offers of counterrevolutionary assistance, these landlord-capitalist regimes fear the example of the Vietnamese revolution. They doubt the capacity of the Vietnamese bureaucratic caste to contain its advance—especially in view of the caste's inability to forestall the overturn of capitalism in the South.

The mass mobilizations that accompan-

ied the economic transformation of South Vietnam convinced the imperialists and their satellites that the Vietnamese revolution is alive, continues to deepen, and endangers their rule.

That is why they came to back the Kampuchean capitalist regime of Pol Pot in its bloody border war with Vietnam. The overturn of the Pol Pot regime and advances in the Laotian revolution showed their fears were justified.

#### **Defend the Vietnamese Revolution!**

The VCP has been an obstacle to every advance made by the Vietnamese revolution, from the opening of the August 1945 revolution down to the overturn of capitalism in South Vietnam almost thirty-three years later. The workers and peasants have had to overcome this obstacle to win each advance—often at great cost.

The VCP rulers seek to retain their privileges and achieve a degree of stability by maneuvering between irreconcilably opposed class forces—imperialism on one

side, the Vietnamese workers and peasants on the other. They have advanced the struggle only when compelled to do so by the powerful pressure of the mass movement and the intense hostility of imperialism—and even then, they have sought first of all to preserve their privileges.

The tasks of the Vietnamese workers and peasants today is to unite to defend their conquests against the imperialist offensive and to help advance the revolutionary struggles in Laos, Kampuchea, and Thailand.

But to win qualitative new advances, the Vietnamese masses need a new leadership—one committed to advancing the struggle for equality and economic well-being in Vietnam and on a world scale.

To achieve their goals, the Vietnamese workers will have to break through the antidemocratic structure created by the VCP to hem in their struggle. Advancing toward the antibureaucratic revolution that this will require, they will come face

to face with the need to forge a new revolutionary party with a proletarian, internationalist program.

The struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants for a better life is in the interests of American working people. Every blow they strike against the U.S.-orchestrated offensive strengthens our fight against the imperialist war drive. Every blow they strike against poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and disease strengthens our fight to defend and extend the gains won by American working people!

That's why we demand an end to the imperialist offensive against Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea!

Recognize the governments in Hanoi and Phnompenh! End the economic blockade!

For massive U.S. reparations to repair the damage done by U.S. imperialism to the peoples of Indochina!

Get U.S. bases, the Seventh Fleet, and U.S. arms programs out of Southeast Asia now!

### **Statement by Japanese Trotskyists**

## **For a New Offensive of Struggles in Solidarity With Vietnam!**

[The following has been excerpted from a resolution on the Vietnam-China conflict adopted by the Central Committee of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International. We have taken the text from the March 12 issue of *Sekai Kakumei* (World Revolution). The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

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#### **The Chinese Bureaucracy's Objectives**

Beijing has claimed that its invasion was a "counterattack in self-defense" against Vietnam. But that was merely a deceptive pretext. What were the real objectives of the invasion?

By setting out on the road of permanent revolution in Indochina, Vietnam has become the new driving force of the Asian revolution. The Chinese government resorted to armed force in an attempt to remove the deep threat posed by Vietnam to the ruling classes of the neocolonial countries of Asia, and to the U.S. and Japanese imperialists. Beijing has chosen as partners in its modernization drive. Chinese foreign policy at this point aims at sealing off the Indochinese revolution, in order to create the kind of international environment in which those partners will provide the aid needed for modernization at low cost. Under the bureaucracy's con-

trol, China's modernization is being closely tied to the fate of imperialist counterrevolution.

In addition, Beijing has as its immediate objective to help prolong the survival of the ousted Pol Pot forces in Kampuchea. This is something the Chinese leadership has not talked about so openly, either within China or internationally. But their de facto accomplices, the U.S. and Japanese imperialists, argue the case for them by campaigning for a withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam linked to a pull-out of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea.

The fact that Beijing aided Pol Pot in the first place was not to advance the interests of Kampuchea's people. Rather, it was out of a desire to exacerbate the hardships and obstacles facing Vietnam, which in the Chinese leaders' anti-Soviet, proimperialist global strategy, has arbitrarily been branded an agent of Moscow. But the uprising of the Kampuchean people with powerful backing from Vietnam smashed that scheme.

Deng and Company should have learned from events. Their scheme failed because the Pol Pot dictatorship was one of the most unpopular regimes ever known, and because any attempt to serve the narrow national interests of one country by aiding a counterrevolutionary, reactionary regime in another country, will inevitably be swept away by the people's struggles. This

is a lesson of history, one that was richly illustrated by the Chinese revolution itself. They should have learned. But they did not.

Now, they are trying to minimize the losses they suffered in that unforeseen fiasco. They are striking blows at the Vietnamese people's army, hoping thereby to help Pol Pot's remaining forces hold out.

The Pol Pot regime was based entirely on brutal oppression and exploitation, on a scale seldom seen in human history. Beijing's attempt at using military force to prevent or delay the final collapse of Pol Pot's forces has not the slightest chance of success. Yet they went ahead with the attempt, using the very worst of methods even by Stalinist standards.

There was also a third objective, a secret but very important one.

China's modernization, even in its early stages, has brought to the surface and sharpened the contradictions between the Chinese masses and the bureaucracy, and within the bureaucracy itself. The action of the top bureaucrats getting each other rehabilitated has naturally sparked demands for restoration of the political, social, and economic rights of tens of millions of people who were unjustly oppressed, discriminated against, and deprived of their civil rights.

A growing sentiment for democracy and a legal system, and against bureaucratic privileges, has taken hold among broad





"Since liberation in 1975 there has been no truce by imperialism."

masses of people. Militant vanguard layers of youth returning from rural exile and of urban workers have begun to forcefully assert these demands. Things have even reached the point where doubts and criticisms have been publicly expressed about the foreign policy of joining hands with imperialism to achieve modernization while feuding with the Soviet Union. This political awakening of the masses of Chinese people has started to provoke deep splits and shakeups within the bureaucracy.

The top leadership headed by Deng Xiaoping is trying to ride out this domestic crisis by conjuring up the specter of a regional hegemonist Vietnam, agent of the Soviet Union, threatening China's borders. This way of cooking up a chauvinist "national unity" sentiment is nothing but the same old maneuver Mao Zedong used to resort to.

We think it our duty to warn the people of China: The guns being aimed at the Vietnamese today also point at the militant Chinese people themselves!

#### What the Imperialists Are After

The U.S. and Japanese imperialists are clearly complicit in the Chinese regime's aggression against Vietnam. Deng Xiaoping made his hasty trip to the United States and Japan in order to work out the division of labor for this joint military and political action. The U.S. and Japanese imperialists are not even trying to conceal the great hopes they hold for Beijing's "struggle" against Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

But it is also true that the imperialists do not really trust China. They cannot. They can never lose sight of the fact that behind Deng Xiaoping are a billion Chinese people. And the revolutionary energy of all those people is something that terrifies the imperialists.

What they really hope for is that the workers states will beat each other down, sapping each other's strength. If Vietnam can be weakened, and China weakened at the same time, and furthermore if this framework of conflicts among workers states can be generalized, it will cause

greater and greater hardships among the popular forces confronting imperialism around the world. That is what they really hope for.

And that is why they have joined hands with China. The open alliance of Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing against the Soviet Union and Vietnam really benefits imperialism and imperialism only. This is a fact we must seek to explain to the militant people of China and the whole world.

At the same time, it is the task of workers in the advanced capitalist countries to struggle against their own imperialist rulers, who are part of this counterrevolutionary alliance. This is what we must explain to working people in Japan and the United States.

#### Advance of the Asian Revolution

From this standpoint we insist that the current "Vietnam-China war" is in fact the front line of confrontation between imperialism and the Asian revolution.

Since South Vietnam was liberated in 1975, there has not been a day's truce in the struggle between the Vietnamese revolution and imperialism. In spite of Hanoi's flexibility, despite its patient requests, and despite the justice of its demands, the U.S. imperialists and their counterrevolutionary client regimes have gone on tightening the political and economic blockade around Vietnam. They still hope to halt the advance of the revolution, to force it to collapse from escalating contradictions within Vietnam.

In order to break out of this counterrevolutionary encirclement, the peoples of Vietnam and the rest of Indochina have linked their struggles firmly together and set out on the road to socialism. The overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea marked an advance for the joint struggle of the peoples of the three countries.

No matter how severe the encirclement they face, their struggle will not be halted. The permanent revolution in Indochina unquestionably faces great difficulties. But for that very reason, it will have to be extended in order to win. It will inevitably lead to revolutionary unity among many peoples and nations. The joint actions of

Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing against the Soviet Union and Vietnam, in collusion with the ASEAN regimes, will backfire, causing the permanent revolution in Indochina to spread to Thailand and Burma. It will lead the peoples of Indochina to solidarize with the Thai and Burmese revolutions.

The confrontation with imperialism will force the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party to take this road of permanent revolution. Should they fail to do so, they will inevitably sink deeper into subordination to the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. The result would be not democratic and egalitarian solidarity among the peoples of Indochina, but rather a bureaucratic, oppressive, forced union of the three countries.

If the Vietnamese leadership rejects subordination to the Soviet Union, they should openly embark on the road of permanent revolution. They should make public calls for aid and solidarity to the revolutionary peoples of Thailand and Burma. They should make it clear that the peoples of Indochina stand together with the Thai and Burmese peoples in their struggles. If this were to happen, revolutionary forces around the world would be all the more strongly attracted to the Indochinese revolution. The imperialist blockade of Indochina would be smashed, not by diplomatic maneuvers, but by popular struggles.

To the people of Japan and the world, we say:

In the past, you joined in struggles to support the Vietnamese revolution. With the fall of Saigon, many of you probably thought the task was finished. Now, you see China and Vietnam fighting. Does it make you feel that the just cause of the Vietnamese revolution, for which you fought, has wound up being just an illusion? Are you mourning that the dream of socialism has been betrayed?

Let's be clear about this. If that's what you're thinking, then you're already halfway to falling for the imperialists' trick. That kind of despair is exactly what they're hoping to create, just as they're hoping to prevent the creation of a second or a third Vietnam.

To repeat: From the liberation of South Vietnam in 1975 right up to this very day, the Indochinese revolution has been fighting against imperialism without a single day's rest. The revolution now faces a crisis. The revolution today stands at a crossroads.

Whether or not the revolution, and the people of Indochina, can go forward to a real socialist federation, including Thailand and Burma, will depend on whether we can break the encirclement of Indochina by imperialism and the Chinese bureaucracy. To do that requires a new offensive of struggles in solidarity with Vietnam in Japan and around the world.

Now is the time to act! □

# Imperialism vs. Workers of the World

By Steve Clark

[The following article has been excerpted from the March 23 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

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Hiding behind the mask of world peace-maker, the Carter administration is driving to reassert Washington's political capacity to use its vast military power.

Due to the deep-seated opposition among American workers to U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the U.S. ruling class has been unable to simply "send in the marines" in an attempt to slow down, halt, and reverse the rising wave of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles around the world.

The resulting weakening of U.S. imperialism in relation to the world working class has been dramatized most recently by Washington's dilemma in the face of revolutionary developments in Iran, southern Africa, and Indochina.

- In southern Africa, Washington has been checkmated by the deep revulsion at home against support to the white minority regimes. This feeling is especially strong among Blacks, who make up a large and growing portion of the volunteer army today. The revolutionary Cuban government has added to imperialism's headaches by stationing some 40,000 troops on the continent to resist counter-revolutionary moves.

- In Iran, the U.S. rulers were unable to intervene at all militarily. Their eagerness to reassert U.S. power in that part of the world highlights the dangers in Washington's decision to dispatch an aircraft carrier and other warships to the waters off Yemen this month. Carter is pushing the Saudi Arabian regime to move against the government of South Yemen and confront the Cuban troops that are stationed there.

- In combating the extension of the Indochinese revolution, Washington has had to pour in arms to the rightist military regime in Thailand and funnel support through that conduit to reactionary guerrilla forces in Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Laos. It had to enlist the help of the Peking Stalinists in an unsuccessful effort to pressure Vietnam to withdraw troops from Kampuchea.

The imperialists know, however, that none of these can substitute for the direct use of U.S. military muscle. No matter how loyally Teng Hsiao-p'ing performs, U.S. imperialism will never trust the rulers of a social system that is its deadly enemy. In

addition, the Chinese army's poor showing in Vietnam proved that it is certainly not a strategic, offensive military power in the area.

And the Iranian events once again demonstrated the frailty of semicolonial capitalist regimes such as in Thailand.

### U.S. Workers Stay Hand

Despite U.S. imperialism's growing need to use direct military force, however, opposition to such a course among American workers remains high.

A CBS/*New York Times* poll released March 2, for example, showed that 63 percent of those questioned opposed sending troops abroad for any reason other than responding to an attack on the United States. Sixty-eight percent said they were glad the U.S. government had not intervened militarily in Iran.

Washington's aim is to turn this situation around, so that it can use its massive military might to stop the spread of socialist revolution.

This effort to put U.S. imperialism back on a war footing is a key battlefield in the rulers' offensive against the resistance by American workers to the political and economic needs of big business. The capitalists are determined to resolve the deep crisis of their system the only way they can—by taking it out of the hides of working people at home and abroad.

The ruling class does not intend to let American workers block its drive to boost profits. It will push ahead to reverse gains won by the unions, and by the Black and women's movement, over decades of struggle. Nor does it intend to let workers' antiwar attitudes prevent it from using them as cannon fodder for Wall Street's interests around the globe.

Carter's war drive is aimed just as much at the American working class as at workers elsewhere around the world.

That's shown by Washington's record \$135 billion war budget for this year.

That's shown by the talk in Congress and the White House of resurrecting the draft.

That's shown by the Pentagon's drive toward the most rapid possible development of a U.S. nuclear "first strike" capacity, and of tactical nuclear weapons such as the neutron bomb.

That's shown by probes such as in Yemen, toward a direct U.S. military intervention.

This is the dangerous road along which Washington is pushing American workers

and all humanity as the crisis of capitalism deepens.

Carter knows that to achieve his goals he must reverse the widespread popular suspicion of Washington's foreign-policy aims. He must convince American workers that the threat of war comes from beyond the borders, and that the Pentagon must be strong in the interests of world peace. He must try to whip up an "us" versus "them" atmosphere.

So, Carter has tried to revive, with a new twist, the "Communist menace" propaganda that took a serious beating from the American people as a consequence of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Pointing to events in Indochina, Carter now aims to startle the American people with the specter of spiraling wars among "Communist countries."

"We will not get involved in conflict between Asian Communist nations," Carter piously lied to an audience at Georgia Tech last month.

By striking this fraudulent posture, Carter hopes not only to portray Washington as a force for peace and sanity in a strife-torn world, but to discredit socialism as an alternative to the wars and suffering bred by capitalism.

### How U.S. Left Responded

No one on the American left except the *Militant* and Socialist Workers Party has stood up under the pressure of this capitalist ideological barrage. No one except the *Militant* and SWP has consistently kept the spotlight on U.S. imperialism and its drive to contain and roll back the Indochinese revolution.

The American radical press all portray the main actors in the recent Indochina conflicts as the governments of the Soviet Union and China, with Vietnam and Kampuchea in supporting roles.

"Vietnam" invaded "Kampuchea," everyone explains. Then "China" invaded "Vietnam."

"Countries" are at war over "national antagonisms" and "spheres of influence." All social divisions between and within these countries, all classes, disappear.

Who invaded Vietnam? The Chinese masses, or the Stalinist regime in Peking? Does it matter that capitalism had been toppled in Vietnam, but not in Kampuchea?

Most important, where is the struggle between the Indochinese masses and U.S. imperialism? Has Washington simply writ-



ten off Southeast Asia? Why has it suddenly and dramatically stepped up military shipments to the Thai dictatorship? What really happened when Teng visited Washington, and when Blumenthal visited Peking?

Most of the radical press has ended up echoing the "explanations" offered by the bourgeois press, which does its best to disguise the underlying struggle between exploiters and exploited—the class struggle—that is at the center of all world politics.

In contrast to this classless mishmash, Marxists explain that at the root of the Indochina wars is the drive by the capitalist rulers of the United States to defend their class interests against the extension of social revolution in Southeast Asia. The main actors are the American ruling class, supported by the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies, on the one hand; and the toiling masses of Indochina, together with the U.S. and Chinese workers, on the other.

Despite surface appearances, the Peking and Hanoi Stalinist regimes are not the central protagonists in this struggle. They represent privileged bureaucratic castes balanced between the contending class forces.

In an essay written forty years ago, Russian Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky explained this crucial starting point for understanding anything about twentieth-century politics: "The struggle for domination considered on a historical scale is not between the proletariat and the [Stalinist] bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and world bourgeoisie."

"In its capacity of a transmitting mechanism in this struggle," Trotsky said, "the bureaucracy leans now on the proletariat against imperialism, now on imperialism against the proletariat, in order to increase its own power." ("Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-1938)*.)

Today in Indochina, the Peking Stalinists are leaning on U.S. imperialism against the interests of both the Indochinese and Chinese masses. Their goal is to

get an economic deal with U.S. capitalism and prove their reliability to Washington as an opponent of revolutionary change in Asia.

The Stalinist regime in Hanoi, on the other hand, has had to lean on the Vietnamese toilers against U.S. imperialism and its Peking ally. Its own attempts to reach accommodation with Washington following the 1973 accords have been met by an intensification of the imperialist blockade and other hostile measures. As a result, the Hanoi bureaucracy has been forced to defend with its own Stalinist methods the revolutionary gains won by the Vietnamese workers and peasants during decades of struggle.

In rejecting such a class approach toward the Indochina events, the vast majority of the American radical press has ended up helping Washington in obscuring U.S. imperialism's counterrevolutionary maneuvers there.

In countering these incorrect conceptions, the *Militant* has stressed that:

- The threat of war in today's world originates in the profit drive of imperialism. At the heart of this drive is the capitalists' ultimate aim of rolling back all conquests of the working class—from unions, to the fourteen workers states, where capitalism has been abolished;

- The Stalinist bureaucratic castes that dominate all the workers states except Cuba are not driven toward wars of aggression and do not seek an offensive military capacity. Their foreign policies are neither those of an imperialist government promoting the interests of the capitalists, nor those of a revolutionary workers state pursuing the struggle to overturn world capitalism;

- The Stalinist castes play a counter-revolutionary role on a world scale, acting as a transmission belt for imperialist pressure against the working class. Nonetheless, they are forced in the interests of self-preservation to defend the property relations in the workers states against imperialism, although their class-collaborationist methods actually weaken the defense of these gains; and

- All the key questions in world politics will be decided in the battles between imperialism and the world working class, a key part of which is the fight to overthrow the bureaucratic castes and replace them by democratic rule of the working class.

## Capitalist Expansionism

All of twentieth-century history is proof scrawled in blood that the source of war is the inexhaustible, expansionist drive for profits by the giant monopoly interests that dominate the world capitalist market.

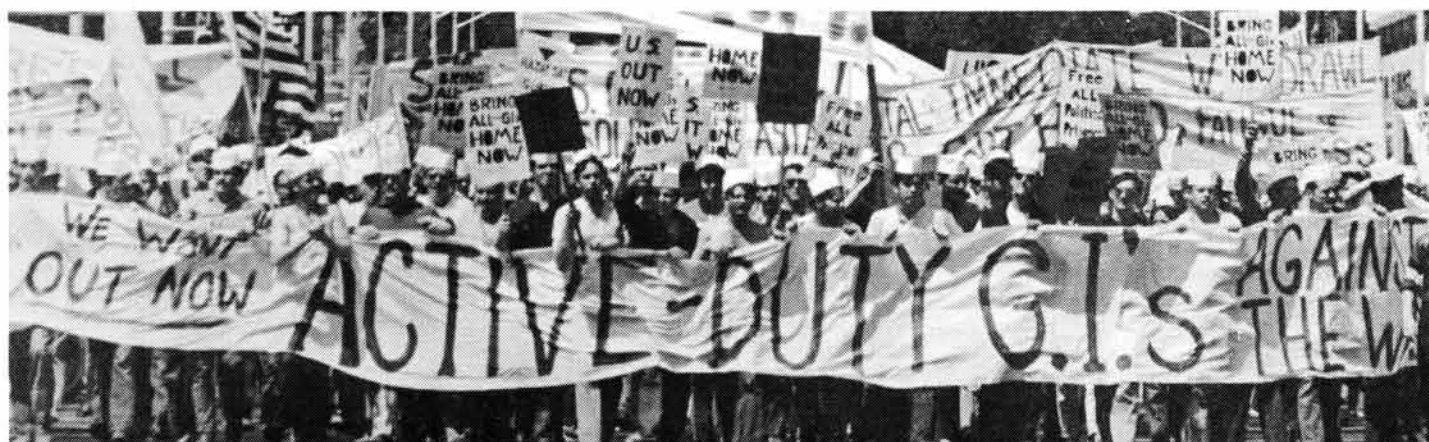
These competing monopoly corporations and banks defend their interests through various national states. The capitalists *must* have state power to promote and defend their needs against those of the workers they exploit at home and abroad, as well as against their capitalist competitors in other countries.

World Wars I and II, the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and innumerable wars to smash other colonial uprisings have been fought by U.S., German, French, British, Japanese, and other imperialist powers. The fundamental aims are always the same: the struggle for markets, control over raw materials, new investment openings, and establishment of military outposts to police these economic stakes.

Interimperialist competition continues today, and is, in fact, intensifying as the gap erodes between the economic predominance of U.S. imperialism and the West European and Japanese capitalists.

Despite this never-ending rivalry, however, the political and military aspects of this interimperialist competition have been profoundly altered by the existence of fourteen countries where capitalism has been abolished and by Washington's nuclear arsenal.

Japan is the most economically powerful capitalist country after the United States. Yet, opposition from the Japanese people—the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—has made it impossible for the Japanese ruling class to rebuild a strategic military



1971 demonstration in Texas led by GIs—a striking example of deep-seated antiwar sentiment among American workers.

establishment, especially with nuclear arms.

Germany, which follows Japan as an economic power, also has no nuclear forces of its own. Here, too, opposition from the German workers has been decisive.

So, the interests of the entire imperialist system depend ultimately on U.S. military power—power that has been hamstrung by American working people.

Capitalism was overturned in Russia at the end of World War I, and following World War II throughout Eastern Europe, in China, in North Korea, in North Vietnam, in Cuba, and most recently in southern Vietnam. These are historic blows against imperialism.

The capitalist powers are no longer simply pitted against each other to carve up markets and the colonial world; their sources for investment and cheap raw materials have drastically contracted. They have banded together under Washington's lead against the world socialist revolution and colonial uprisings.

The imperialists share a common aim: to hold back any extension of this deadly threat to their class rule and ultimately to crush it altogether. They are driven to regain for direct exploitation the one-third of humanity that now lives in countries where capitalism has been abolished.

Washington's campaign to contain the Indochinese revolution today is one battlefront in this class war between two social systems reflecting the interests of two antagonistic classes—workers and capitalists.

### Nuclear Arms Race

Imperialism's irreconcilable hatred for this new social system explains Washington's nuclear weapons buildup since World War II. The U.S. rulers did not incinerate more than 200,000 human beings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order, as they claim, to force a Japanese surrender and save the lives of American GIs. The Japanese government had already informed Washington of its desire to negotiate an immediate surrender.

That act of capitalist barbarism was a warning to the Soviet Union and to the oppressed and exploited around the world.

From that day to this, every escalation of the nuclear arms race has originated in Washington.

The USSR did not develop an atomic weapon to counter the U.S. rulers' threat until late 1949.

Washington exploded the first hydrogen bomb in 1952. Moscow in 1953.

The first intercontinental ballistic missiles were deployed in 1960. By whom? The American rulers, with Moscow only following four years later.

Washington put its first missile-laden submarine to sea in 1960. Moscow did so some seven years later.

U.S. imperialism introduced multiple atomic warheads (MIRVs) in 1970, with

the Soviet Union following in 1976.

Today, under the transparent guise of "defense," Washington is moving ahead with plans for the new M-X and cruise missiles, and the neutron bomb.

The Carter administration and bipartisan Congress are driving toward a nuclear "first strike" capacity. This sought-after ability to wipe out the entire Soviet nuclear force in a single surprise blow exposes the true aggressive aims of U.S. imperialism.

Washington's nuclear arsenal makes it the enforcer of imperialist interests throughout the world against the struggles of the workers and peasants. In this capacity, it has gone to war time and again since World War II, primarily against the spread of the colonial revolution and the threat that capitalist property would be toppled by these struggles.

Washington went to war in Korea in 1950. It sent marines into Lebanon in 1958. It helped crush the Congolese nationalist movement in 1964. It staged an invasion of Cuba in 1961. It intervened to halt a popular uprising in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

And it waged a long and bloody war against the workers and peasants of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea.

In addition, the CIA engineered successful coups in Brazil, Guatemala, Iran, Chile, Indonesia, and other places. And the list goes on.

The mass opposition today among U.S. workers to such military aggression is a tremendous weapon in the hands of the oppressed, from Zimbabwe to Thailand. But the U.S. ruling class is no more resigned to living with this situation abroad than it is to bowing to the resistance by American workers to a drastic attack on their living standards.

As the situation in Yemen today shows, the U.S. government is constantly gauging the situation, assessing the relationship of forces, and waiting for its opportunity to reassert direct military power. Only constant vigilance and readiness to oppose such moves anywhere in the world can keep the rulers on the defensive.

## Ruling Classes & Castes

The uncontrolled quest for profits that powers the imperialist war drive does not exist in countries where capitalism has been abolished and replaced by a planned and nationalized economy. The merciless lash of competition among privately owned monopolies no longer rules the economy.

This is a historic conquest of the world working class and a tribute to the Russian toilers who opened the door to a new epoch in October 1917.

U.S., Japanese, German, and other imperialist-based companies invest billions of dollars outside their own national borders each year, raking in billions more in profits to reinvest. Companies such as

General Motors, Toyota, Royal Dutch Shell, British Leyland, and Michelin exploit millions of Thai, South African, Jamaican, Peruvian, and other workers in semicolonial countries, as well as in other imperialist countries. Banks such as Chase Manhattan, Credit Lyonnais, England's Barclays Bank, and others run profit-making operations on a world scale.

Businessmen, their retainers, and all the trademarks of imperialist corporations dominate the world.

Can the same be said for the Soviet Union, China, or any other country where capitalism has been abolished? No.

Without the export of capital and its profitable investment abroad, the economies of every imperialist country in the world would grind to a halt and collapse. Yet the Soviet Union and China export no capital, and production—as well as the standard of living of the masses—continues to progress, although at a rate slowed by bureaucratic mismanagement.

The imperialist powers go to war and dispatch invading armies to protect these vital investments and direct economic interests around the globe. The states where capitalism has been abolished, however, have no such interests.

### Character of Bureaucratic Castes

All this is true despite the fact that all of these postcapitalist countries except Cuba are saddled with counterrevolutionary bureaucratic castes. In fact, the differences between the two economic and social systems also determine fundamental differences between the social laws governing the actions of a capitalist ruling class and a Stalinist ruling caste.

This is not a moral or ethical question. Both the capitalist and Stalinist rulers are alien from and despise the workers and oppressed. On that level, they are entirely kindred spirits.

But the different social systems they preside over, and their relationship to the means of production, cause them to act and react in different ways to protect and promote their interests.

What Leon Trotsky wrote about the Soviet Union some four decades ago in *The Revolution Betrayed* remains true today for all the workers states under Stalinist rule. "The Soviet bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order by methods of its own to defend the social conquests," Trotsky explained.

The caste plays no necessary role whatever in the functioning of the economy. In fact, its pillage and bureaucratic mismanagement are obstacles to the full development of the productive possibilities of the new social and economic relations.

These countries remain workers states, however deformed or degenerated, because the property relations established through the toppling of capitalism represent an historic step forward by the working class. The workers are the ruling class in these



countries, although oppressed by a parasitic caste that has seized political power from them and stunted the workers' forward march toward socialism.

A ruling capitalist class that *owns* factories and banks, in contrast, amasses capital in its own hands, which it then seeks to reinvest to again turn a profit, amass more capital, and so on. Since that search for profitable investment pushes the capitalists beyond their own borders, they are expansionist by nature. And the state they control uses military power to ensure that capital can be invested abroad and protected there.

The capitalists live more lavishly than any working person can imagine. But all their enormous personal wealth is only a pittance of the vast fortunes that they own and have control over. They must either invest these revenues profitably, or else go under in the competitive struggle.

Things are different with the bureaucratic castes that rule the Soviet Union and other workers states. They own neither the factories, the products of the factories, nor the revenues from the sale of those products.

Through their political and administrative control, they rake off from what the workers produce a tremendous amount for their own consumption and personal comfort. But the bureaucracy cannot get its hands on the productive wealth of society, buy or sell it, invest it for profit abroad, or pass it on to its children.

Trotsky explains it this way in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "The bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations of its own."

Nikita Khrushchev, for example, could be rudely bumped from power and sent off to a disgraced, obscure, and only moderately comfortable retirement. Stalin routinely purged, jailed, and executed top figures in the bureaucratic caste.

Nelson Rockefeller, on the other hand, may have never become president. But his vast wealth ensured that he was, till his death, a wielder of enormous political power. He was part of the ruling class, not an individual member of a parasitic, administrative caste.

Trotsky continued: "The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus. The bureaucracy enjoys its privileges under the form of an abuse of power."

"It conceals its income; it pretends that as a special social group it does not even exist. Its appropriation of a vast share of the national income has the character of social parasitism."

#### Castes Not Expansionist

Unlike the capitalists, the bureaucratic caste does not depend for its wealth and



Uprising in Santo Domingo in 1965 was crushed by U.S. intervention. "Mass opposition among American workers today to such aggression is tremendous weapon in hands of oppressed."

privileges on the accumulation and expansion of capital. The nationalized and planned economies off which it leeches are free from the predatory drive for profits and foreign investments.

Unlike the capitalists, the bureaucracy has no need to build up a massive military establishment. In fact, arms spending cuts into its privileges. The caste needs a strong enough repressive apparatus to police the workers and defend its borders from imperialism. Washington's mad arms race, however, pushes the bureaucracy to respond out of elementary self-preservation.

The defensive character of the army of the workers states was pointed up by the difficulties of the Chinese army during its invasion of Vietnam. *New York Times* military writer Drew Middleton reported March 6 that Peking faced "a problem in shifting the army's attitude from defensive war, for which it has been indoctrinated and trained, to one suitable for an invasion, limited though it was."

Peking's favor to U.S. imperialism was a costly one militarily and politically. Its full impact on the ranks of the Chinese army, and on the discontented workers and peasants of China, has just begun to be felt.

#### Stalinist Foreign Policy

The caste does not have a foreign policy in the same sense as the capitalists, who pursue policies to protect their massive economic interests abroad. History books to the contrary, no major capitalist power has ever been "isolationist." Their financial and military tentacles extend around the globe.

The caste also does not pursue a revolutionary foreign policy in the interests of the working class, as did the Soviet government under the leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolshevik Party. The Stalinists do not pursue the revolutionary

anti-imperialist foreign policy of the Castro government in Cuba, which has sent troops to aid the African freedom struggle and rallied the Cuban masses this year in defense of Vietnam during the Peking invasion.

The policy of the bureaucratic castes, to the contrary, is to minimize their need for involvement abroad. They seek trade openings to obtain foreign exchange to finance imports. They seek influence over certain governments in the semicolonial world and certain national liberation movements, so that they have some leverage in their counterrevolutionary dealings with imperialism.

But the castes are not expansionist. Their aim is to milk what they can from economic development within their own borders—not to multiply their problems by swallowing up new territories to develop and new restless populations to control.

Writing in 1939 about the Soviet Union under Stalin's rule, Trotsky explained: "The mission of the Soviet regime is not that of securing new areas for the productive forces but that of erecting productive forces for the old areas. The economic tasks of the USSR do not necessitate the extension of her borders" (*"The Twin Stars: Hitler-Stalin," Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940).*)

Isn't this contradicted by the Soviet army's occupation of Eastern Europe after World War II?

Not at all.

When the Soviet army occupied Eastern Europe after driving out the Nazis, Stalin had every intention of coming to terms with imperialism in those areas. He brutally crushed independent workers' struggles and sought to establish friendly capitalist coalition regimes.

Imperialism, however, smashed Stalin's plans. Winston Churchill signaled the

launching of the cold war with his "Iron Curtain" speech, and the imperialists began more openly to back rightist forces throughout Eastern Europe.

To prevent the establishment of a string of hostile governments along the Soviet border, Stalin was forced by 1947 and 1948 to allow working-class mobilizations, even if tightly controlled ones, in order to abolish capitalism and set up more reliable regimes. The Kremlin had tried to avoid this course; it was a defensive response to imperialist threats, not an expression of "Communist expansionism."

## 'Peaceful Coexistence'

All the bureaucratic castes practice class collaboration with the imperialist enemies of the oppressed and exploited. The form this takes is adherence to and promotion of the Stalinist concept of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism on a world scale—*détente*. They all seek above everything else a permanent truce with imperialism, so they can build "socialism in one country"—their own.

Actually, it is more accurate to say:

1) that in return for being left alone and helped out economically, the castes promise imperialism that they *won't* try to build socialism anywhere beyond their borders; and

2) that within their borders, the castes strive to build what they *falsely call* socialism. Their goal has nothing whatsoever to do with the Marxist goal of a worldwide society of freedom, democracy, and abundance in which human beings labor cooperatively and produce for the common advancement of all. A society in which there are no exploited or exploiters, no oppressed or oppressors.

In the Stalinist dictionary, "socialism" means bountiful privileges for the bureaucrats. It means economic development at a pace the caste hopes will keep the masses' minds off their lack of freedom and political control. Democratic rights and decision making would undermine the totalitarian grip of the bureaucracy, which is the sole source of its privileges.

To preserve its berth in society, the bureaucracies above all crave stability—inside and outside their borders. Lenin correctly said that this is the epoch of wars and revolutions, and it is precisely wars and revolutions that the Stalinist perverters of Leninism most fear.

The Stalinists' methods are counter-revolutionary. As a social layer, they are conservative. They hate everything that shakes up the status quo, especially if it puts the working class into motion and threatens them directly. Any gain for any revolution anywhere threatens to heighten class consciousness and discontent among the masses in the Stalinist-dominated workers states.

This search for "peaceful coexistence," of course, does not mean that the bureaucratic castes will not and do not go to war.

Faced with a military threat or attack from imperialism, a caste will react in self-defense. Its aim is to protect its own privileges. But in doing so, and with its own counterrevolutionary methods, it must also defend the progressive social relations off which it feeds.

Only a year after the Stalin-Hitler "peaceful coexistence" pact, for example, the Kremlin was forced to go to war to defend the Soviet Union against a Nazi invasion.

The Stalinists have also used military force to crush antibureaucratic revolutions by the workers, as the Kremlin did in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In cases such as these, however, the bureaucracy is seeking to *defend* its position—against imperialism in the first case, against the workers in the second. The ultimate aim of the caste is to keep trouble from knocking on its door.

"The Kremlin does not want war or revolution," Trotsky wrote. "It does want order, tranquility, the status quo, and at any cost."

It is on their mutual hatred of revolution that the caste stakes its hopes for peaceful coexistence with world capitalism.

But this hope is as utopian as it is reactionary. "Stalin seeking to escape war does not mean that war will permit Stalin to escape," wrote Trotsky in 1939.

In their counterrevolutionary search for peace through appeasement of imperialism, the Stalinists actually make war more likely. Only extension of the revolution, and the growing consciousness and self-confidence of the working class can make the workers states more secure from imperialist attack.

## Proletarian Internationalism

This, not peaceful coexistence, was the policy of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Far from promoting the idea of "socialism in one country," the Communist International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky saw the extension of the socialist revolution as a life and death matter for the Soviet Union. It championed the slogan, "Workers of the world unite!"

It is the Stalinists' rejection of Lenin's revolutionary course that is their real betrayal of the cause of world peace, not some alleged expansionism or xenophobic aggressiveness.

Of course, since the outlook of Moscow, Peking, and other castes is limited to the privileges they derive within the boundaries they rule, they define their needs as "national interests" and place them above all else.

But wars are not caused by "nationalism" or "national hostilities." Wars are not caused by ideas or "human nature." Wars are caused by conflicting material interests.

Governments will often cloak their interests behind a chauvinist guise in hopes of

convincing the masses that a war is in the interests of "the entire nation." This is the standard propaganda ploy of an imperialist ruling class driven to maximize its profits through world domination.

The material interests of the castes, however, are not expansionist or militarist. Stalinism's *nationalism* is most characterized by its total rejection of working-class *internationalism*.

## Vietnam, Kampuchea, China

This view contrasts sharply with that peddled by virtually the entire U.S. radical movement except the *Militant*. Seeing competing "nationalisms" as the root of the Indochina conflicts, virtually every radical newspaper has echoed the U.S. government's diplomatic stance.

First, like Washington, they called for immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. Following Peking's invasion, both they and Washington linked two slogans together: Vietnam out of Kampuchea; China out of Vietnam.

The petty-bourgeois left put an equal sign between the two invasions, entirely missing the opposite class forces that came into play in the two wars. Both were allegedly "wars between Communist nations," which is dreadful, demoralizing, tragic, ad nauseum. And that settles that.

Of course, both events *do* have something in common: Both are linked to the U.S. imperialist drive to contain and eventually roll back the Indochinese revolution.

The government of Vietnam supported insurgent Kampucheans as an act of self-defense against a tightening, imperialist squeeze in which the reactionary Pol Pot regime was becoming a keystone.

Peking's invasion of Vietnam, on the contrary, was hatched in Washington as *part of* the imperialist drive to stop any spread of anticapitalist overturns to Kampuchea and Thailand by putting pressure on Hanoi.

Neither invasion, however, can be explained by "ugly nationalism" as the *New York Times* put it, or "national animosities" as *In These Times* and other radicals explain. Nor can they be explained as proxy wars for Sino-Soviet "national antagonisms," reflected in clashing "spheres of influence."

The Peking regime had no territorial designs on Vietnam. It did not aim to topple the Hanoi regime, nor to conquer Vietnam.

The Peking Stalinists carried out the invasion at Washington's behest because they saw a common interest in halting the Indochinese revolution. The Chinese bureaucracy sought to prove its counterrevolutionary reliability in the area. Its goal was to punish the Vietnamese, who had dealt new blows to imperialism and put the Peking bureaucracy on the defensive.

In return, the Chinese caste expects massive U.S. trade and aid. This, Peking has promised the Chinese masses, will



make it possible to achieve the "Four Modernizations" and improve their living conditions.

Despite these promises, the Peking Stalinists may yet have to pay a heavy price at home for the treacherous invasion. Knowing that it would be unpopular among the Chinese masses, Teng banned all public gatherings, demonstrations, or wall posters discussing the war. Nonetheless, protests did occur in many Chinese cities, according to press reports.

Unlike the Chinese war in Korea or Stalin's defense against Hitler, this war by the ruling *caste* of a workers state was not in the interests of the ruling *class*, that is, not in the interests of the Chinese proletariat. It was unpopular from the outset.

### Imperialism's Aims

U.S. business is eager to boost its sales through the opening of the China market. It sees an opportunity to strike another blow at its Japanese competitors in particular.

In addition, as the invasion of Vietnam itself showed, Washington has not recovered from the problems that forced it to turn toward détente with Peking and Moscow a decade ago.

The U.S. ruling class, however, is under no illusion that it can ultimately rely on Peking to hold back the revolution in Southeast Asia. The capitalists are preparing the day when they can reassert their own military power there. That is the only hope to achieve *their* strategic goal in the area: not just to contain the revolution in Southeast Asia, but eventually to reestablish a capitalist Vietnam and a capitalist China.

This is not the aim of the Peking Stalinists. They seek to preserve stability in Southeast Asia, and thereby win the good graces of imperialism.

Peking does not want capitalism restored in Vietnam, which would require a very destabilizing civil war. It also does not want the reintroduction of a large U.S. military presence in Indochina. This, the caste knows, would be aimed at the conquests of the Chinese revolution, on which its own survival depends.

Peking's entire counterrevolutionary courtship of U.S. imperialism, however, makes that scenario more possible. It threatens not only the Indochinese revolution, but the Chinese workers state as well.

Furthermore, while American bankers and businessmen are out for every dollar they stand to make from their new relationship with the Chinese regime, the capitalists understand that this cannot fundamentally reverse their deepgoing economic crisis. So long as they cannot massively export capital to China and exploit Chinese labor, they cannot boost their overall worldwide profit rate—which they must do.

The U.S. rulers know that such a goal could only be accomplished with the resto-

ration of capitalism in China. They are still resigned to their inability for the foreseeable future to roll back the revolutionary gains of the workers in either the Soviet Union or China.

That would meet deepgoing resistance from the Soviet and Chinese workers, provoking a civil war. The last thing the workers want is the restoration of capitalism, with its mass unemployment, destitution, permanent inflation, wars, and other social ills. They will fight to preserve *their* conquests, just as U.S. workers fight to preserve their unions from attacks by the employers.

Caught between the working class on one side and imperialism on the other, the Stalinists desperately fight to preserve the status quo.

Trotsky pointed to the imperialists' lack of gratitude and loyalty to its Stalinist collaborators in the 1930s:

"In spite of all the efforts on the part of the Moscow clique to demonstrate its conservative reliability (the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalin in Spain!)"—today we could add, and of Teng in Vietnam—"world imperialism does not trust Stalin, does not spare him the most humiliating flicks and is ready at the first favorable opportunity to overthrow him." ("Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?")

Washington's détente with Moscow and Peking marks its recognition that "the first favorable opportunity" is a ways down the road and that, in the meantime, it must make use of the Stalinists themselves in hopes of making that trip a little shorter. Teng's treachery weakens the defense of the economic conquests of the Chinese workers and heightens the chance of an ultimate imperialist victory through restoration.

In the same essay, Trotsky continued: "For the bourgeoisie—fascist as well as democratic—isolated counterrevolutionary exploits of Stalin do not suffice; it needs a complete counterrevolution in the relations of property and the opening of the Russian market. So long as this is not the case, the bourgeoisie considers the Soviet state hostile to it. And it is right."

### Unions & Workers States

Trotsky was the originator of a useful analogy between trade unions and workers states.

"The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the United States and other countries support completely the counterrevolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie," Trotsky wrote in 1939. "This does not prevent us from labeling them trade unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie."

"Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counterrevolutionary workers' state. In the last analysis a workers state is a trade union which has

conquered power." (*In Defense of Marxism*.)

The outlook of the Stalinist castes is summed up in their counterrevolutionary strategy of "peaceful coexistence" with world capitalism. Similarly, the union bureaucrats proclaim and practice "labor peace" and "stable labor-management relations." In return for favors from the bosses that let them continue raking in dues, they agree not to organize the South, to corral working people inside the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties, and to keep democratic control over union power out of the hands of the workers.

The bosses—in a single industry or organized as the government—seek to destroy the conquests of the working class, all the way from unions on a national level to the workers states on a world scale. For them, class collaboration is at best a tactic along the path toward that goal.

The workers, on the other hand, are pitted in battle against capitalist exploitation. Their interests lie along the road of conscious, uncompromising class struggle. For them, class collaboration is a set of handcuffs that hampers the use of their power in that fight.

For the bureaucracies, however, class collaboration is the staff of life. They are a petty-bourgeois social layer that derive their privileges from trying to becalm the stormy class struggle.

The aim of the union bureaucrats is to fatten their own pocketbooks, which depend on the existence of the union. Their class-collaborationist course, however, ends up weakening the unions, just as "peaceful coexistence" weakens the workers states.

The labor officialdom, like the Stalinist castes, is sometimes forced to act in self-defense or under pressure from the workers. It may have to lead a strike, if the employers launch a union-busting drive, just as Stalin finally went to war against German imperialism following Hitler's invasion.

### Raiding Operations

Trotsky's analogy can even shed some light on what was really at stake in Peking's invasion of Vietnam.

One of the biggest services the union tops perform for the bosses is to keep the working class divided: male against female, white against Black, employed against unemployed, union against nonunion, U.S. workers against Japanese workers, and so on.

The bosses and their government glory in such divisions, which pit the workers among themselves, instead of against their common exploiter. The union bureaucracy serves as the transmission belt through which the employers bring this pressure and these prejudices and divisions to bear against the labor movement.

One way this is sometimes done is through "raiding operations" by the mis-



Employing tactic similar to U.S. instigation of Chinese invasion of Vietnam, American agribusiness tried to use Teamsters union to crush farm workers organizing drive.

leaders of one union against another union. The bosses encourage this situation if they feel too weak to keep out a union altogether, but believe they can come to a "sweetheart" agreement with the bureaucrats of a particular union that will minimize their own profit losses.

For example, several years ago California agribusiness called in the Teamsters union bureaucracy to aid it in smashing the organizing drive of the United Farm Workers. Through its struggles and broad national support, the UFW had begun to win some contracts. Agribusiness was determined to smash the union.

The growers, of course, publicly proclaimed their "neutrality" in the "unfortunate jurisdictional dispute." They claimed to have nothing to do with the hired goons who beat up and killed UFW militants. "It all shows the destructive logic of unions," the agribusiness spokespersons explained. "Farm workers would be better off without them."

A familiar refrain? Echoes of Washington's proclamations of innocence over Peking's invasion of Vietnam?

All the while, the growers were meeting and making deals with the Teamster bureaucrats, just as Blumenthal did recently with Teng in Peking.

The UFW's supporters pointed the finger of blame for this union-busting drive where it belonged: at the growers. And they condemned the Teamsters officialdom for its treacherous, scabbing role in the

antilabor scheme.

Fortunately, the UFW was successful in exposing the growers' game and winning significant national solidarity for their fight. The Teamster bureaucrats were finally forced to pull out of the fields.

This points to another important lesson as well. The decisive battle didn't come down to the bosses vs. the Teamster bureaucrats, or the bureaucrats vs. the farm workers. The battle was between the growers on one side, and the farm workers and UFW supporters on the other. That was what counted in the end.

## Class Struggle on Rise

The big questions of revolution and counterrevolution in the world will not be decided by the bureaucratic castes and their Stalinist policies. Those questions will be settled in the battles between the world working class and imperialism.

Every victory for the world revolution weakens the imperialist warmakers. Each such victory is a hundred times more potent in defending the social gains of the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other workers states than the ultimately suicidal policies of "peaceful coexistence" followed by the Stalinist castes. And each such victory weakens the grip of these betrayers over the workers in their own countries, and their influence over the course of struggles in other countries.

Today those struggles are on the rise. That is shown by the revolutionary events

in Iran. It is shown by the mounting liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and throughout southern Africa. It is shown by the living revolution in Indochina that Washington is trying to contain, with Peking's help.

The working class in the imperialist countries, too, is on the move. In Britain they have shattered the government's 5 percent wage guidelines. In France they are battling to save jobs in that country's steel-making region. German steelworkers this year waged their first industry-wide battle against the employers in fifty years.

And in the United States, today's struggle at Newport News and last year's miners' strike are the heat lightning of the storms to come. American workers are beginning to fight back against the rulers' offensive, and they are discussing and thinking about all the life-and-death political issues of our times.

"These are sorry days for socialism," moans the *Guardian*.

The *Militant* says, no! These are not sorry days for socialism. These are sorry days for world capitalism, which is crisis-ridden and is suffering important blows.

These are sorry days for the bureaucratic castes, whose betrayals and lack of any historical role have thrown Stalinism into crisis.

And these are sorry days for petty-bourgeois radicals such as the *Guardian*, who have staked their hopes on the Stalinist castes and have no confidence in the revolutionary power of the working class. They have folded before Carter's warmongering propaganda blitz because they are isolated from and do not orient toward the only social force in the world that can stay the hand of U.S. imperialism and ultimately disarm it—the American workers.

The future of humanity today rests with the workers of the world, and with the workers of this country above all.

Members of the Socialist Workers Party are preparing for those big battles today in the factories, mines, and mills across the United States. There, they are finding no reason for pessimism and despair. Just the opposite. Socialists are finding a greater audience for anticapitalist ideas than ever before.

The fight for a world free from war is a fight over which class will rule the world—the workers or the capitalists.

In that international class war—from Iran to Zimbabwe, from the Soviet Union to China, from France to the United States—the decisive element will be the construction of revolutionary parties, armed with a Marxist program and composed overwhelmingly of industrial workers.

"Where will it end?" sob the *Guardian* editors. The *Militant* answers with complete confidence:

With the world socialist revolution, which will put an end to the capitalist scourges of poverty, exploitation, and war.