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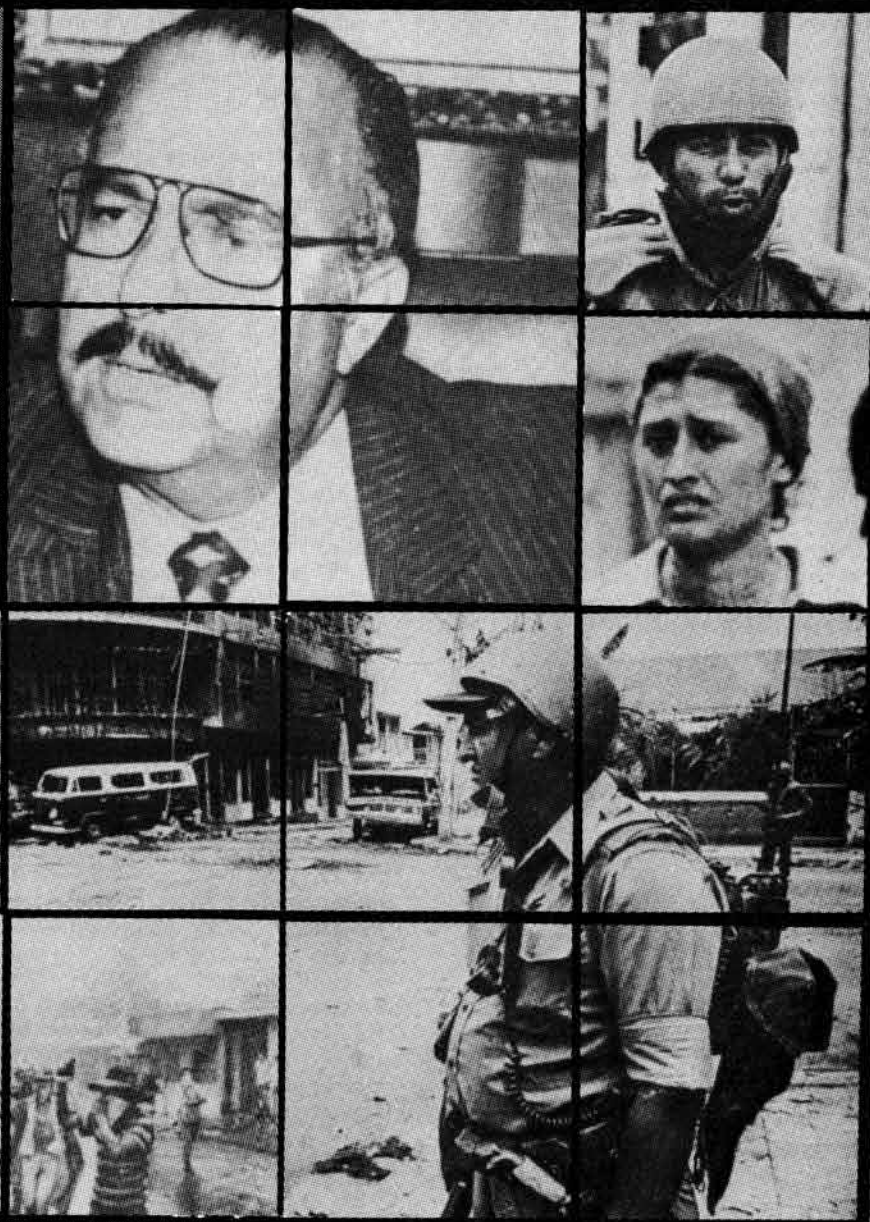
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Solidarity With Fight to Oust Somoza

(Statement of United Secretariat
of the Fourth International)



INDOCHINA DEBATE

War and Revolution in Indochina—
What Policy for Revolutionists?

A Reply to Ernest Mandel by Steve Clark,
Fred Feldman, Gus Horowitz, and Mary-Alice Waters

Statement of the Fourth International

For Solidarity With the Fight to Oust Somoza!

[The following statement was issued July 4 by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The generalized crisis that hit the Somoza dictatorship in January 1978 became a decisive confrontation in June 1979. A full-scale civil war is under way in which thousands of workers and peasants have already given their lives.

Mass mobilizations and the increasingly audacious actions by those fighting under the banner of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) have profoundly shaken one of the bloodiest dictatorships of Latin America. They have pushed the Somoza regime to the edge of collapse, raising a threat to the grip of imperialism on the region.

The crisis of Somozaism affects the whole of Central America. It weakens the military dictatorships of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, to whom Somoza always gave the fullest support. But it also affects the bourgeois regimes of Costa Rica and Panama. Although these regimes long ago took their distance from Somoza and today openly oppose him, they do this for two reasons. First to shore up—at little cost—their democratic image in the eyes of the masses who are attracted by the exemplary struggle of the Nicaraguan people. And second, to lay the groundwork for an alternative to Somozaism that will not threaten the framework of the capitalist system.

The Somoza regime enjoyed relative stability after the Guatemalan revolution was crushed in 1954 by the direct intervention of U.S. imperialism, supported by a coalition of reactionary forces in the region. The existence of the Somoza tyranny contributed greatly to maintenance of the status quo for a quarter of a century.

On the economic level, this period was characterized by a massive influx of capital and the formation in the 1960s of the Central American Common Market, an instrument designed to facilitate imperialist penetration in the region. Guatemala, El Salvador, and to a lesser extent Costa Rica and Nicaragua, experienced the beginnings of industrialization, which meant an increase in the social weight of the proletariat. But it was above all their agrarian economies that underwent major transformations. The so-called agricultural reform led to substantial investments, to a technological rationalization and modernization, and to a growth of productivity in the cultivation of such export products as bananas, cotton, coffee, and sugar.

The main beneficiaries of these changes were the imperialist companies and big landowners who adapted to the new conditions. Capitalist agriculture and a rising agricultural proletariat made increasing inroads on both the traditional latifundist structure and the remnants of semifeudal relations.

Concentration of property, far from being restrained, increased more rapidly (in 1976, 6.2% of landowners in Central America held nearly three-quarters [73.2%] of arable land while 69% of them shared 6.5%). The great majority of the peasant masses suffered the consequences. Deprived of their holdings or condemned to eke out an existence on smaller and smaller pieces of unproductive land, they have seen their conditions of life deteriorate dramatically.

Add in a rate of population growth that is among the highest in the world, and it is clear why El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua face an explosive situation which the ruling classes, backed by imperialism, have sought to defuse through brutal and systematic repression.

The war that broke out in 1969 between El Salvador and Honduras was one of the striking events of this period. In the last analysis it was the result of tensions and internal conflicts stemming from the massive unemployment and the demand of the peasants for land. In collaboration with the oligarchy of Guatemala and Somoza, the El Salvadorian oligarchy—one of the most repressive in Latin America—systematically encouraged a massive emigration of landless peasants to Honduras, a country whose population density is much lower. The reaction of the possessing classes of Honduras led to a political and military conflict, in which U.S. imperialism assumed the role of arbiter, thereby shoring up its direct influence in the region.

This war had many other repercussions. Most importantly it meant the end of the Central American Common Market and revealed even more clearly the inability of the local ruling classes—dependent totally on imperialism—to provide the slightest solution to the region's economic and social problems. It led not only to the sharpening of disparities between the different countries, but also and most importantly to the deepening of social contradictions inside them (for example, in El Salvador and even more so in Nicaragua).

Nicaragua is the country in the region where imperialist domination has taken the most open and extreme forms. Anasta-

sio Somoza García, founder of the dynasty four decades ago, was put in power through direct American intervention. The National Guard, military pillar of Somozaism and of capitalist rule in the country, was established and trained by imperialism as a mercenary army. Intimately tied to the dictator and to his economic and political interests, the National Guard is the supporting structure of the administration and the "judicial" system.

The current dictator, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, and his family control a major part of the Nicaraguan economy—nearly a third of the arable land, the majority of the most profitable industrial, export-import, and transportation sectors. Usually their investments in Nicaragua, as in the other countries of Central America, are combined with those of American-based multinational corporations. Because of this, the crisis of Somozaism becomes combined with the crisis of bourgeois and imperialist domination.

For imperialism, the significance of the crisis in Nicaragua to a large extent goes beyond the borders of the country. The entire dominance of imperialism in the Central American isthmus—a region that is economically, politically, and strategically decisive—is at stake. Washington is trying and will continue to try to do everything in its power to prevent the death agony of Somozaism from opening the way to a challenge to its fundamental interests.

Thus, direct U.S. intervention cannot be excluded despite the sizable political obstacles stemming both from the unique characteristics of the Nicaraguan crisis and from the more general crisis that imperialism has experienced since the war in Vietnam. Such an intervention, especially in the absence of a credible proimperialist bourgeois alternative, would be immediately exposed for what it is—support to Somozaism, if not to Somoza himself, with the aim of crushing the Nicaraguan people in revolt.

It would spark a massive anti-imperialist upsurge throughout the continent. This is exactly the fear of the Latin American governments who opposed the perspective of intervention during the June meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) and defeated the openly stated proposal for such intervention by Washington's mouthpiece Cyrus Vance. American workers, who have not forgotten the Vietnam War and its consequences, will also express their opposition to a new military adventure.

Nor can the imperialists ignore the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Havana, which declared: "The intervention of the United States would create a Vietnam in the very heart of Latin America. The Nicaraguan people and those of Central America would undoubtedly rise up against such foreign intervention, and their other brothers in Latin America and the Caribbean could not remain indifferent to such genocide. It is necessary to prevent this intervention. It is necessary to forthrightly and courageously denounce it before world public opinion and in international bodies." In response to this, the U.S. imperialists immediately launched a new campaign against Cuba.

It is from this point of view that we must see the combination of threats of intervention and political and diplomatic maneuvers by imperialism and its Latin American allies. Contacts are increasing with the provisional government of national reconstruction, which includes representatives of the Sandinistas. The perspective of intervention by a so-called peacekeeping force from Latin American countries to "separate the warring parties" is being actively promoted, while Somoza—although officially disavowed—continues to massacre the Nicaraguan people with impunity.

In reality this massacre is encouraged by imperialism. It represents a direct blow to the masses and weakens the Sandinista forces. Even in its agony, the Somoza dictatorship continues to play its role of defender of the interests of imperialism and Nicaragua's exploiting classes. If necessary, imperialism will send a "peace force" designed to prepare a bourgeois alternative to the dictatorship and to establish the best possible relationship of forces to preserve the integrity of the existing state apparatus, particularly the National Guard.

The military initiatives of the Sandinistas, which are gaining greater and greater active support from the masses; the revolt of the peasants, workers, and plebeian masses of the cities; and the occupation of major areas of the country by the insurgents, together with the formation of popular committees that take charge of the elementary needs of the population, have brought about a fundamental polarization—two social forces confront each other in a full-scale civil war. *The fundamental task of the hour is to bring this struggle to victory through the revolutionary overthrow of Somoza and his regime. This would represent a major new defeat for Washington and for imperialism as a whole, and would give a fresh impulse to mobilizations of the masses of the region.*

Revolutionary Marxists in Nicaragua and throughout the world place themselves unreservedly on the side of the Sandinista fighters and of all those who are actively taking part in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship and its imperialist

masters. Our comrades in Nicaragua are joining in the mobilizations of the masses and participating in their heroic battle. Our organizations throughout the world, especially in the countries of Latin America and in the imperialist centers, must extend the international campaign of solidarity with the struggle of the Nicaraguan people. Such a campaign by the workers movement can and should take on a decisive importance.

If in fact the masses mobilize throughout Latin America, and if at the same time the masses of the imperialist countries and especially of the United States let it be clearly understood that they will not tolerate a counterrevolutionary war of aggression, the imperialist and "national" bourgeois rulers will have difficulty in intervening militarily to defend the Somoza regime. This is why the campaign of support to the struggle of the Nicaraguan people is an immediate political task of prime importance.

The direct presence of American troops, as well as the nature of the ties between the Somoza regime and imperialism, have

always given an immediate anti-imperialist dimension to the struggles of the Nicaraguan people. In the 1920s César Augusto Sandino led popular uprisings against imperialist military intervention. Despite the ultimate defeat of this movement and the assassination of Sandino, Sandinism—a petty bourgeois, anti-imperialist, revolutionary-nationalist current—became deeply rooted among the exploited masses of Nicaragua. The reformist currents of the workers movement never acquired a significant base. The Communist Party, in particular, was discredited after its support to Somoza during the Second World War.

The victory of the Cuban revolution later sparked a process of radicalization in Nicaragua as in other countries of Latin America. It reinforced the revolutionary-nationalist current, since the July 26 Movement, in its struggle against Batista, exhibited similarities with Sandinism.

In 1962 this process culminated in the formation of the FSLN, which placed itself in the historic and popular tradition of the anti-imperialist struggle of Sandino. An

Special Issue

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

Featured this week is a reply by Steve Clark, Fred Feldman, Gus Horowitz, and Mary-Alice Waters to Ernest Mandel's article "Behind Differences on Military Conflicts in Southeast Asia—The Theoretical and Political Issues," which appeared in our April 9 issue.

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anti-imperialist current with a petty bourgeois political orientation, the FSLN subsequently adopted the perspective of a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The struggle of the FSLN—which was greatly influenced by the Cubans and was conceived for a whole period as essentially a guerrilla struggle—went through many ups and downs. But it was above all the insurrection of September 1978 that, despite its failure, revealed unequivocally the mass support for the struggle of the FSLN and broadened that support. Today the FSLN enjoys the backing of the great mass of exploited toilers of the cities and the countryside, who identify with it in their struggle. Thus it plays at this stage the decisive role in the struggle against the dictatorship and imperialism.

The struggle of the Nicaraguan masses against the dictatorship and imperialism takes on a dynamic of permanent revolution that is more immediate than in many other colonial or semicolonial countries. Imperialist domination is almost completely combined with the domination of the national bourgeoisie, and the capitalist property system is represented by the property of the Somoza family and of the imperialist corporations. This means that the struggle against imperialism is at the same time a struggle against domination by the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, and the struggle against the Somoza family and against the tentacles of the multinational corporations is a struggle against capitalist domination as a whole.

The question is already being posed concretely. After the overthrow of Somoza, how can the interests of the masses best be met?

Is it in their interests to spare the American, Japanese, and European trusts that have supported the Somoza regime to the end and allow them to continue to exploit the great masses of people who carried out the revolutionary struggle?

Is it in their interests to agree to pay the foreign debts of the dictatorship, which would mean a heavy mortgage on the future economic development of the country?

Is it in their interests to accept—in the name of “continuity of the state”—that the executioners of the National Guard should remain in place, ready to launch new campaigns of ferocious repression?

Is it in their interests to accept—in the name of “national solidarity”—that the peasants continue to be brutally exploited and deprived of their most elementary rights by the big landowners who have opposed the Somoza gang?

Is it in their interests to accept that the crimes of the Somoza hangmen not be denounced before the people and the thousands of links between them and imperialism and the bourgeoisie be hidden?

It is clear to revolutionists in Nicaragua and throughout the world that if the overthrow of Somoza does not lead to the

overthrow of domination by the imperialists and the national bourgeoisie, any victory will be short-lived and the masses will be quickly stripped of all the gains won through their heroic struggle. The imperialists and their representatives don't hide the fact that their main aim is to prevent the Nicaraguan revolution from taking the Cuban road.

The response of revolutionists is unambiguous. It is necessary to prevent the Nicaraguan revolution from suffering the fate of the Guatemalan revolution of the 1940s and 1950s, of the Bolivian revolution of the 1950s, or of the Chilean workers and peasants upsurge of the 1970s. It is in the elementary interests of the masses of Nicaragua, of Latin America, and of the whole world, that the Nicaraguan revolution should follow the Cuban example by overthrowing the dictatorship, expelling imperialism, and removing from power and expropriating the native ruling classes. In this way the conditions will be created to satisfy the basic needs of the masses for food, housing, health, education, and jobs.

Inside the FSLN there exist clear ideological and political divisions. The “*tercerista*” or “*insurreccional*” tendency is largely predominant; it is they who determine the orientation and methods of the FSLN and who, among others, led the September 1978 offensive. Partisans of collaboration with anti-Somoza sectors of the bourgeoisie, they place the greatest importance on action by the Sandinista armed detachments, considering the organized mobilization of the masses as playing only a supportive role. This has produced tensions in the past, and can lead to many conflicts in the future.

The “*prolonged people's war*” tendency has an eclectic orientation, adopting aspects of Maoism and Castroism. The “*proletarian*” tendency stresses the importance of the role of the working class in the struggle against imperialism and capitalism, but it does not challenge the basic strategy of the FSLN, including its policy of alliances.

The formation of the government of national reconstruction, in which well-known representatives of the anti-Somoza wing of the bourgeoisie—Violeta de Chamorro, Alfonso Robelo, and Sergio Ramírez—join with representatives of the FSLN, shows that the concept of the democratic revolution is not without implications for the immediate course of the revolutionary struggle.

In fact, the government of national reconstruction is a card played by the bourgeoisie to try to prevent the overthrow of Somoza from leading to the break-up of the socioeconomic structures of capitalism and the bourgeois state apparatus. Thus it operates against the interests and the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of those who are struggling against the dictatorship and its National Guard assassins. This means a concrete danger to the

development of the military battle taking place and an even greater threat to a victorious outcome of the revolutionary struggle as a whole.

To reach the goals of the exploited and oppressed masses and to fight back against any imperialist intervention, the masses must be armed and workers and peasants militias must be formed. There must be a struggle to extend and strengthen the organs the masses have begun to throw up in the course of the civil war to assert their demands and to defend their vital interests.

In the case of any serious operation to impose an alternative solution on the basis of maintenance of the apparatus of the Somoza regime, the struggle for the convocation of a constituent assembly, elected through universal, direct, and secret vote, could centralize the aspirations of the masses that are expressed in their struggle against the dictatorship.

In the framework of the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship, which is the fundamental immediate task, revolutionary Marxists will be struggling for:

- Dissolution of the National Guard.
- Freedom for all political prisoners.
- The winning of all democratic rights (freedom of speech, of the press, and of political and trade-union organization above all).
- Rejection of all political, economic, and military pacts with the imperialist powers and with the OAS.
- Repudiation of the foreign debt accumulated by the dictatorship in the interests of the exploiting classes and imperialism, and a break with the International Monetary Fund.
- Expropriation and nationalization, without compensation and under workers control, of all the property of Somoza, of his family, of high officials of the regime, of imperialism, and of the “national” capitalists.
- Implementation of a genuine agrarian reform that would give land to the peasants who are demanding it and would assure them the means to cultivate it.

The only government that can carry out such a program embodying the vital interests of the Nicaraguan people and the needs of developing and strengthening the revolution is a government that defends the interests of the workers, the peasants, and the other exploited layers and that excludes all representatives of the ruling classes and imperialism.

For the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship!

For the victory of the Nicaraguan masses and the fighters of the FSLN!

For a campaign of international solidarity against any attempt at intervention, including political, economic, or military blackmail by imperialism!

Break all diplomatic ties with Somoza!
Not one penny, not one weapon to the dictatorship!

INDOCHINA DISCUSSION

War and Revolution in Indochina— What Policy for Revolutionists

I. Fundamental Political Differences Over 1978-79 Events in Southeast Asia

In December 1978 Vietnamese troops and Kampuchean insurgents launched an offensive to bring down the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

In February 1979 Peking launched a massive invasion of the border regions of Vietnam.

These conflicts were at the center of attention of working people the world over. What side to take? How to explain the events? What position to advance? These life-or-death questions put all political currents to the test.

Most tendencies in the international working-class movement were plunged into disarray. Such confusion was to be expected of the Stalinists, Social Democrats, and petty-bourgeois leftists of various types. But the Fourth International—which prides itself on its revolutionary integrity and clearheadedness in conflicts, which has always seen war as the supreme test—did not speak with one voice; it was divided.

Some sections of the Fourth International condemned the invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnamese troops as a blow to the toiling classes of those countries and an aid to imperialism. They called for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese troops.

Others, with whom we agree, supported the action taken to overthrow the Pol Pot regime, hailing the replacement of that reactionary government as a big step forward for the class struggle in Indochina and as a blow against imperialism.

Some sections argued that the material roots of the conflicts lay in the counterposed interests of the bureaucracies governing the workers states. They argued that imperialism's role was a secondary one, attempting to exploit such interbureaucratic conflicts for its own interests.

Other comrades, including ourselves, insisted that the historic advance of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, and imperialism's efforts to halt the spread of the Vietnamese revolution, were the cause of the armed conflicts.

All sections condemned Peking's invasion of Vietnam. But some placed priority on cautioning against a Soviet military attack on China's borders, rather than stressing the need to defend Vietnam. This gave the impression of a pacifist-like appeal for China to pull out.

Others, equally firmly opposed to any

Soviet attack on China's borders, demanded a vigorous defense of Vietnam and insisted that Moscow give Hanoi whatever material and military aid it needed to beat back the invasion.

Some sought explanations for the conflicts in the supposedly ancient historical enmities of the various Indochinese peoples, nationalism, and the desire for "spheres of influence."

Others, like ourselves, kept the spotlight on the class struggle as the moving force of history and on the aggressive role of imperialism throughout all Southeast Asia.

Behind these political differences were others that touched on questions of analysis and theory.

Some sections argued that a socialist revolution had taken place in Kampuchea in 1975 and a workers state had been established by the Pol Pot regime.

Others, like ourselves, argued that far from the working class taking power, the workers and peasants of Kampuchea had been brutally crushed by a capitalist regime that instituted policies counter to the interests of the working class in every single sphere.

Over the last months all of these positions have been argued in articles appearing in the press of the Fourth International and the pages of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

Two methods? Yes. Two underlying theoretical approaches? Yes. But above all, two political lines. Two lines of action counterposed in wartime. That was the difference that emerged in the world Trotskyist movement.

It is the first time since the opening of World War II that differences of such magnitude in wartime have arisen in the Fourth International. Forty years ago the pressures coming down on the revolutionary movement were of a quite different magnitude and led to a split. It is clear that the outcome this time will not be the same. That augurs well for a discussion that will clarify the real issues.

But the full import of these differences must be understood. Unless rectified, they can paralyze the International's ability to counter the continuing imperialist campaign against the Indochinese revolution and, as events unfold, could erupt again with even greater force and worse political consequences.

In the April 9, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, Comrade Ernest Mandel defended his view that the conflicts in Indochina stemmed from interbureaucratic conflicts in which imperialist intrigues played a secondary role.

He devoted most of his article to the underlying theoretical differences and their potential political implications.

These questions certainly deserve discussion, and we will take them up in detail. But in our view, priority should be given to the political differences that have arisen.

We believe that events since the beginning of 1979 have clearly vindicated the positions we outlined in articles that have appeared in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, and against which Comrade Mandel directs his polemic.

Background to 1978-79 Events

Comrade Mandel divides his article into four parts: 1. "Was Pol Pot's Cambodia a Workers State (Albeit Extremely Bureaucratized and Despotic)?" 2. "What are the Criteria for Defining a Workers State?" 3. "The Concrete Context and Concatenation of the Interbureaucratic Conflicts and the Revolutionary Process in Asia and on a World Scale." 4. "Are Wars Between Bureaucratized Workers States Possible and What Should Our Attitude Be Towards Them?"

We will begin our reply with the third point—the concrete context and chain of events leading up to the military conflict of 1978-79. This is the best way to clarify our guidelines for action today: What side to take in the conflicts? What policy to advocate?

Only by starting from the real context of the conflicts can we seriously test the validity of our theoretical understanding of the process through which workers states come into being or why the Peking bureaucracy launched a war against the workers state of Vietnam.

Throughout the events our position has been based on the assessment that the cause of wars in the imperialist epoch is the class struggle—that is, the conflict between the imperialists' inexorable drive to maximize profits, and the resistance of the workers and their allies to this brutal exploitation.

In a very abbreviated form, the specific context we described was as follows:

1. Significant advances in the class struggle occurred in Vietnam between 1975-78. In 1975 the proimperialist, neocolonial regime in the South was overthrown, and the last U.S. imperialist contingents were kicked out of the country. Although the Vietnamese Communist Party leadership still wanted to reach an accommodation with imperialism—and in pursuit of this goal tried to preserve the remnants of capitalism in the South—this policy had to give way under both the blows of imperialist economic boycott and pressure from the masses. They began taking anticapitalist measures in late 1975, the country was reunified politically in mid-1976, and by March and April of 1978, workers were mobilized to expropriate the last bastions of capitalist property. With those measures of last year, a workers state of 50 million people—the third most populous in the world—had been established throughout the country. The imperialists considered this a historic defeat, feared the spread of the Vietnamese example to other Southeast Asian countries, and were determined to retaliate in order to slow down and halt that process.

Comrade Mandel rejects this assessment. He places little importance on the post-1975 social and political advances in Vietnam and on the continued imperialist offensive against the Vietnamese revolution.

2. Significant setbacks occurred in the class struggle in Kampuchea between 1975-78. A workers and farmers government was not established after the proimperialist Lon Nol regime was ousted in 1975. The excellent opportunity to mobilize the workers and peasants to advance their own interests and move toward establishing a workers state was missed. Instead, the new Pol Pot regime ruthlessly crushed the workers and peasants, driving them from their workshops and farms, dispersing them throughout the country, and putting them to work in what were in effect agricultural forced labor camps. From the beginning, the Pol Pot regime took an extremely hostile stance toward the Vietnamese revolution.

Comrade Mandel also rejects this assessment. He spends considerable space trying to refute articles by Steve Clark and Fred Feldman on the social character of Kampuchea under Pol Pot. Comrade Mandel presents a completely opposite conclusion: that Kampuchea under the Pol Pot regime was a workers state.

3. The sharply different evolutions of Kampuchea and Vietnam and the growing clashes between them provided the imperialist and capitalist regimes in the region with the opportunity to intervene. They switched from their initial stance of suspicion and hostility toward the Pol Pot regime. They began to reestablish relations with it, with the aim of using the regime as a buffer against the impact of the Vietnamese revolution elsewhere in

Asia. Relations between Pol Pot and Peking, also hostile to the Vietnamese revolution, became closer.

This was the background to the military conflict of 1978-79, when Vietnamese troops and Kampuchean oppositionists launched their successful effort to topple Pol Pot. As Fred Feldman explained in the January 22 issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*:

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. . . .

Comrade Mandel cites this particular passage as erroneous.

The overthrow of the Pol Pot regime was a further blow to imperialism. It was a blow to Peking as well, for the Peking Stalinists had been strong backers of the Pol Pot regime; they were bitterly opposed to the social advances in Vietnam and fearful of the possible disruptive effects of these revolutionary events on their plans for closer ties to U.S. imperialism.

Collusion between the Chinese Stalinists and the imperialists set the stage for Peking's invasion of Vietnam. As described by Gus Horowitz, in a passage also cited by Comrade Mandel as erroneous:

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. [*IP/I*, March 5, 1979, p. 196.]

Comrade Mandel's Method of Argumentation

It is worthwhile to begin by looking at Comrade Mandel's method of argumentation.

In his section on "the concrete context and concatenation" of events, for example, he begins by cautioning against what he calls "the most dangerous aspect" of our approach to the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. According to him, we have fallen into "a conjunctural, impressionistic type of analysis which comes dangerously close to

The Changes in Vietnam Between 1975 and 1978

Comrade Mandel downplays the degree of imperialist hostility to and the seriousness of its actions against the Vietnamese revolution after 1975. In so doing, he fails to assess correctly the significance of the events in Vietnam from 1975-78.

Comrade Mandel asserts that "it was

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 circumstances, 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" (*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, April 9, 1979, p. 341, col. 1).

The governments of these latter countries are concerned about this danger, says Comrade Mandel, and "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" (p. 341, col. 2).

But hold on! First, we don't think Kampuchea is a workers state. Second, the character of the tensions between Moscow and the above-named governments bears no similarity to the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. Third, we oppose any new use by Moscow of the doctrine of "limited sovereignty," just as we did at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. And fourth, in the only case in which there is a genuine danger at the moment—along the Soviet-China border—we have made clear our opposition to Soviet policies.

Comrade Mandel continues in the same spirit for several more paragraphs, finally concluding with this insinuation:

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. [p. 342, col. 1]

No thanks. That's a "when did you stop beating your wife?" type of question, and we think we'll pass it up.

Why has Comrade Mandel chosen such a convoluted beginning to his polemic over the concrete events? His tactics suggest those of a military commander who initiates diversionary maneuvers to avoid or postpone a head-on confrontation in areas where his position is weak.

As we shall now show, Comrade Mandel's effort to produce a factual refutation of our assessment of the background to the wars is meager indeed.

Kampuchea, and not Vietnam, that, for at least three years, had been the main target of an international hate campaign. . . . The campaign against Vietnam was much milder at least until late 1978" (p. 342, col. 2).

We will deal shortly with imperialist

policy toward Kampuchea. As for Vietnam, however, the imperialists were not at all "mild" at any time after 1975. On the contrary, they tried to maintain whatever leverage they could to counter further advances of the revolutionary process in Vietnam and its extension to other countries of Southeast Asia. They did not simply give up and turn to other problems.

Washington took steps, first of all, to strengthen the major neighboring capitalist regimes, particularly the dictatorship in Thailand.

Knowing that Vietnam was a devastated country that desperately needed reconstruction aid, the imperialists acted with cold-blooded brutality, putting the country under severe economic pressure just as they had done against Cuba fifteen years earlier. In hopes of weakening the revolution, Washington barred trade with Vietnam and reneged on its own promises, made at the time of the 1973 Paris Accords, to grant reconstruction aid. Vietnam was able to establish only minor economic relations with Japan, France, and Sweden. The economic aid it received from Moscow was grossly insufficient to meet its needs.

The consequences of this imperialist economic squeeze were far from "mild." Hanoi had staked a great deal on obtaining that aid and trade, and the Stalinist leadership had based its initial policy projections around the hoped-for *modus vivendi* with imperialism. Hanoi originally announced a five-year delay in reunification of the country, and decided to allow a considerable amount of capitalist ownership and trade relations in the southern part of the country. This only exacerbated the economic problems, however. With trade in the south in the hands of capitalist merchants, shortages were severe, hoarding widespread, and inflationary price increases rampant.

What does Comrade Mandel say about this imperialist economic squeeze?

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." [*Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 2, 1979.]

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. But this is certainly no proof that imperialism had been systematically courting and using the Pol Pot regime against the Vietnamese revolution. [p. 342, col. 2]

Modest Aid or Near Blockade?

Let's dissect this argument.

1. "Contrary to the assertions. . . ." But Comrades Feldman, Clark, and Waters *did not* assert that there was a consistent pattern in which the Kampuchean government made overtures to imperialism, while the Vietnamese government did not. What we actually said was that the Hanoi regime has always sought to mend fences with imperialism, but that the *imperialists were hostile*. And we said that despite the initial hostility between the Pol Pot regime and imperialism, relations between them improved in 1978, as imperialist hostility to Vietnam deepened. Comrade Mandel's opening remark is just a polemical diversion to lead readers away from the real difference.

2. Now examine Comrade Mandel's final sentence. The suspension of imperialist aid to Vietnam following the invasion of Kampuchea was not offered by us as "proof that imperialism had been systematically courting and using the Pol Pot regime against the Vietnamese revolution." We pointed to the cutoff of imperialist aid as part of the evidence that the imperialists were hostile to the Vietnamese revolution and were determined to prevent the spread of its example. It was a demonstrative action on the side of the Pol Pot regime when the December 1978-January 1979 war broke out. Comrade Mandel again distorts our views, diverting attention from the real point at issue.

3. Comrade Mandel correctly points out that Hanoi made overtures to imperialism to try to obtain cordial economic relations. We've been saying the same thing since 1975, we might add. Our point, however, was that despite Hanoi's hopes, the imperialists have been on a virtually unrelieved economic offensive against Vietnam.

4. When the smokescreen of diversions is penetrated, what Comrade Mandel says about the real point at issue is that "some mild measures of international aid in favor of Vietnam were decided and implemented," but that "these measures were generally too limited and that they were suspended after Vietnam's invasion."

But Vietnam did not face a "mild" form of friendly economic relations with imperialism. It faced a situation of blockade. Vietnam faces such a blockade to this day, with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank holding back loans needed for economic development and with other banks refusing credits needed to buy rice. Yet Comrade Mandel downplays the seriousness of the imperialist drive to disrupt the Vietnamese economy and the desperate problems that the country faces. That is where the difference between us lies.

Mass Pressure and Anticapitalist Mobilizations

The imperialist blockade, the sabotage by indigenous capitalists, and severe natural disasters wreaked havoc on the already

war-shattered economy of Vietnam. This, in turn, caused increasing dissatisfaction among the urban and rural masses, forcing Hanoi to take measures over time that it had not originally planned.

Banking in the South was nationalized and a currency reform was carried out in 1975. Unification of the country was speeded up to July 1976. But the regime still allowed capitalist merchants to dominate domestic commerce in the South. As late as the early months of 1977—as Comrade Mandel himself has just pointed out!—the Vietnamese Stalinists tried to woo the imperialists with a liberal investment code. The problems of capitalist hoarding, rigged shortages, and resulting inflation remained.

In March 1978, under the pressure of rising mass discontent, the Vietnamese regime mobilized tens of thousands of people to expropriate the last key components of the capitalist economy in the South, especially in the Cholon district of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). Uniform currency was established shortly thereafter. Those measures, which fused the North and South economically as well as politically, achieved the establishment of the workers state throughout the country.

The revolutionary process that culminated in March and April 1978 marked a great leap forward for the masses of workers and peasants throughout Vietnam. Despite the hardships stemming from the long imperialist war, and from the subsequent blockade and severe natural disasters, the door had been opened to new social advances.

Unemployment has been greatly reduced. Education and medical care have been steadily extended. A more equitable system of food distribution has been established. The basis for improvements in agricultural production has been laid, including the establishment of New Economic Zones where more than a million people are working to restore land abandoned during the war. The beginning of economic planning for industrial development has laid the basis for a significant improvement in the standard of living; this will be greatly facilitated by the 1978 measures.

Comrade Mandel, nonetheless, belittles the involvement of the Vietnamese masses in this whole process of social advance, in particular the measures taken in early 1978:

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 an upward trend. [p. 342, col. 2]

Disregarding the significance of the mass pressure in the 1975-78 period, as

well as the evidence of the 1978 mobilizations against the capitalist merchants in the South, he counters by claiming, "The political activity of the South Vietnamese masses is certainly more limited than that of the Chinese masses."

Even if this comparison is factually accurate, which is dubious, it has no bearing on the matter. The fact remains that the government in Hanoi has made concessions to popular pressure and at decisive points has mobilized key sections of the Vietnamese people to drive through anticapitalist measures in response to the debilitating effects of imperialist blockade and internal capitalist sabotage.

All the evidence from objective observers who have visited Vietnam is that the measures culminating in the social overturn last year are extremely popular among the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese workers and peasants. They correctly view them as *their* conquests after decades of struggle against imperialist and capitalist exploitation.

Comrade Mandel says that in Vietnam "there is widespread dissatisfaction with the poor food situation [and] the scandalous corruption. . . ." This may well be true, but it is an argument indicating political ferment among the masses rather than the reverse. It was such ferment that pressured the Vietnamese government to organize the anticapitalist mobilizations of 1975-78.

Other causes of alleged discontent, according to Comrade Mandel, are "the drafting of youth into the army and even [dissatisfaction] 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."

The factual balance sheet after several months, however, indicates no mass dissatisfaction on this score. Comrade Mandel's one source (one source "among others," he claims—what others?) seems to be wrong. Comrade Mandel would be better off turning his sights to China, where there was indeed widespread dissatisfaction during the invasion of Vietnam.

The actual evidence indicates that the Vietnamese masses have been increasingly insisting that their needs be met, that they have pushed the government to take anticapitalist steps in the South, that they support the social conquests they have made, and that they are determined to defend them. They support the actions taken to topple Pol Pot and defend Vietnam against Peking's military attacks. They clearly feel they have a stake in the defense and extension of the social revolution they have made. And they are right.

Imperialism's Reaction

What of the imperialists? Was theirs a "mild" reaction to these events? Did they

simply take a stoical view of the changes in southern Vietnam, accepting them as a foregone conclusion after 1975? Hardly! At each stage they intensified their bitter propaganda offensive, complaining of what the February 26 *Toronto Globe and Mail* called Vietnam's "hard line on the imposition of a socialist economy in the south." They wept crocodile tears for the "boat people"—while doing everything possible to maximize their human suffering. They have campaigned against what *Le Monde* called the "Vietnam Gulag." In a passing phrase Comrade Mandel does mention the imperialist propaganda campaign against Vietnam in 1978, but he avoids drawing any conclusions—and certainly not the obvious conclusion that it was preparation for more serious action against Vietnam.

This imperialist orchestrated propaganda campaign is still intensifying. Television shows and articles in the newspapers and magazines center their attention on the fate of the "boat people"—most of them expropriated merchants and traders or middle-class professionals anxious to leave. The U.S. ruling class is trying to use this propaganda to discredit socialism, justify the Vietnam War, reverse the widespread opposition among American workers to any new direct military intervention, and legitimize further steps in support of counterrevolutionary forces in Kampuchea.

The bourgeois media have had some success in disorienting sectors of the petty-bourgeois left around this issue. But we have the responsibility to keep the spotlights accurately focused on imperialism. We must pay special attention to this vicious propaganda, exposing the lies and explaining its dangerous aim. Comrade Mandel, with his spotlight misdirected elsewhere, barely mentions it.

Peking's Reaction

Comrade Mandel also claims that the Peking bureaucracy saw no threat in the 1978 mobilizations in southern Vietnam. Can he forget so quickly that Peking has all along opposed the social advances in Vietnam and launched a major new stage in its slanderous hate campaign directly in response to the 1978 expropriations? To

The Turn in Imperialist Policy Toward Kampuchea

Comrade Mandel assesses the immediate origin of the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict as follows:

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. 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

refresh his memory, we direct him to an article by Pierre Rousset that appeared in the October 16, 1978, issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*. Comrade Rousset, although he shares some of Comrade Mandel's views on the Indochina conflicts, wrote the following:

In May 1978 Peking began a great hue and cry in defense of the Hoas (the Chinese in Vietnam), who had been hit hard by the measures taken in March against large-scale capitalist commerce. Chinese aid to Vietnam was cut off, political relations between the two countries deteriorated to an unprecedented low, and a new wave of refugees brought grief to a divided Indochina, as tens of thousands of Hoas returned to China.

The statements issuing from the various capitals became frantic. Phnompenh declared that in May it had uncovered a new "coup" plot, backed by Hanoi. Pro-Peking newspapers in Hong Kong openly speculated about the possibility of war [between Vietnam and China]. . . .

"Hanoi," Rousset continued, "ordered an unprecedented military mobilization of the population" and talked of the possibility of war with both Kampuchea and China.

Is it not clear that the threat of conflict was related to the social changes made in Vietnam?

Comrade Rousset noted that "there is no doubt that the 'Hoa problem' between China and Vietnam is real." But he stressed:

Hanoi made a good point when it contrasted Peking's silence on the fate of the Chinese in Cambodia to the official outrage expressed when blows were dealt to the large-scale commercial capitalists of Chinese origin in the Cholon district of Ho Chi Minh City. The abolition of capitalist trade was not an act of racial discrimination but rather a measure necessary to safeguard the revolution. This was confirmed by the measures taken in April to curtail small-scale private trade and to move toward socialization of agriculture in south Vietnam.

It was in this overall context of the deepening of the Vietnamese revolution that the imperialists stepped up their military support to the Thai dictatorship and encouraged Peking's bellicose attitude toward Vietnam. Comrade Mandel, however, has managed to miss the significance of these social advances and the mounting counterrevolutionary moves in response to them.

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-January 1979 unfolded, the border incidents and imperialist intrigues playing a secondary role in this infernal logic. [p. 343, col. 1]

But if the Pol Pot regime took the initiative in provoking tensions—which we agree is true—then an obvious question is posed: Why did the government of this tiny, war-devastated country deliberately provoke its bigger and more powerful

neighbor? It was Phnompenh's initiative, according to what Comrade Mandel just said, "that made the Vietnamese leadership consider toppling Pol Pot." Why did Pol Pot do it? What can explain this "infernal logic"?

Comrade Mandel rejects our explanation: that the Pol Pot regime, which was hostile to the Kampuchean workers and peasants, was deadly fearful of the Vietnamese *revolution*, of the example set by the social advances of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, and was thus amenable to a rapprochement with imperialism.

It felt more daring as a result of its improving relations with imperialist-backed governments in the region and its expectations of powerful support from Peking, which had made détente with American and Japanese imperialism the central pillar of its foreign policy.

What is Comrade Mandel's alternative explanation?

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.

Comrade Mandel lists some of these "traumatic shocks" dating as far back as 1954. He then concludes:

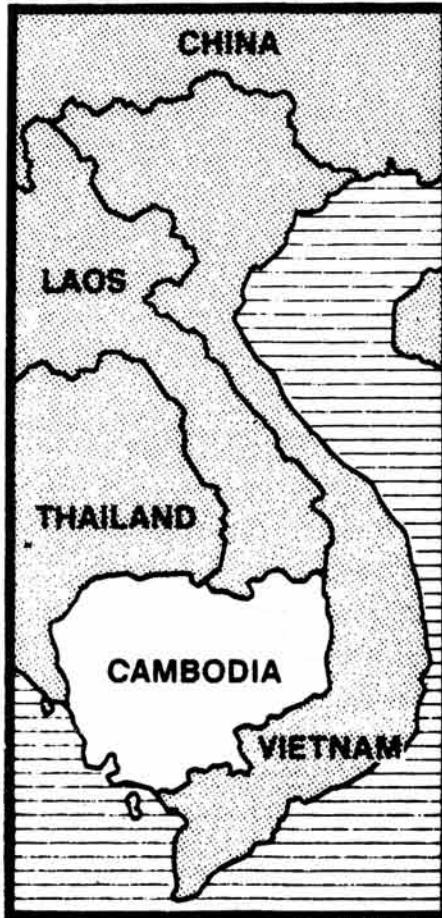
All this does not justify the nationalist, even racist anti-Vietnamese political course they pursued afterwards. But at least it explains it by reasons more credible than their allegedly "bourgeois" nature and their "intention" . . . to build capitalism in Kampuchea.' [p. 343, col. 1]

1. The phrase "their allegedly 'bourgeois' nature and their 'intention' . . . to build capitalism in Kampuchea" is another example of Comrade Mandel's debaters' tricks. The word *intention* is placed in quotation marks, giving the impression that it is taken from an article by Feldman, Clark, or Waters. But nowhere in our articles will Mandel find any speculation about the class nature of the Kampuchean state flowing from the psychological intentions of the Pol Pot leadership. What he will find is evidence that the reactionary and repressive policies of that leadership, aimed (intentionally) at demobilizing and dispersing the Kampuchean masses, did in fact close the door to a workers and peasants government and a workers state. The Kampuchean state remained capitalist, whatever Pol Pot's intentions, and the social surplus product could only lead to renewed capitalist accumulation and—through corruption, smuggling, and outright appropriation—to the gestation of a new bourgeoisie in the state bureaucracy and the nooks and crannies of the economy.

Furthermore, again despite Comrade Mandel's misleading use of quotation marks, we nowhere speak of the "bourgeois" nature of the Pol Pot leadership. Rather, we speak of the bourgeois nature of the Kampuchean state and government under the petty-bourgeois Pol Pot leadership—a not uncommon phenomenon in the semicolonial world, as Comrade Mandel knows well. With the Kampuchean workers and peasants crushed and dispersed, unable to exercise any restraining role, this petty-bourgeois state apparatus was a culture medium for the development of a new Kampuchean bourgeois class.

Not conflicting class interests, but "traumatic shocks" and "infernal logic" are the stuff of Comrade Mandel's "more credible" explanation.

And what of imperialist policy? Can that, too, be explained by "traumatic shocks"? Comrade Mandel knows better than that. So how does he explain the



New York Times

change between 1975 and 1978 in imperialist policy toward the Pol Pot regime? He simply ignores the change. He dismisses imperialist intrigues as "playing a secondary role" in the conflict.

But there was a change.

From Distrust to Buffer

The imperialists were bitterly hostile to the overthrow in 1975 of the landlord-capitalist regimes they had backed in Vietnam and Kampuchea. In Kampuchea, the bourgeois figures with whom Washington had collaborated either fled or were killed by the Khmer Rouge. Capitalist enterprises and imperialist holdings were nationalized. This certainly did not inspire Washington's initial confidence and trust in the new leaders.

Most important, the extraordinarily repressive policies of the new Kampuchean regime—which had no parallel in Vietnam—were grist for Washington's mill in its campaign against the entire Indochinese revolution. Here was the "bloodbath"!

In contrast to the widespread support for the Vietnamese revolution among the masses of that country, the horrible suffering and inevitable hatred of the government caused by the policies of the Khmer Rouge gave Washington good reason to believe that it would be far less internally stable, less capable of winning the sympathy of world public opinion, and therefore weaker and more vulnerable. Hence, the "Mayagüez incident" and the bombing of Kampuchea.

So the capitalist media at first exploited the brutal acts of the new Kampuchean regime for propaganda purposes, attributing the measures against the workers and peasants to the "evils" of communism. Carter branded the Pol Pot regime as "the worst violator of human rights in the world."

But as time passed, as the social revolution deepened in Vietnam, and as Phnompenh's hostility, including military actions, against Vietnam became more important, the imperialists began to take another look at the Pol Pot regime. By the latter half of 1978, for example, the capitalist press toned down its hostile news reports about Kampuchea, suggesting that there had been exaggerations about the horrors of the regime there. At the same time, the capitalist media stepped up its attacks on Vietnam.

We would suggest to Comrade Mandel that the reason for this turnabout is obvious. The imperialists considered the Vietnamese revolution to be a mortal threat; the workers and peasants of Southeast Asia are inspired by its example.

Kampuchea under Pol Pot, however, presented no threat to capitalist rule. The counterrevolutionary measures that had been taken by his regime inspired only fear and revulsion in the masses of Southeast Asia.

There is no workers state that bears comparison with the Pol Pot regime in this respect. Unlike the Soviet Union in Stalin's day—which despite the crimes of the bureaucracy was identified with the gains of the October revolution in the minds of the toiling masses of the world—the Kampuchea of Pol Pot gave the imperialists nothing to fear. On the contrary, they began to see that it actually afforded them an opportunity—a buffer against the spread of the Vietnamese revolution to Thailand.

Diplomatic relations were established between the Pol Pot regime and the pro-U.S. regimes in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Japanese imperialism offered economic aid to the Pol Pot regime. Australian imperialism made overtures. When border clashes broke out between Kampuchea and Vietnam, the U.S. State Department backed Phnompenh, using the justification of maintaining "a stable system of independent states." And while loudly complaining of Hanoi's alliance with Moscow, the imperialists encouraged and facilitated

Peking's aid to Pol Pot.

While Comrade Mandel ignores the significance of Pol Pot's developing relations with the imperialists, the Vietnamese fortunately did not. Neither did the U.S. State Department publication *Problems of Communism*. Writing in the January-February 1979 issue of that publication, professors Joseph Zasloff and MacAlister Brown explained to their audience of ruling-class "think tank" specialists:

Finally, swift military action by the Vietnamese diminished the effectiveness of any ASEAN or other international opposition that might have been organized against a slower campaign. In this regard, the Kampuchean regime had begun in late 1978 (with Chinese encouragement) to try to reduce its isolation by making overtures to its neighbors and even to Western powers.

Reaction of Kampuchean Masses

What about the Kampuchean masses? What was their reaction to the December 1978-January 1979 conflict? According to Comrade Mandel:

[They] were so disoriented by the foreign invasion that even today, three months later, the newly installed regime in Pnompenh 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. [p. 343, col. 2]

This picture bears no relation at all to the actual situation.

Victor Sanchez, a member of the first American TV crew in Kampuchea following the overthrow of Pol Pot, reported: "People that we spoke with welcomed the Vietnamese troops and saw them as a liberating army rather than an occupational force." (New York *Village Voice*, May 21, 1979)

Also reporting from Kampuchea, Jim Laurie, the ABC television bureau chief in Hong Kong, said of the Kampuchean he talked to in Pnompenh:

They seemed relieved to be beyond the grip of the ousted Pol Pot regime, but apprehensive about the future and suspicious of the Vietnamese who are there ostensibly as advisers, but who control nearly every facet of government.

Yet the feeling expressed was that the Cambodians now could not do without the Vietnamese. [Los Angeles Times, June 17, 1979.]

In contrast, there have been no reports that the deposed Pol Pot forces have won any broad popular support on the basis of anti-Vietnamese appeals.

Insofar as there have been difficulties in reorganizing normal life in Kampuchea—on top of those that still exist as a result of the imperialist devastation—this was due, not to the Vietnamese invasion, but to the legacy of the Pol Pot regime. Consider the following description, for example:

The Vietnamese invasion has triggered a tremendous movement of people. Some are city dwellers now trying to return to the homes they were forced to leave. . . . Some are villagers trying to escape the hard labor and rigorous discipline of Khmer Rouge control. Some are flocking to the cities in the hope they will find food and security.

Some are young men led into the hills by the Khmer Rouge. . . . Others are food-seeking scavengers from villages where rice crops have been destroyed or carted into the jungles by the Khmer Rouge. [Christian Science Monitor, April 11, 1979.]

In an earlier section of his article, Comrade Mandel himself paints a very clear picture of the human suffering caused in Kampuchea after the Pol Pot regime took over. He accurately explains that the regime carried out a policy that "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 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. [p. 336, col. 1]

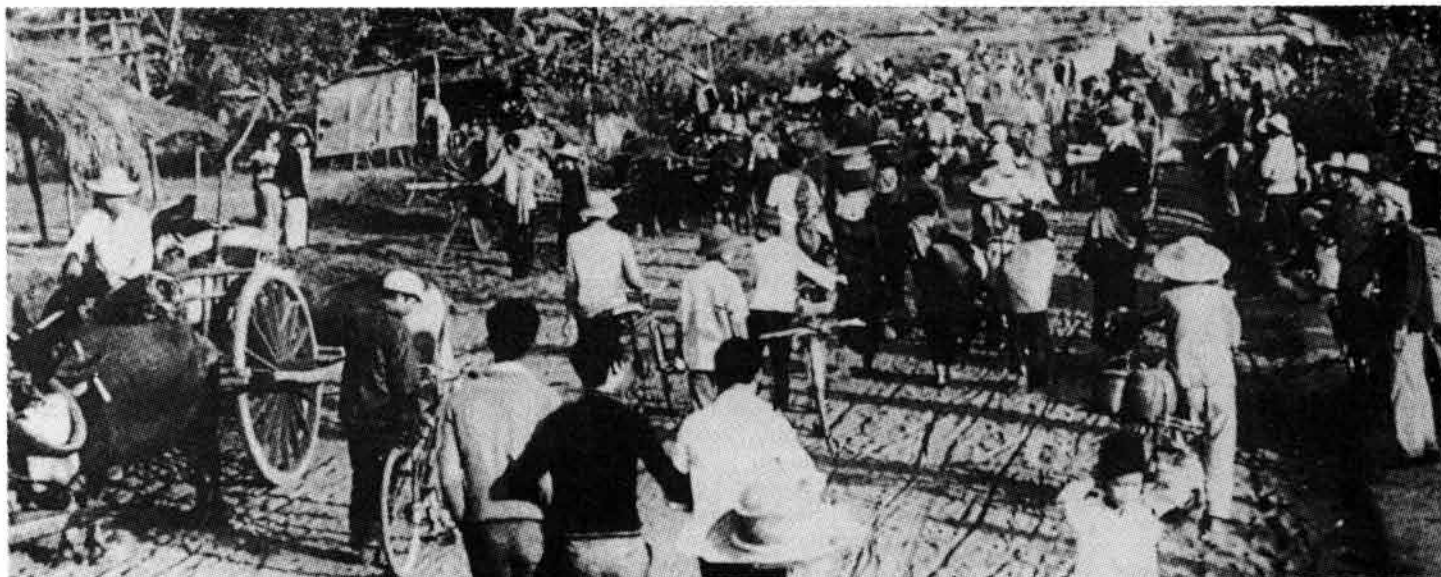
Comrade Mandel's view that the Pol Pot forces would be able to build up popular backing by appealing to Kampuchean patriotism is almost a cruel joke. The only appeal that Pol Pot is making is on the basis of terror: killing and brutalizing persons suspected of welcoming the changes made by the new government, and marching people at gunpoint to accompany the remnants of his army.

Who Is Working With the Khmer Serei?

Perhaps most astonishing of all is Comrade Mandel's final point in his one-sided view of the sequence of events:

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 Serei 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. Their uppermost goal is to eliminate the remnants of the Pol Pot forces and to reestablish a bourgeois state in alliance with Sihanouk. [p. 344, col. 1]

This, Comrade Mandel seems to have believed, was a devastating parry. But hardly was the ink on his article dry before ironclad evidence from the Pol Pot forces themselves proved that it was Comrade Mandel, not us, who had schematically—and dangerously—misread the real lineup of class forces in Indochina.



Kampuchean peasants seeking refuge in Vietnam in 1978.

As reported in the *New York Times* on April 24:

The Khmer Serei, or Free Cambodians, share with their former Pol Pot foes a hatred of the Vietnamese invaders and the Cambodians making common cause with them. In recent interviews in Peking, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the former Cambodian head of state, said that his Chinese hosts had told him that they were financing Khmer Serei soldiers to fight alongside Pol Pot forces, who also enjoy Chinese support.

The fact of this counterrevolutionary alliance was confirmed a few weeks later by Ieng Sary, the number-two official of the deposed Pol Pot regime. He was in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to drum up support at a gathering of "nonaligned" governments. His bid was being sponsored by the pro-U.S. governments of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In an interview with correspondent Nayan Chanda published in the June 22 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and reprinted in the July 9 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, Ieng Sary "confirmed that some Khmer Serei groups have been fighting the Vietnamese in Kampuchea side by side with Pol Pot forces."

The Khmer Serei was organized in the 1960s by the Central Intelligence Agency. It is headed today by the U.S.-based In Tam, former prime minister of Kampuchea under Lon Nol.

Ieng Sary also told Chanda that the Thai government is "unwaveringly behind Democratic Kampuchea."

"Thailand is officially neutral," Henry Kamm reported April 24 in the *New York Times*, "but privately, Thai officials . . . make no secret of their hope that the Pol Pot forces will continue to be a viable foe of the Vietnamese. Thailand views Vietnam's supposed striving for regional superiority with far greater concern than the cruelty of the former Pol Pot regime and wished that regime had survived."

The April 21 London *Economist* explained:

Khmer Rouge troops, in tight spots, have been allowed to cross into Thailand, where the Thai forces have fed them, given them medical treatment, rearmed them and then trucked them across the border to re-enter the battle, sometimes at tactically improved positions.

Ieng Sary told Chanda that "Asean countries are helping us a lot." And at a June 29 meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, Sinnathanby Rajaratnan of Singapore called for measures to "bleed the Vietnamese in Cambodia."

The Japanese imperialists have also announced plans to aid the Pol Pot forces.

But, it may be argued, these ties to imperialism and other reactionary forces are true *today* as a result of the Vietnamese role in toppling Pol Pot. If the Vietnamese had kept their hands off, the Pol Pot regime surely would not have forged such links.

On the contrary, in an interview with R. P. Paringaux published in the June 2 *Le*

Monde and reprinted in the June 18 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, Ieng Sary admitted that the regime's measures against the Kampuchean workers and peasants were from the first directed against the Vietnamese revolution:

It is true that our revolution is radical, but we weighed the pros and cons before transferring the population, abolishing currency, and so forth. The necessity [in 1975] was to stabilize the country. We foresaw already the war with Vietnam.

The regime's military probes against Vietnam began in April 1975, escalating to full-scale assaults on the vital New Economic Zones in September 1977. Surely Comrade Mandel doesn't think that the imperialists were indifferent to the possibilities offered by the Pol Pot regime's military attacks on Vietnam.

But things went further. The Pol Pot regime was actively backing FULRO (Front Uni pour la Libération des Races Opprimées—United Front for the Liberation of the Oppressed Races), a counterrevolutionary formation in Vietnam founded by the French and subsequently backed by the U.S. imperialists.

Chanda reported:

[Ieng Sary] confirmed what Western intelligence analysts have long suspected—that the Khmer Rouge has been collaborating with Fulro, which was once backed by the French and Americans. "The Fulro approached us for cooperation—to exchange intelligence, military experience and get guerrilla warfare training."

However, following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime it has obviously become difficult for them to supply Fulro with food and ammunition: "On the contrary, they supply us with the powerful poison which only they know how to produce. . . ."

For Comrade Mandel, imperialism played only a secondary role in the conflict and need hardly be discussed. On the battlefield, though, things are not what Comrade Mandel thought they should be.

There the two sides are clearly drawn. On one side, a new regime in Kampuchea

backed by the Vietnamese workers state and supported by the Kampuchean masses. On the other side an alliance of Washington, Tokyo, the ASEAN nations, the Thai military dictatorship, the Khmer Serei, the remnants of Pol Pot's wing of the Khmer Rouge backed by Peking and cheered on by capitalist forces around the world.

'Which Side Are You On?'

This lineup in Southeast Asia today immediately suggests a question: How can it be explained in class terms? Pol Pot's representative, Ieng Sary, himself offers an answer:

The Deputy Prime Minister [Ieng Sary] said that the regime that might emerge from such a coalition depended on the will of the Cambodian people. He said it could be capitalistic or even monastic, and would be chosen in free and secret elections that could be supervised by the Secretary General of the United Nations. A return of Prince Sihanouk, he added, would also depend on the popular will. [Interview in June 1 *New York Times*; reprinted in June 11 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

This is further evidence that it was Comrade Mandel, who began from the proposition that Kampuchea was a workers state, who has been caught in the trap of false and preconceived schemas.

In a battlefield situation as clear as the above, the position that revolutionary Marxists should take is obvious—and should have been obvious even with less direct evidence when the fighting broke out last December and January. We stand in the same camp as the Kampuchean workers and peasants and the Vietnamese workers state against the counterrevolutionary alliance. The call for withdrawal of Vietnamese troops only aids imperialism in its offensive against the workers and peasants of Kampuchea and Vietnam. We favor decisive Vietnamese action to defeat Pol Pot and his counterrevolutionary gang.

Peking's Invasion of Vietnam

Given Comrade Mandel's dismissal of the seriousness of imperialist hostility toward Vietnam, and of the collusion between Pol Pot and the avowedly proimperialist forces, it is not surprising that he rejects the role of imperialism as a causal factor in the next stage of the conflict: the February-March 1979 invasion of Vietnam by Peking.

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 . . . this does not imply that such an exploitation represents the exclusive or even the main aspect of these conflicts. [p. 342, col. 2]

Comrade Mandel centers most of his discussion of this question around argumentation for his own view of interbureaucratic conflict, a theme developed further in the last section of his article entitled, "Are Wars Between Bureaucratized Workers States Possible and What Should Our Attitude Be Towards Them?" We will discuss this question later on.

For the moment, however, let us deal with the "concrete context and concatenation" of events. The striking thing about Comrade Mandel's argument is how little

time he spends on the facts.

Comrade Mandel grants the possibility of "a certain connivance between the Chinese bureaucracy and Tokyo and Washington in East Asia" (p. 343, col. 1). He even grants that "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" (p. 342, col. 2). But he insists that "imperialism acts mainly through its own instruments, not through Peking and certainly not through Pol Pot" (p. 343, col. 1).

We have just seen how poorly Comrade Mandel's assertion stands up with regard to Pol Pot. Now let us briefly document the collusion between Peking and Washington.

The Actual Sequence of Events

1. The axis of Peking's class collaborationist foreign policy, above all else, is pursuit of improved political and economic relations with the imperialists, particularly Tokyo and Washington. As the prospects for such relations improved over the past decade, the Peking Stalinists became increasingly open in expressing their willingness to take action against revolutionary change. They developed close relations with the reactionary Pol Pot regime and were hostile to the social advances in Vietnam, which they viewed as disruptive to their permanent strategic goal of détente with imperialism based on preserving stability and the status quo in Asia.

2. When Hanoi helped topple the Pol Pot regime, the imperialists redoubled their campaign against Vietnam. Their key initial aim was to force Vietnam out of Kampuchea. Peking echoed this demand.

3. In this same period, Washington and Tokyo speeded up the establishment of closer relations with Peking. Deng Xiaoping publicly announced Peking's intention to "punish" Vietnam during his visits to Washington and Tokyo. The demeanor of both imperialist governments indicated they had given the green light. The U.S. State Department later admitted that it had been informed in advance of Peking's planned invasion of Vietnam.

4. During the invasion itself, the imperialists went ahead with top-level trade missions to Peking. The official ceremonies establishing full diplomatic relations between Peking and Washington took place while Chinese troops were still on Vietnamese soil. This "business as usual" stance was a demonstrative show of support for the invasion. Most major imperialist news media gave backhanded support to the invasion by suggesting that Hanoi had asked for it. Some, such as the *Economist*, supported Peking's action openly.

5. Washington dispatched a nuclear-armed naval task force to the area to deter Soviet aid to Vietnam. It initiated a major step-up of military aid to Bangkok, to be used against the Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea.

6. On the diplomatic level, the formulas promoted by the imperialists and Peking coincided: Reciprocal withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea and Chinese troops from Vietnam. In the guise of evenhandedness, this conformed to the basic objective of the imperialists—to force Vietnam out of Kampuchea. Peking also accepted the imperialist proposal for an ostensibly neutral (i.e., capitalist) Kampuchea, to be headed by a veteran capitalist politician like Sihanouk.

Direct Collusion, Not Connivance

The evidence—not of "a certain connivance," as Comrade Mandel puts it, but of direct collusion—is overwhelming.

What counterevidence does Comrade Mandel offer? None at all. The closest he comes are a few paragraphs in the following section of his article devoted to the problem of "wars between bureaucratized workers states."

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. [p. 347, col. 2]

A brief glance at our articles will show that Comrade Mandel has once again invented a position we do not hold. We never said that Indochina (much less Kampuchea) is more vital to imperialism than Europe, the Mideast, or Latin America.

What we did say is that after their defeat in 1975 in Indochina, the imperialists did not simply shrug their shoulders, write off their losses, and walk away. On the contrary, they never accepted these losses. They never give up their goal of reversing revolutionary change. They have been trying, with all the means at their disposal, to contain and roll back the advances that were made (although this is more difficult given the deep antiwar sentiments in the American working class).

Does Comrade Mandel dispute this? Would he deny that counterrevolution is the unalterable policy of the imperialists, and is actively pursued everywhere, even in tiny countries like Kampuchea? We doubt it.

More to the point, however, the Vietnamese revolution and its impact on the 300 million people of Southeast Asia is *not* a small matter to the imperialists; it is of strategic importance.

Comrade Mandel is aware of these considerations, and he has apparently prepared for the above objections by erecting another line of argumentation. We can all agree, he says, that "after its grave defeat in 1975, U.S. imperialism is, for the time being, unable to intervene directly in Indochina" (p. 348, col. 1).

But this is completely misleading.

The imperialists can and do intervene in Indochina. Directly. They dominate the neighboring regimes of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. (The largest U.S. diplomatic mission in the world is located in Bangkok.) U.S. imperialism dominates the waters in the area through the seventh fleet and bankrolls the armies of the capitalist powers. It controls mercenary armies organized by the CIA in Laos, the FULRO forces in Vietnam, the Kuomintang exile armies in Thailand and Burma, and the Khmer Serei in Kampuchea.

An imperialist power that disposes of such forces can hardly be dismissed as of little importance to developments in Indochina.

Even if Comrade Mandel denies that the imperialists established ties with Pol Pot's regime, he must acknowledge that they have stepped up their military shipments to Bangkok and other ASEAN regimes. The rightist guerrillas in Laos and Kampuchea have stepped up their activity. And the imperialists have sought to isolate Vietnam. All this is direct intervention, is it not?

What is excluded at this time is massive imperialist intervention with their own troops.

What about imperialism's other options? We can all agree, Comrade Mandel continues, that the imperialists "can only seek to reenter the scene by exploiting the conflicts between the Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Kampuchean leaderships" (p. 348, col. 1).

This, too, is false. It is hardly imperialism's only avenue of entry. Moreover, it implies that at least in Southeast Asia the imperialists are limited to seeking opportunities to exploit, but unable to have a direct hand in determining the policies of Moscow or Peking. Sidestepped, if not entirely ignored, by Comrade Mandel is the longstanding hostility of both Moscow and Peking to any developments in the class struggle that threaten their strategic goal of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. These Stalinist regimes have time and again proven their readiness to collaborate directly with imperialism in taking action against revolutionary developments.

Détente with Moscow and Peking

Another element in his argument is posed in the following terms:

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?" [p. 347, col. 2]

The barb about "reconquering the Kampuchean market" is, of course, just another of Comrade Mandel's polemical devices, in this case a *reductio ad absurdum* of our real point—that imperialism has strategic interests in Southeast Asia, in particular in attacking the Vietnamese revolution.

Rephrasing his argument so it can be



Pol Pot troops in sanctuary across border in Thailand.

dealt with seriously, we have his question posed as follows: "Why should Washington deliberately jeopardize its own vital interests vis-à-vis Moscow by ganging up with Peking against Vietnam, in pursuit of less vital interests in Southeast Asia?" Continuing, he adds his agreement with the bourgeois analysts who say 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" (p. 347, col. 2).

It is true that Washington's détente relationships with Moscow are more crucial to imperialist interests than those with Peking. But it does not follow that imperialist reliance on Peking for specific objectives is excluded because it would "jeopardize" the more important relationship with Moscow. If that were the case, wouldn't any relationship with Peking at all be excluded?

More important, Washington does *not* jeopardize its relations with Moscow by its collusion with Peking. On the contrary, it gains the possibility of playing the two Stalinist regimes off against each other. In the specific case cited by Comrade Mandel, events have shown that Washington's collusion with Peking did not jeopardize the SALT II treaty. It is, in any case, Brezhnev much more than Carter who needs SALT II. Following Peking's withdrawal from Vietnam, Brezhnev sighed with relief that the Washington-Moscow détente relationships had not been impaired.

Détente is not a favor that the Kremlin grants Washington when imperialism is on good behavior. Peaceful coexistence has been the permanent strategic goal of the bureaucratic caste in Moscow for decades;

for Washington, it is a necessary way of buying time and enlisting Moscow's assistance so that imperialism can try to reverse the world relationship of class forces to its advantage.

In his polemical zeal, Comrade Mandel turns the actual relations between imperialism and the Moscow bureaucracy upside down, arguing as if the Kremlin can use détente as a club to prevent Washington from intervening in various parts of the world, rather than exactly the other way around!

In fact, the key to Washington's relationship with Peking is implicitly indicated by Comrade Mandel himself. He correctly points out that imperialism needs Moscow more than Peking because, unlike Moscow, Peking "can't deliver any goods" in vital areas of Europe, the Mideast, or Latin America (p. 347, col. 2).

But what about Southeast Asia? Peking is in a better position to deliver the goods in Southeast Asia, isn't it? Or at least in a better position to try? Was that not what was at stake for Peking in its invasion of Vietnam?

To answer this, Comrade Mandel retreats to a final line of argumentation. He admits, after all, that imperialism did try to use Peking, and that Peking's invasion of Vietnam did facilitate imperialist maneuvers. But "the bigger difference is whether in the China-Vietnam conflict Peking acts basically for imperialism" (p. 348, col. 1). Comrade Mandel's answer to this question is no.

Beside the Point?

The reader has the right to expect Comrade Mandel to try and prove his final point by reference to the actual events. What does he say about the facts that we

cited. The consultations between Peking and Washington prior to the invasion, for example? According to Comrade Mandel, "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" (p. 348, col. 1).

No. These consultations were precisely to the point. Naturally, we do not know the details. We don't know when, where, or by whom the idea was first broached. What we do know, however, is that there was more than an accidental coincidence of interests involved.

The axis of Peking's foreign policy is its relationship with Washington, and, to a lesser degree, with Tokyo. All Peking's actions on the international arena revolve around that axis. Peking's interest in trying to "punish" Vietnam was its desire to facilitate its ties with and demonstrate its reliability to Washington. But Peking first had to consult before going ahead with the invasion, which it would not have launched if it had not received the green light.

That was the essence of the collusion. Ultimate responsibility lies with Washington.

As for the other evidence we cited to illustrate Washington-Peking collusion—the imperialists' "business as usual" stance during the invasion, the U.S. naval task force sent to the area, the common diplomatic stand between Peking and Washington—this evidence is, for Comrade Mandel, so much "beside the point" that he never even bothers to discuss it!

Comrade Mandel's opinion that Peking did not act on behalf of imperialism does not rest on a serious evaluation of the events at all. It is rather presented as a *deduction* based on his own particular analysis of how the governments in Pek-

ing, Moscow, and Hanoi act in general. (We'll return to that question later.)

We've established the means, the motive, and the opportunity, and shown the sequence prior to and after the crime. But Comrade Mandel demands that we present a photograph of the murder and the smoking gun!

This is the same false and dangerous method he used in denying Pol Pot's overtures to imperialism, placing the burden of proof on the Vietnamese and the defenders of the Vietnamese revolution. With the Ieng Sary interviews, conclusive proof is now in . . . but the Vietnamese wisely didn't wait for the last nail to be driven into the coffin before figuring out there was a plot afoot to bury them alive. And neither did we.

* * *

Let us summarize the impression that Comrade Mandel leaves his readers with concerning the role of imperialism.

1. Indochina is of secondary concern to the imperialists.

2. Even to the extent the imperialists are concerned about Indochina, they cannot take direct action to intervene there.

3. Even if the imperialists try to intervene there, they can only do so indirectly, by exploiting the Sino-Soviet conflict.

4. In exploiting the Sino-Soviet conflict, the imperialists can't give much weight to deals with Peking, because they can't risk jeopardizing their more vital interests with Moscow.

5. Even if the imperialists did try to use Peking, and even if Peking's actions did facilitate imperialist maneuvers, Peking acted for its own independent reasons. If there is a coincidence of interests and policies, this is fortuitous.

Thus, by a polemical sleight of hand, the role of imperialism neatly disappears into the background. The study of the recent conflicts in Indochina proceeds with the spotlight on other matters.

This brief excursion into Mandel's analysis gives us a better insight into the problem of "mentally rearranging one's analysis of the world situation." It seems that it is actually Comrade Mandel who has begun with a preconceived schema: the unjustified assumption that since 1975 imperialism has been unable to play a major role in Southeast Asia, and that the actions taken by the various regimes of the area were fundamentally independent of imperialism.

Only if we begin from the actual context and chain of events, rather than from Comrade Mandel's preconceived schema, can we have a truly clarifying discussion of the two major underlying theoretical and analytical questions:

1. What are the criteria that define a workers state, and how does this apply to the post-1975 developments in Kampuchea and Vietnam?

2. What are the causes and dynamics of

conflicts among the bureaucratic castes of the deformed and degenerated workers states?

In the concrete context of Indochina, our theories on these questions must be able to provide consistent explanation for the lineup of class forces that we have already observed. In particular, our analysis must explain:

1. Why the imperialists were hostile to the 1975-78 developments in Vietnam.

2. Why the imperialists were able to carry out a rapprochement with Pol Pot.

3. Why the imperialists backed Peking's invasion of Vietnam.

4. Why the workers and peasants of Kampuchea welcomed the Vietnamese action in toppling Pol Pot.

5. Why the workers and peasants of Vietnam rallied to the defense of their state in the above conflicts.

6. Why there was disenchantment and, within the constraints on political activity, signs of opposition in China to the invasion of Vietnam.

As we shall show, the theory that underlies our article does give a consistent explanation for the above facts. Comrade Mandel's theoretical explanation is not only inadequate to explain the above, but has gravely deficient and dangerous implications for future policy of revolutionary Marxists.

Before we get into these theoretical questions, however, there is a further topic we need to discuss.

What Were the Results?

There is one particularly curious aspect to Comrade Mandel's position on the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. Although he puts Hanoi's military action in the same category as Peking's—that is, "criminal, irresponsible, and counterrevolutionary" (p. 344, col. 2); although he brands them both as "unspeakable crimes" (p. 349, col. 2); although he calls for immediate Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea; he nonetheless says:

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. . . . [This was the prelude to] a full-scale military invasion, marginally supported by a few local forces. [p. 343, col. 2]

This is a truly remarkable passage! Comrade Mandel, assuming the mantle

of tactical advisor to the Vietnamese, says Hanoi should have helped to overthrow Pol Pot, but not through a "full-scale military invasion," not with "the regular Vietnamese army." That's against the rules:

The Vietnamese leaders *did* support and encourage an internal struggle against Pol Pot. They fostered opposition currents inside the Khmer Rouge. But the Pol Pot faction did not react passively to these attempts to play by Comrade Mandel's rules. They liquidated opposition leaders and sought to cement ties with proimperialist forces. Dissidents, with Vietnamese support, were obliged to take up guerrilla warfare, and made headway in eastern Kampuchea in 1978.

The Vietnamese rulers and Kampuchean oppositionists were faced with the prospect of a long war in which the Pol Pot regime would be the recipient of increasing outside help.

What should the Vietnamese have done then? Waited for imperialism to make even bolder and more open moves?

Comrade Mandel's tactical advice is not serious at all. It is just a lure to entice those who feel that *something* should have been done about the inhuman Pol Pot regime and entrap them into supporting his real proposal, which amounts to doing nothing.

To the famous question, "What is to be done?" his answer is "Wait! Wait! For a more perfect moment, a more perfect way!"

Wishes vs. Reality

This brings us to the heart of the matter for serious revolutionary politicians. Certainly it would have been better if the opposition to the Pol Pot regime inside Kampuchea had been better organized. Certainly it would have been better if the Kampuchean masses had had a revolutionary leadership capable of doing the job themselves. And certainly it would have been better if Hanoi had been guided by a revolutionary Marxist rather than a Stalinist leadership.

But real life didn't turn out that way. And we have to base our political positions on real life, not wishes.

Did the Vietnamese action in helping to topple Pol Pot—and did our support to it—advance or hinder the class struggle? That is the question. Regardless of Hanoi's intentions—which were not revolutionary—did its action in Kampuchea lead to strengthening the workers state in Vietnam? Did it pave the way for advances of the workers and peasants in Kampuchea and elsewhere in Southeast Asia?

Our answer to these questions is yes. Comrade Mandel's is no.

To substantiate his position Comrade Mandel argues "it is clear that the situation of the Thai guerrillas has seriously deteriorated" as a result of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea (p. 344, col. 1).

But the dictatorship there has a somewhat different estimate of the situation it faces than Comrade Mandel. It shows all the signs of great worry. It is afraid that the working masses of Thailand will be encouraged by the fall of Pol Pot. It has been desperately seeking increased aid and assurances from the imperialists against the new threats to its "security." It is trying to do all it can, militarily and diplomatically, to force Vietnam out of Kampuchea and overturn the new government there.

The problem of the Thai guerrillas is of a different order altogether. Why does Comrade Mandel think their situation has "seriously deteriorated"? *Not because of blows dealt them in the class struggle.* What has happened is that the Communist Party leading the guerrilla movement—a Stalinist party—has been torn by the question: What side to take? The question can't be ignored; they can't easily manage diplomatic neutrality.

Yes, many elements of the Thai CP will line up on the basis of their preference for one or another caste, whether it be based in Moscow, Peking, or Hanoi. Some may even be led to support "their own" landlord-capitalist government in its actions against Vietnam and Kampuchea. But some may be forced to think through the political questions: How can the events be used to advance the class struggle? Can the Thai masses be inspired by the example of Vietnam, by the overthrow of Pol Pot's tyranny, and by recognizing the weakened condition of the Thai regime?

To the degree that elements in the Thai CP start thinking along these lines, they can potentially be won away from Stalinism and toward revolutionary Marxist positions. What's the matter with that? Wouldn't that be a step forward, even though it would necessarily be accompanied by dissension in the Thai CP?

Step Forward for Kampuchea

As for the Kampuchean masses, they welcomed the ouster of Pol Pot, even if the "regular army" of the "historical enemy" was needed to do it. To the Kampuchean masses, the Vietnamese workers and peasants have carried out a friendly act!

The Kampuchean masses, freed from the tyranny of Pol Pot, will try to assert their own interests. The opportunities for social advances, including steps toward a workers and peasants government and establishment of a workers state, are much improved.

In the fight for those advances, clashes with the Vietnamese Stalinist rulers are possible and even likely. But that *future* possibility does not override the progressive character of *today's* struggle against the Khmer Rouge and other reactionary forces.

Comrade Mandel's assessment is the opposite—that "an existing workers state [in Kampuchea] became rather weakened

as a result of the prolonged guerrilla war that the invasion has triggered off. . . ." (p. 344, col. 1.) But even within the framework of Comrade Mandel's own view, that a workers state has existed all along, the question remains: Are not the Kampuchean workers and peasants in a stronger position today than under Pol Pot? *Doesn't the strength of a workers state rest fundamentally on the strength of the workers and their allies?*

Comrade Mandel argues that Hanoi's action in Kampuchea was a miscalculation that provided Peking with the pretext for its invasion. Adding that Peking's action might provide Moscow with a pretext for retaliation, he says "these successful adventurist moves are utterly irresponsible from the point of view of the interests of the workers and peasants of Southeast Asia" (p. 344, col. 1).

A few paragraphs later Comrade Mandel insinuates that we are making 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. . . . 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" (p. 344, col. 2).

An Elementary Law

We again remind Comrade Mandel of what he said earlier about the Pol Pot regime: "The victims of state terrorism certainly have to be measured in terms of hundreds of thousands." (p. 336, col. 1). Yes, to rid Kampuchea of the Pol Pot regime cost many lives. Yes, it even risked war with Peking, in which many lives were also lost.

But whatever the motives or calculations of the Hanoi bureaucracy, both the Kampuchean and Vietnamese workers and peasants are better off today than if Hanoi had refused to act. If Pol Pot had remained, the Kampuchean masses would have paid even more dearly, including in lives. And the social advances of the Vietnamese masses would have been put in ever greater peril.

What kind of morality is Comrade Mandel interjecting here? Has he forgotten the elementary law? It takes struggle and costs lives to rid the world of tyranny and class exploitation, but struggle is unavoidable, necessary, and the only road forward for humanity. And in this case, fortunately, the outcome thus far has been favorable for the workers and their allies in Southeast Asia and around the world.

True, once Hanoi decided it had no

choice but to move against Pol Pot, it had to consider the possibility of war with Peking—but not as a moral question. It was a matter of military tactics and strategy. On that level, the calculations of the Hanoi leadership seem to have been better than Comrade Mandel gives them credit for. The Vietnamese were, after all, able to fend off the attack from Peking, and without being forced to cede Kampuchea back to Pol Pot and his allied forces.

When the Castro leadership sent troops to Angola and the Horn of Africa to counter imperialist moves there, that too was risky. They took a chance on imperialist military intervention against Cuba itself. Were they, too, acting adventuristically? Were the Moscow Stalinists acting more responsibly, perhaps?

No. The Cubans' action was a well-considered and effective initiative that considerably aided the advance of the class struggle in Africa.

Ours is an era of wars and revolution, an era in which proletarian strategy and tactics require bold initiatives to take advantage of the weaknesses of the enemy and to advance the interests of our class. It is on that basis that the recent events in Southeast Asia must be judged.

Comrade Mandel opposed Peking's invasion of Vietnam. He claims that it facilitated imperialist maneuvers. Certainly, but we must also ask: Were these imperialist maneuvers successful, or were they set back? Comrade Mandel never gives an explicit answer to this question.

But he seems to imply that the very fact of the war, regardless of the results, is a gain for imperialism:

We have to say it loud and clear: these wars are criminal, irresponsible, and counterrevolutionary enterprises. They only help imperialism. [p. 344, col. 2]

It is not unwarranted to conclude that the above passage is related to Comrade Mandel's persistent refusal to demand of Moscow that it give Vietnam whatever material aid it needed to repulse the attack from Peking.

Moscow vs. Havana

In fact, Comrade Mandel says hardly anything at all about Moscow's role. The only manner in which he brings it up is in arguing that both Moscow and Peking "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" (p. 343, col. 1).

This statement is true. But Comrade Mandel draws the wrong conclusion from it. He deduces that Peking could not have been engaged in any special collusion with imperialism. He doesn't even consider the possibility that although Moscow did play a different specific role in the conflicts, it likewise was in complicity with imperialist objectives.

There is no need to speculate about



Havana rally February 21 condemns Washington's role in Peking's invasion of Vietnam.

Moscow's policy. Several items of evidence stand out.

1. The Kremlin leaders covered up U.S. imperialism's role in the invasion of Vietnam.
2. Moscow's aid to Vietnam was miniscule.
3. Moscow has been in complicity with imperialist diplomatic pressure on Hanoi

with regard to finding a "solution" to the situation in Kampuchea.

In other words, Moscow's stand in relation to the recent conflicts was fundamentally the same as during the height of direct U.S. military aggression in Vietnam—counterrevolutionary to the core.

What would a revolutionary leadership

of a workers state have done? It would have offered to aid Vietnam to the fullest extent possible to repulse Peking's invasion, while denouncing Washington's instigating role.

Comrade Mandel's silence on this question is also related to his silence on the role of Cuba. In contrast to Brezhnev, the Castro leadership *did* expose and condemn Washington's role. It *did* expose the Washington-Peking objective of restoring a reactionary regime in Kampuchea. It *did* assert the need to aid the Vietnamese revolution to the fullest.

As a demonstration of solidarity and an implicit criticism of Moscow, the Castro leadership mobilized the population and offered to send forces of their own to help repulse the invasion. "We have shed our blood in Angola and Ethiopia," proclaimed a banner at a solidarity rally in Havana February 21. "We are prepared to do so for Vietnam."

A Few Questions

This leads to a few questions that demand clarification. Comrade Mandel condemned the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. He called for the immediate withdrawal of China from Vietnam.

But did he favor Hanoi militarily repulsing Peking? If not, then his call for Peking's withdrawal can only be interpreted in a pacifist sense, especially in light of his description of the conflict as a "sordid interbureaucratic squabble."

But if Comrade Mandel favored the military defeat of the Peking invasion, then we must ask him another question. He condemned the Vietnamese action in Kampuchea in the exact same terms—as "criminal, irresponsible, and counterrevolutionary," as a "sordid interbureaucratic squabble." He likewise called for the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. To be consistent, did he favor the Pol Pot military camp repulsing Hanoi?

It is inconceivable to us that anyone in the revolutionary workers movement could favor military victory of the Pol Pot camp—especially now, in light of the new information, released by the Pol Pot forces themselves, acknowledging their counterrevolutionary alliances.

But if Comrade Mandel continues to oppose Hanoi's military actions in Kampuchea, and at the same time does not support the Pol Pot military forces, his position is neutralism.

Either Comrade Mandel prefers to stay above the battle in both conflicts—which is hardly a fitting posture for a Marxist—or he makes a distinction between them.

We suggest that he think these questions through. For if he makes a distinction between the two conflicts, his entire argument collapses. Comrade Mandel would have to admit he has made a mistake.

That, we suggest, is the revolutionary and honest thing for him to do.

II. Behind Wars Between Workers States: Class Struggle or 'Monolithism'?

In response to our emphasis on imperialism's role in the deepening of the class struggle in Indochina, Comrade Mandel outlines a sharply counterposed explanation for the recent conflicts in Southeast Asia.

Peking was acting for its own goals 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" (p. 342, col. 2).

Hanoi "wanted an Indochinese federation under its own bureaucratic hegemony" (p. 342, col. 2).

The Pol Pot regime adopted a "fiercely nationalistic and anti-Vietnamese attitude" that provided Hanoi with the pretext to intervene (p. 343, col. 1).

As we noted earlier, Comrade Mandel does not really try to document these assertions by examining the actual context and unfolding of events. Instead, his views follow from his assessment of the special laws that he believes govern the behavior of the various bureaucratic regimes. How can one explain, he asks in the final section of his article, "the danger of wars between bureaucratized workers states, or more correctly the danger of wars between the ruling bureaucracies of these countries?" (p. 345, col. 1).

His explanation:

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. . . .

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.² In this, and in nothing else, lie the objective political roots of potential

wars between bureaucratized workers states. [p. 345, col. 2]

Comrade Mandel firmly argues the indisputable point that the bureaucratic castes regard all autonomous developments as threats to their rule. But his sweeping assertion that "in this, *and in nothing else*" (emphasis added) is to be found the underlying cause of war between workers states is false to the core.

Such an analysis does not explain, for example, why the Kremlin does not go to war with neighboring Romania. The Romanian government, after all, takes many political stands that are somewhat independent of the Kremlin. Nor does his analysis explain why Peking has never threatened war against North Korea, despite the fact that at times in the past the North Korean government has headed in an independent direction.

Moscow did, however, invade Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. In these cases the workers were moving towards political revolution, a clear and pressing danger to the Kremlin, which took decisive counterrevolutionary action to forestall the threat.

These examples illustrate that although any autonomous development is a threat, the autonomous developments that can provoke a bureaucratic caste to go to war are those in which the working class itself begins to mobilize and move in the direction of political revolution.

Furthermore the stakes must be high before Moscow or Peking will risk the military invasion of another workers state. They know that such wars are unpopular among the workers in their own countries. They must weigh any expected benefits against the heavy costs in terms of their own internal stability and bureaucratic grip on political power.

Flowing from this, it is clear that Moscow's invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia were not "interbureaucratic conflicts" or "wars between the ruling bureaucracies." They were attacks by the Kremlin on the Hungarian and Czechoslovak workers.

This points to the fatal flaw in Comrade Mandel's argument. He spotlights the tension between the bureaucratic castes, rather than the class struggle, which underlies this tension. He omits completely specific developments in the class struggle that can force the castes to resort to such extreme measures.

category, but it is the first time we have ever heard Comrade Mandel describe the Vietnamese bureaucracy in such terms—he even includes it as one of the "castes."

Is this a slip on Comrade Mandel's part, or has he really changed his thinking on this matter? If he has changed, he certainly owes us all a somewhat more detailed explanation than the passing mention in this article.

This flaw is even more evident in the current-day examples.

Hanoi's decision to take military action against the Pol Pot regime is in no way comparable to the Kremlin's invasion of Hungary or Czechoslovakia—even if one accepted Comrade Mandel's thesis that Kampuchea is a workers state. There was no danger whatsoever that the example of "autonomous" developments under Pol Pot would be taken up by the Vietnamese workers and peasants and used to challenge the bureaucratic caste in Hanoi. The Vietnamese move to oust Pol Pot was not an attack on the Kampuchean workers and peasants. Hanoi did, however, act in response to developments in the class struggle—not in response to the threat of political revolution, but in response to a mounting threat from imperialism. It was in self-defense against imperialism that Hanoi moved.

Peking's invasion of Vietnam was different in origin from either of the above examples. It bore nothing in common either in motivation or aims with Moscow's invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. While Peking is certainly hostile to Hanoi's independent course, the invasion was clearly not an attempt to place a more reliable regime in power in Hanoi in order to extend Peking's "zone of influence" at the expense of Moscow.

Peking's invasion was a service to imperialism and it had limited military aims—to pressure Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea. Not "autonomous developments," but counterrevolutionary class collaboration, was at issue here.

In each of these very different cases, the key factors pushing the bureaucratic castes in Moscow, Peking, or Hanoi to go to war were developments in the class struggle—whether antibureaucratic challenge from the working masses, an attempt to fend off imperialist threats, or shifts in imperialist policy that offered the possibility of cementing a deal.

The underlying initiatives for these wars did not come from the castes. The castes were not acting as independent historical agents. They were responding to pressures and initiatives from the two major contending class forces—the imperialists and the world working class.

What About the Workers in the Workers States?

The problem of "autonomy" and "monolithism" is more complex than Comrade Mandel presents in his article.

Given the existence of separate and distinct bureaucratic castes in each of the workers states (except Cuba), there is a material basis for divergent interests and, flowing from that, differences of policy and opinion. These divergences, even if they have nothing in common with a threat of political revolution, are neverthe-

2. Later on, Comrade Mandel specifies that "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. . . ." (p. 348, col. 2). We think it is correct to include Vietnam in this

less a constant challenge to each of the bureaucratic castes.

"If such-and-such a policy is permitted in Poland," the Soviet workers might say, "why is it not permitted here in the USSR?" The same argument can be applied elsewhere. Even the "Eurocommunist" development has posed such problems. "If Berlinguer, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, can object to certain repressive actions and still remain part of the world Communist movement, why are we arrested if we say the same thing?"

Any bureaucratic caste affected by such developments would naturally like to put a stop to them. But it cannot always do so. Military action is a last resort and is itself fraught with dangers. Excommunication, as in the Stalin-Tito split and the Sino-Soviet split, has not proven very effective against parties that hold state power; and it is harder today to excommunicate even Communist parties that do not hold state power.

What stays the hand of the bureaucratic castes? What prevents Moscow and Peking from ruthlessly crushing every deviation, from making war as they will? Despite the multitude of differences among the various castes, why have there been so few military clashes?

The most important obstacle to the castes is the working class of their own countries. However silenced and politically atomized, the workers are still the ruling class in the workers states.

In comparison to capitalist political rule, which is based on capitalist productive relations, bureaucratic political domination in the workers states is much less firmly rooted, since it stands in sharp contradiction to the progressive productive relations established and defended by the workers of those countries. Stalinist rule is rigid, but it is also fragile. Thus, the castes must always weigh the risk of open political opposition from their own working class if they take military action against the international interests of the working class.

That is the strongest obstacle to a bureaucratic caste going to war against another workers state. For example, the development inside China of opposition to the invasion of Vietnam was an important pressure on Peking to pull back after a few weeks, even though its common aim with Washington of forcing a Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea had not been achieved.

In summary: the bureaucratic castes act out of material self-interest and self-preservation. They can be forced to go to war to defend the workers state, from which they derive their privileges, against threats from imperialism. They can decide to go to war to put down a serious threat of developing political revolution. In order to advance their sought-after alliances with imperialism, they may even go to war to

try to prevent the spread of socialist revolution.

On the other hand, the working class in the workers states is a formidable check on the ability of the castes to simply act as they like in the world arena.

But in each case where a military con-

Who Is Changing What?

How does Comrade Mandel's abstract "principle of monolithism" stand up as an explanation for the major rifts between bureaucratic castes in the past?

Comrade Mandel says:

It was this drive [for monolithism] (and not the fear of the effects upon the Soviet Union of a nonexistent mass movement in Yugoslavia in 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. [p. 345, col. 2]

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. [p. 346, col. 1]

Comrade Mandel's current view is different than that adopted in earlier resolutions of the Fourth International, which he himself supported at the time. The origins of both the Stalin-Tito rift and the Sino-Soviet dispute were placed in the context of the class struggle and world political framework.

The causes of the Stalin-Tito split were analyzed in a report and resolution on Yugoslavia adopted at the Third World Congress of the Fourth International in 1951. We disagree with some assessments in these documents, especially the characterization of the Yugoslav CP as centrist rather than Stalinist. Nonetheless, we think that the reasons given in these documents for the Stalin-Tito break were, as Comrade Mandel says, "overall correct positions."

The resolution analyzed the later rightward evolution of the Tito regime, but said the following about the original split:

The third decisive stage of the Yugoslav revolution was crossed on June 28, 1948, by the split which occurred between the Kremlin and the CPY. After the consolidation of the conquests of the Yugoslav revolution, the CPY proceeded to their extension by the nationalization of wholesale trade and a considerable part of retail trade; the establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade; the beginning of the collectivization of agriculture and the five-year plan of industrialization and electrification of the country. At the same time bureaucratic deformations of the proletarian power developed in Yugoslavia both as a result of the backward character of the country and of the Stalinist policy of the leadership of the CPY, imitating the institutions of the bureaucratized USSR. *The split between the Kremlin and the CPY, the expression of the refusal of the CPY to subordinate the interests of the Yugoslav revolution to those of the Soviet bureaucracy, opened the road to the struggle against these*

flict does erupt, it is necessary to look for the fundamental explanation in concrete circumstances of the class struggle, and take a position on that basis. Comrade Mandel is dead wrong in his attempt to rip "autonomy" and "monolithism" out of the context of the ongoing tug-of-war between imperialism and the world working class.

bureaucratic deformations. [Fourth International, November-December 1951, p. 202. Emphasis in original.]

The report on Yugoslavia said:

What was involved was the dynamism of the Yugoslav revolution itself. From the beginning the Yugoslavs were under greater pressure from imperialism, and in constant conflict with it precisely because of the definitive character of their revolution. This was an intolerable situation for the Kremlin, which sought to live in peace with imperialism, to honor its agreements regardless of the cost.

The difficulties were further aggravated by the effects of the Yugoslav revolution on the communist cadres of the other Eastern European countries and its demands for the completion and coordination of the social revolution in these countries. Such a policy could only have led to a greater conflict with imperialism and to the undermining of the Kremlin's power in the buffer zone.

As it turned out, it was the left turn of the Kremlin in Eastern Europe, their definitive break with the native bourgeoisie which began with the Prague events of February 1948—under pressure of the Marshall Plan and its threat of an economic invasion by imperialism—that forced the Kremlin into its rupture with the Tito regime. Understanding and fearing, as always, that a left turn could favor the independent revolutionary forces, the Kremlin as always in the past struck immediately at these forces, i.e., at the Yugoslavs. [Ibid., p. 178.]

So, contrary to Comrade Mandel, "fear of the effects upon the Soviet Union," or at least of the immediate effects elsewhere in the buffer zone, was considered important in the "overall correct positions that we adopted" earlier. Also central was the context of imperialist pressure against the workers states. The "principle of monolithism" was not invoked abstractly in these earlier documents of the Fourth International.

Sino-Soviet Dispute

Let us turn to the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet dispute. What were "the overall correct positions" we adopted in the resolution on this question at the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International in June 1963?

The resolution indicates the changing relations between Moscow and Washington as part of the background:

In the open since 1957 and extended in a big way since the "Camp David" meeting (1959), resumed again after the passing compromise made at the Moscow Conference in 1960, aggravated following the affair of the Caribbean [when Peking accused Moscow of adventurism,

and of violating Cuba's sovereignty in reaching an agreement with Washington over the head of Havana) and the Sino-Indian frontier incidents in the fall of 1962 [when Moscow supported India], the Sino-Soviet conflict shows once more that the extension and victory of the socialist revolution are incompatible with Stalinism and with the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy whether in the form they took under Stalin or under the leadership of Khrushchev, even when the revolutionary movement is controlled by a bureaucratic leadership. [*Fourth International*, no. 17, October-December 1963, p. 50.]

Without raising objections in principle to seeking agreements with the capitalist states, the Chinese leaders nevertheless found in experience that for them the perspective was scarcely realistic and, still worse, that the risk existed that agreements could be concluded between Moscow and Washington at the expense of some of the interests of the People's Republic of China. They were led to orient their policy much less toward seeking agreements with imperialism than toward pursuing a policy aimed at weakening it. It must be added that the leadership of the Chinese CP feels the pressure of a living revolution which triumphed thirteen years ago while the leaders of the Soviet CP represent a bureaucracy consolidated in power for some forty years.

The fundamental cause of the Sino-Soviet conflict lies in the different needs of the bureaucracies headed by the two leaderships: the one expressing the needs of a bureaucracy feasting at the head of an economically developed country, the other at the head of a society that is still poor, unable to count on major aid from the USSR. The search for agreements and above all an over-all agreement with imperialism on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy contradicts the search by the Chinese leaders for more aid and for better defenses against the heavy pressure of imperialism. From these divergent material needs flow the differences that have appeared between the Chinese and Soviet leaders on some of the key questions of current international politics which have led the Chinese to vigorously denounce Khrushchev's orientation as well as that of his partisans throughout the world (Togliatti, Thorez, the Indian CP, the American CP). [*Ibid.*, p. 51.]

Here too, the objective situation of the class struggle and the relations between imperialism and the workers states were considered the origin of the conflict, not the abstract "principle of monolithism."

If in the above assessment we substituted Peking for Moscow and Vietnam for China, we would see that the situation today bears some similarities to that of the early 1960s:

The search for agreements and above all an over-all agreement on the part of the Chinese bureaucracy contradicts the search by the Vietnamese leaders for more aid and for better defenses against the heavy pressure of imperialism. From these divergent material needs flow the differences that have appeared between the Vietnamese and Chinese leaders on some of the key questions of international politics.

Again, the class struggle and the relations between imperialism and the workers states, rather than the abstract "principle of monolithism," offer us the explanation for the current conflicts.

The potential problems with the way Comrade Mandel treats the "principle of

monolithism" go deeper than superficiality in analysis. Although he insists that wars occasioned by this principle are basically different from capitalist wars—they are not motivated by an inherent drive towards economic expansion and do not threaten world war—his assurances are hardly satisfactory.

Comrade Mandel clearly views the current developments as events of major importance for Marxist theory. "We are faced," he says, "with one of the most



Laura Gray/Militant

STALIN: Rift with Tito grounded in Kremlin's effort to "live in peace" with imperialism.

unforeseen turns of world events in the last decades" (p. 344, col. 2). This causes him to look back with a new perspective on past events:

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.³

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. [p. 346, col. 2]

Comrade Mandel assures us regarding wars between workers states that "at least at the present level of the world relationship of forces, there will be *limited wars* (which does not necessarily mean that they can't take the form of long-term

3. For some reason here, Comrade Mandel is apparently lumping together the distinct national bureaucratic castes, each with its own special interests, under one heading: "the bureaucracy." He does this so often in his article that we wonder if it is just a terminological eccentricity, or is there more to it?

guerrilla wars). . . ." (p. 346, col. 2.)

With all due respect to Comrade Mandel's prescience, can we really be so sure? Anyway, are limited wars these days really so limited?

And will it really matter—if "the lives of tens of thousands of workers and peasants" are lost in "criminal, irresponsible, and counterrevolutionary enterprises" (p. 344, col. 2)—whether these wars had economic roots in capitalist exploitation or had "economic roots [that] lie in the special way in which the hardened bureaucratic layers ruling these countries can guarantee and maintain the material privileges they enjoy"? (p. 345, col. 2.)

If Peking has an inherent drive "to establish its zone of influence over all the Asian workers states," if Hanoi "wanted an Indochinese federation under its own bureaucratic hegemony," if there is an organic need to make war for reasons like these, what then is really so different from capitalist wars? A different motivating cause, but similar results. What's the big difference in the final analysis?⁴

Character of Bureaucratic Castes

If Comrade Mandel's vision of the future is accurate, then the prospects for humanity are not so bright as the Fourth International had expected up until now. Unless there is a flaw in his analysis, unless he left something out of the picture.

He did.

What is involved is not a "new stage in the degeneration of the bureaucracy," but *new developments in the class struggle* that the bureaucratic castes cannot escape.

Ours is the age of imperialist war and workers revolution. The bureaucratic castes will react to major social forces in that context. They will threaten new invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakias. They will threaten to help the bourgeoisie crush workers upsurges in capitalist countries—as in Spain. There will be further collusion between the castes and the imperialists against the workers and their allies. And there may well be new border conflicts on the Ussuri River or elsewhere, as the Moscow-Peking rivalry for relations with imperialism impels the castes to drive further division between the workers states.

But such developments would reflect the accelerating crisis and decomposition of world Stalinism under the blows of the deepening class struggle and changing

4. At one point Comrade Mandel introduces the idea that "the Vietnamese, desperately short of rice this year, might enviously eye the good rice harvest in Kampuchea. . . ." But he quickly drops the subject, adding that they may actually have "to subsidize their new Pnompenh allies" (p. 345, col. 1). We take this as one more of Comrade Mandel's polemical devices, rather than a serious point. Note how he manages to suggest that there really may be underlying economic motives without taking responsibility for defending the assertion.

relationship of forces to the advantage of the workers and oppressed.

The bureaucratic castes are not the major actors on the world stage. The decisive historical force for humanity's

future is the working class. The workers can and will prevent the bureaucratic castes from making war as they would like, just as they must eventually wipe capitalism from the face of the earth. Yes, the rise of the world revolution will cause

the bureaucratic castes to try to lash out; but wars between workers states will become *less likely* with each new victory in the class struggle on a world scale, because the working class, which is the *ruling class* in the workers states, will become stronger.

III. WAS KAMPUCHEA UNDER POL POT A WORKERS STATE?

The opening two sections of Comrade Mandel's article are devoted to arguments for his position that Kampuchea under the Pol Pot regime was a workers state. Responding to our contention that it was not, he addresses the question of whether it is possible that the nationalized sectors of the economy under Pol Pot could have acted as "breeding grounds for private capital accumulation." He answers:

"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" (p. 341, col. 1).

We contend the opposite. And this is the heart of the argument. There is no evidence whatever to suggest that the direction of motion in Kampuchean society under Pol Pot was toward the establishment of a workers state, to say nothing of the argument that a workers state had already been established.

Prior to the victory over the imperialist-backed Lon Nol regime in 1975, Kampuchea was a capitalist state. Both we and Comrade Mandel would agree on that.

But in what sense was it a capitalist state? It bore little resemblance to the industrial capitalist countries. It was extremely backward economically, even in comparison with most semicolonial countries. On top of that, its economy had been devastated by the imperialist warmakers. There was little manufacturing and less industry. The productive economy was overwhelmingly agricultural, where subsistence farming and small-scale commodity production predominated.

The indigenous ruling classes were small and weak, consisting mostly of agricultural landlords and commercial capitalists dependent on imperialism. Insofar as there were modern sectors of the economy, these were controlled by imperialism. Its domination by finance capital and complete subordination to the world capitalist market underlined the capitalist character of Kampuchea, despite its economic backwardness. The government and state apparatus functioned to promote the interests of these exploiting classes which fed off the crumbs from the tables of imperialism.

To show that Kampuchea became a workers state under Pol Pot, it would have to be proven that new productive relations, which advanced the historic interests of the working class, had been established in

the decisive sectors of the economy. It would have to be proven that imperialist domination of resources and the most profitable enterprises had been broken definitively, not just temporarily. Most importantly, it would have to be shown that private appropriation of land and means of production would be impossible without a civil war to break the resistance of the working class and to destroy proletarian state institutions resting on new property relations.

Sweeping nationalizations, while necessary, are not sufficient to determine that a workers state has been established. Among the semicolonial states there have been many examples—especially in the wake of victorious independence struggles or anticolonial upsurges—of extensive nationalizations, in which the old ruling classes have been largely expropriated, and in which imperialist domination of the economy has been temporarily broken.

But often these seemingly radical property changes have not led to the establishment of new relations of production that would define a workers state. Rather they have proved to be a breeding ground for the emergence of a new bourgeoisie from the petty bourgeoisie in the state apparatus.

Comrade Mandel grants that such developments are possible and have happened. He points out correctly that in the absence of a social revolution, Mozambique and Angola, for example, are today headed in the same direction as Burma, Syria, and Egypt—countries where there had likewise been extensive nationalizations, but capitalism had not been overturned.⁵

Nonetheless, he argues, Kampuchea is a qualitatively different case.

If so, the burden of proof is on Comrade

5. In the mid-1960s there was a very useful discussion in the Fourth International of the significance of the extensive nationalizations that had taken place in Egypt. Joseph Hansen cogently showed that it was wrong to treat these nationalizations as a sufficient criterion for a workers state. The revolutionary consciousness of the masses is also a determining criterion.

"A workers state is based not only on nationalizations but, among other things, on the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. . . . The great school for the masses in achieving this level is a popular revolution—a profound collective experience in mobilizing against the ruling class and its system in order to put an end to it and to consciously open up new historic possibilities." ("Nasser's Egypt—On the Way to a Workers State?," *The Workers and Farmers Government*, "Education for Socialists" series, Pathfinder Press, p. 8)

Mandel, just as the burden of proof would be on anyone who might argue that Angola and Mozambique are now workers states. It is not enough to prove that the old bourgeoisie has been crushed and private ownership of the means of production outlawed. The burden of proof is on Comrade Mandel to show that the Kampuchean state, under Pol Pot, stood on new property relations that advanced the historical interests of the working class. He must show that it would take a civil war in which the working class is defeated to reverse these new relations.

It is he who must show that a fundamental change had occurred, that "there can be no doubt about *the direction* in which things were going."

Comrade Mandel's Case

How does he try to prove his case?

"This is not in the first place a question of speculation," he says, "but 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 revolutions⁶); 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. [p. 336, col. 1]

Comrade Mandel does recognize the brutalities committed by Pol Pot, but treats them as follows:

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." [p. 336, col. 1]

Earlier Comrade Mandel gives a brief description of the "social revolution" carried out by this "inhuman despot."

A big part of the participants in the bourgeois 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/

6. At this point, Comrade Mandel quotes approvingly from Francois Ponchaud, who described the situation under Pol Pot as a new society "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."

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). . . .

The radicalism (or ultraleftist adventurism) of the Pol Pot regime went so far as virtually suppressing all forms of trade and money. Only the barest remnants of barter continued. [p. 335, col. 2]

Contrary to Comrade Mandel, none of these actions are tasks of the proletarian revolution. None are needed "to suppress private property." None are criteria for the establishment of a workers state. In fact, all are obstacles to a radical social revolution leading to the establishment of a workers state.

Although the criminals of the old regime must be brought to justice, it is not a revolutionary policy to "physically eliminate" participants in the bourgeois state apparatus. It is not a proletarian measure to apply this policy, as the Pol Pot regime did, to rank-and-file soldiers and government workers, or even to lower-level army officers or administrators of the old regime.

It is not a step toward a workers state to eliminate "the lower middle classes," including doctors, nurses, teachers, and others whose skills are vitally needed for social progress. Policies of this type by the Pol Pot regime meant drastic blows to the living conditions of all Kampuchean working people. Like the execution of minor government officials and low-ranking army officers, such policies terrorized the masses.

Wholesale slaughter has never accompanied a socialist revolution—not even when the leadership was dominated by Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe, China, or elsewhere in Asia. This was not an excess of revolutionary zeal on the part of an "ultraleft adventurist," but mass counterrevolutionary intimidation of the workers and rural toilers.

Furthermore, it is not a task of the proletarian revolution to force peasants—let alone virtually the entire urban population, as well—into what Comrade Mandel delicately calls "rigid collective farming." This policy, in reality almost universal forced labor camps, began to be applied in the zones the Khmer Rouge controlled even before they took Pnompenh. It dealt a devastating blow to the poor peasants, reversing the radical agrarian revolution that had begun during the civil war in the early 1970s. And it shattered the very possibility of a workers alliance with the peasantry, the foundation for a workers and peasants government. Far from constituting a "radical agrarian revolution," this "radical" suppression of the peasants' use of the land was a *counterrevolution* from which agriculture in Kampuchea will not recover for many years.

It is certainly not a task of the socialist revolution to suppress "all forms of trade and money" so that "only the barest

remnants of barter continued." The attempt to eliminate the circulation of money was simply aimed at assuring that the social surplus product would be concentrated in the Khmer Rouge apparatus, and that the consumption of the masses would be severely reduced. It did not eliminate the use of money commodities—most frequently rice—or legal and illegal forms of trade. To the extent that money and commodity circulation were cut back sharply, this reflected the reduction of the Kampuchean economy to a level below subsistence. The measures taken by the Khmer Rouge closed rather than opened the road out of this ruinous situation.

The socialist revolution does not aim to suppress *all* private property. Depriving the masses of people of even such personal property as cooking utensils and clothing, and instituting forced communal living, is *not* suppression of private property *in the means of production*. It is aimed at brutalizing and terrorizing the toilers themselves.

Nor is it a revolutionary act to disperse the urban population and forcibly separate families. However small, the urban working class is the *decisive* social support for a workers' state. Its dispersal to the rural labor camps, along with millions of poor artisans, shopkeepers, and refugees, was a savage blow to the Kampuchean revolution, blocking the road to the establishment of new relations of production.

A socialist revolution means establishing institutions that open the door to human progress and social advance—that is, a better life for the masses of working people. It means putting them in a better position to defend themselves against imperialism. The policies implemented by the Pol Pot regime, to the contrary, constituted a brutal economic, social, and political *retrogression* for the Kampuchean workers and peasants.

To present such reactionary measures as those of a "social revolution" can only discredit the very idea of social revolution in the working-class movement.

When Rosa Luxemburg proclaimed that the choice before humanity was socialism or barbarism, it never occurred to her that any Marxist might mistake the one for the other.

A Progressive Economic Structure

Comrade Mandel challenges our view, as presented by Comrades Feldman and Clark, that "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" (quoted on p. 339, col. 1).

The intervention of the workers, he maintains, was proved to be nonessential in Eastern Europe (a point we will answer shortly). But he apparently does not dispute that "establishing and maintaining a

progressive economic structure" is a characteristic of a workers state.

Nothing in Comrade Mandel's article, however, demonstrates that the Pol Pot regime established a progressive economic structure. Comrade Mandel himself seems to argue to the contrary, in fact. He states that the policy of the Pol Pot government "made it impossible to quickly repair the damage cause by the imperialist destruction."

The national economy and the very fabric of the 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. [p. 336, col. 1]

The "whole period" that Comrade Mandel is talking about here is *the entire period of Pol Pot's rule*.

We can only agree with Comrade Mandel that the policies chosen by the Pol Pot regime deepened rather than reversed the social dislocation that had set in under the previous regime. Industry, already in decline, was sharply reduced. Disease and starvation continued throughout the years of Khmer Rouge rule. All indications are that hundreds of thousands of deaths ensued.

Comrade Mandel assures us that the Pol Pot regime was "intent upon industrialization, be it of a special type" (p. 336, col. 2). We agree. It shared this objective with all capitalist regimes in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. But, as history shows, intentions are not enough.

Because of its economic structure, a workers state can move rapidly in the direction of industrialization. But Comrade Mandel gives no evidence that the Pol Pot regime was making strides toward this goal, much less that it was capable of the kind of economic progress made possible by the new property relations established in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, North Korea, or Cuba.

In fact, Comrade Mandel makes only two comparisons between Kampuchean society under Pol Pot and what happened in workers states.

He writes:

The obvious parallel which comes to mind is the severity, scope, and extreme terrorism of Stalin's forced collectivization in the Soviet Union. . . .

. . . 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. [p. 336, col. 1]

The crimes of Pol Pot certainly bear comparison with those of Stalin—all proportions guarded, since Stalin's treachery was carried out on an even greater histori-

cal scale and was even more costly for humanity. But what does this comparison prove about the nature of the Kampuchean state? We could also compare Stalin and Hitler as murderers of workers and peasants. But that in no way equates the class character of the Soviet and German states.

Kampuchean society under Pol Pot's regime was characterized by deepening social decay and economic collapse. But in the 1930s, the planned economy of the Soviet workers state was proving its strength. In the midst of a worldwide capitalist depression the Soviet Union emerged as a major industrial power. Modern industry grew, and the working class was strengthened. In spite of the policies of the Stalin regime, economic and social advances were made.

Stalin's brutal forced collectivization was carried out a decade after the workers state, with its new progressive economic and social relations, had been established under the revolutionary leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks. It was part of the Thermidorean counterrevolution.

What if some "revolutionary" leadership had tried to militarily evacuate the entire population of Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1917, dispersing the proletariat into rural forced labor camps along with a dispossessed peasantry. Could such a policy have created the Soviet workers state?

The answer is obvious.

And the comparison with Stalin's forced collectivization falls apart.

'War Communism'

Even more outrageous is Comrade Mandel's comparison of Pol Pot's course with that of the Bolsheviks in Lenin's time. He suggests that Pol Pot followed a policy of "extreme terroristic 'war communism,'" (p. 340, col. 2), that is an extreme variation of the policy adopted during a particularly severe period of the civil war in the Soviet Union.

It is true that manifestations of social dislocation and economic collapse appeared in Russia during the period of "war communism." But these were in no sense a product of the "war communist" measures of the Leninist government. They resulted from the fact that the new Soviet regime had to fight against dozens of counterrevolutionary armies, including foreign interventionist armies organized by the imperialists. The measures taken under "war communism" were absolutely necessary to enable the new workers state to survive and win the civil war, so that it could then begin repairing the damage and moving forward.

No valid comparison can be made with Kampuchea, where, as Comrade Mandel admits, the policies of the Pol Pot regime from day one deepened the problems left behind by the old Lon Nol regime. They weakened the defenses against imperial-



Agricultural forced-labor brigade in Pol Pot's Kampuchea

The Kampuchean people faced a staggering legacy of imperialist destruction, and the Mayagüez affair attested to Washington's initial hostility to the new government. But the Pol Pot regime from the beginning diverted scarce resources to *initiate* military actions against neighboring Vietnam, and subsequently cemented an alliance with the imperialists.

Was Pol Pot defending the conquests of the workers and peasants against counterrevolutionary armies? No, the Khmer Rouge army was used first to reverse the agrarian revolution and disperse the working class, and then to hold the workers and peasants in subjugation.

So, contrary to the implication in Comrade Mandel's article, Pol Pot's terror was not an "extreme" variant of the "war communist" measures carried out by the Bolsheviks. The two have nothing in common. Their class content is the opposite. The Leninist terror was aimed at the enemies of the proletarian revolution. Pol Pot's terror was aimed at the workers and peasants of Kampuchea—and Vietnam.

If left uncorrected, Comrade Mandel's comparison could provide reinforcement to those social democrats who attempt to portray Stalinism as an "extreme" form of Bolshevism, thereby lumping revolutionary socialists into the "totalitarian left." Many of them trace the origins of Stalinism to the period of "war communism," or say that Stalinism dates from the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921—a necessary revolutionary measure that was backed by Lenin and Trotsky.

These falsifications are constantly promoted by the enemies of Bolshevism. They must be countered, not de facto reinforced by specious comparisons to the policies of

counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois tyrants such as Pol Pot.

Social and Economic Collapse

Comrade Mandel says "the radicalism (or ultraleft adventurism) of the Pol Pot regime went as far as virtually suppressing all forms of trade and money" (p. 335, col. 2). But what was "ultraleft" about this? These measures did not represent a premature leap towards the communist future, where trade and money really can be eliminated, where goods will become free goods *on the basis of huge economic advances*.

In Kampuchea, the suppression of much (not all) trade and money was—like the decline of industry and the near-collapse of communications, transport, education, and medical care—a sign of the *regression* of the economy. It was a step away from, not towards, socialism.

"Only the barest remnants of barter continued," Comrade Mandel tells us. Yes, with the direction of motion back towards bare subsistence, barter assumes a greater role.

But this is hardly a sign of surmounting capitalism.

The nationalization of industry must also be viewed in that context. Comrade Mandel poses a useful question:

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. [p. 336, col. 2]

Well then, what was the "entire socioeconomic context"? Given the devastation, the shortages, the flight of the old bourgeoisie, and the absence of outside aid, any

government—whatever its class character—would have had to resort to extensive nationalizations to organize even the most elementary production. But the Pol Pot regime went further, organizing agricultural production through forced labor and drastically reduced consumption, which meant bare subsistence. Goals in industry and manufacture were minimized.

What did the nationalizations signify in that socioeconomic context? Certainly not the beginnings of a planned economy moving in a progressive direction. Economic planning—at least the economic planning characteristics of a workers state, even an economically backward workers state—requires coordination of the many and complex components of the entire economy. The type of “planning” that the Pol Pot forces instituted had nothing in common with that. They did not even try to carry out a plan to immediately expand industrial production and create economically viable urban centers. They instead closed down most industry, evacuated the cities, and only later even began to reopen factories on a small scale.

They did not try to plan for education, health, or other social improvements. Just the opposite. Their policies amounted to a plan to set Kampuchea back, not move it forward. Yet Comrade Mandel blithely maintains that the socioeconomic context of the nationalized enterprises was that of a workers state.⁷

Law of the Excluded Middle

Actually, Comrade Mandel does not really try to adduce evidence to show that Kampuchea was a workers state. What he does instead is argue from the law of the excluded middle: Kampuchea could only

have been a capitalist state or a workers state; it couldn't be a capitalist state, because the capitalists had been wiped out; therefore it must be a workers state.

We agree, of course, that it could only have been a capitalist state or a workers state. But elimination of the old capitalist class does not create a workers state. As for the eventual emergence of a new bourgeoisie out of the Khmer Rouge apparatus, Comrade Mandel asserts there is no evidence to prove this might happen.

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. [p. 336, col. 2]

The reduction of the economy to an extremely primitive level was admittedly not conducive to the rapid accumulation of private fortunes. But primitive accumulation was nonetheless proceeding.

The Khmer Rouge bureaucracy on all levels had material privileges relative to the masses. What they could accumulate was small relative not only to standards of finance capital, but small even compared to many semicolonial countries. But it was still significant in the context of the Kampuchean economy.

The top officials monopolized control of the proceeds from international trade.

Commerce—legal and illegal—continued on a reduced scale within Kampuchea, despite the “suppression” of trade and money: rice was often used as a currency. Trade was also carried out by Khmer Rouge soldiers along the Thai border.

Then there was theft and plunder, a not insignificant source of accumulation in an economically backward country. The marauding practices of the remnants of the Khmer Rouge army—including the practice of plundering farms and villages, and carrying hundreds, sometimes thousands, of civilians with them as a forced labor supply—have come to public view since the fall of Pol Pot. We can assume that such practices did not develop overnight.

These small signs from a society whose inner workings were largely concealed from public view can be taken as indications of broader processes at work. They can not be brushed aside without providing proof that new progressive economic relations of production existed and their dynamic was stronger than the capitalist tendencies.

What prevents the Stalinist bureaucracy in a degenerated or deformed workers state such as the Soviet Union or China from transforming its material privileges in the realm of consumption into capital accumulation? Inertia? Some lingering commitment to socialist ideals? No. As Trotsky wrote in *Revolution Betrayed* more than forty years ago, the bureaucratic caste

“has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of its policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat” (p. 251).

A few pages later, Trotsky explains that “the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses” (p. 255).

What, then, does Comrade Mandel think was blocking primitive capitalist accumulation in the Khmer Rouge apparatus (aside from the extreme scarcity of all goods)? Certainly no amount of ideological “austerity” could have overcome the logic of individual material interests. Without the check of the Kampuchean working class supported by the peasantry, the only possible outcome, over time, was the emergence of a new capitalist class on the basis of private capital accumulation.

Post-January '79: A New Direction?

As we have already seen, foreign capitalists made a turn towards the Pol Pot regime. Japanese capital was interested in investment. The imperialists began viewing Kampuchea as a buffer to help protect capitalist Thailand against Vietnam's socialist revolution. Sihanouk reemerged as a public figure even before the fall of the government. Did this not indicate something about the direction of motion?

Even clearer evidence is provided by the evolution of the Pol Pot grouping since its fall from power. In his June 2 interview with *Le Monde's* R.P. Paringaux, Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's chief deputy, stated that the Khmer Rouge is willing to “accept a regime with a mixed economy and the existence of a bourgeoisie. This is our point of view today. We are beginning to put it into practice.” As part of putting this orientation into practice, Pol Pot concluded a working military alliance with Bangkok, Washington, and the remnants of the old regime of Lon Nol, the butcher put in power by Nixon in order to facilitate the murderous bombing of the country.

Doesn't that call into question Comrade Mandel's assertion that there “can be no doubt about the direction in which things were going”? Doesn't Pol Pot's subsequent evolution throw even graver doubts onto the contention of those who believe that Kampuchea had definitively crossed the threshold of a workers state?

It is no accident of history that the Lon Nol and Pol Pot forces have been able to find a way to work together, under the aegis of Kampuchean “patriotism.” Their chauvinistic proclamations against the Vietnamese “enemy” are common ideological cover for their hatred of the socialist revolution in Vietnam. This is the way they express their determination to try and break the link between the Vietnamese revolution and the Kampuchean workers and peasants who want to make a socialist revolution in their country.

7. Some comrades have asked: “Isn't it possible that the entire society was thrown backward to some precapitalist social formation?” This is clearly not Comrade Mandel's position, and this is not the place to develop the question. It was taken up in its essentials in the article, “Pol Pot Regime—Was It a Workers State?” by Fred Feldman and Steve Clark, as follows:

“In the Western press, the Pol Pot tyranny was commonly portrayed as seeking to return to an undefined but precapitalist agricultural past by transforming the whole population into peasants.

“But the precapitalist modes of production (whether Asiatic or feudal) grew up over centuries, shaped by complex social and economic forces; they can't be reproduced in a matter of a few years, even if a certain number of policies are implemented that seem to contradict the direction of historical development.

“The top Khmer Rouge leaders were not impoverished rural folk with horizons limited to the village. They were Paris-educated, several of them specializing in the economic problems of the ‘third world.’ Moreover, they were adherents of Stalinist politics.

“For such a grouping, reversion to precapitalist relations of production seemed as unrealistic as it was in fact.” (*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 26, 1979, pp. 182-3.)

Misplaced Confidence in Pol Pot

In the end, Comrade Mandel's argument that Pol Pot's forces established a workers state in Kampuchea does not rest primarily on confidence in the direction of motion of the economy, but mostly on confidence in the capacity of the Pol Pot leadership—despite its “barbaric methods”—to establish new property forms and institutionalize new relations of production in the interests of the workers.

For example, one argument that Comrade Mandel advances for his view that Kampuchea was a workers state is the following:

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”? [p. 337, col. 2]

But, Comrade Mandel, what are “communists of Stalinist persuasion”? Stalinists are enemies of the proletarian revolution, aren't they? They are the opposite of communists. And what is a “communist bureaucrat”? Aren't communists and bureaucrats opposite types?

Comrade Mandel quotes from the official program of the Kampuchean Communist Party, long passages referring to workers power and internationalism. “All humbug and propaganda?” he asks. “Possibly. But doesn't the *content* of the propaganda tell us something about the class nature of the Kampuchean bureaucracy?” (p. 337, col. 1).

No! The content of the propaganda doesn't tell us a thing about the class nature of the Pol Pot regime, any more than the revolutionary phrases of a thousand and one petty bourgeois demagogues tell us about their class nature.

“Possibly petty-bourgeois demagogues could repeat such language,” answers Comrade Mandel. “But can they implement it? And weren't these statements implemented to an important extent in Kampuchea?”

But what was implemented? The general phrases about leading the Kampuchean people to “a communist society?” Making the means of production the “collective property of the common people?” Humbug and propaganda!

Comrade Mandel quotes Article 12 of the constitution: “Every worker is master of his factory.” Is this what he has in mind as having been “implemented to an important extent in Kampuchea?”

Comrade Mandel's basic error here is to conceive of the Stalinists as being tied to the working class by means of their Stalinist ideology. This is false. Stalinist ideology is completely alien to the working class, just as is the demagogy of petty bourgeois radicals. To grant that there is

an ounce of progressive content in the ideology of the petty bourgeois Stalinist castes and their camp-followers, to grant that there is an ounce of proletarian content in their counterrevolutionary orientation, is a dangerous step in the direction of blurring the clear class line of demarcation between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism.

But Comrade Mandel goes even further. The Pol Pot bureaucracy, he says, was “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” (p. 337, col. 1).

But the “specific form of remuneration” of the Pol Pot bureaucracy in no way links it to the working class.

Before coming to power in April 1975, its “specific form of remuneration” came, if anything, from the product of the peasantry rather than the workers.

After April 1975 the bureaucracy got its “specific form of remuneration” from the surplus product of the peasants and workers. This did not transform it into a part of the working class any more than the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is working-class. It is, as Trotsky insisted, “petty bourgeois in its composition and spirit” (“The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35*, p. 180). Stalinism is a petty bourgeois current within the workers' movement.

The problem is to show whether the *state* rests on and defends property relations that establish the workers as the ruling class.

The fact that Comrade Mandel cannot show that the workers were the ruling class in Kampuchea, and that the state functioned in their historic interest, leads him into a terrible contradiction later on. He says:

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. [p. 340, col. 2]

But isn't Comrade Mandel's position that the Pol Pot bureaucracy and Khmer Rouge army were “tied to the working class” what is really “utterly preposterous”—and by his own argument that their “objective social function” was to crush the workers?

The truth is that the Khmer Rouge army was in no way tied to the working class. It arose as peasant (that is, petty bourgeois) in origin and social composition and its leadership was Stalinist (also petty bourgeois) in ideology. Once in power it did not base itself on the revolutionary alliance of the workers and peasants, but moved to crush them. And it remained petty bourgeois, as the governing apparatus of a state that remained capitalist.

What occurred in Kampuchea was indeed very similar to the type of situation foreseen by Trotsky in 1932 in an article titled “Peasant War in China and the Proletariat.”

The commanding stratum of the Chinese “Red Army” has no doubt succeeded in inculcating itself with the habit of issuing commands. The absence of a strong revolutionary party and mass organizations of the proletariat renders control over the commanding stratum virtually impossible. The commanders and commissars appear in the guise of absolute masters of the situation and upon occupying the cities will be rather apt to look down from above on the workers. . . .

Thus, in China the causes and grounds for conflict between the army, which is peasant in composition and petty bourgeois in leadership, and the workers not only are not eliminated but, on the contrary, all the circumstances are such as to greatly increase the possibility and even the inevitability of such conflicts; and in addition the chances of the proletariat are far less

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favorable to begin with than was the case in Russia. [*Trotsky on China*, Pathfinder Press, p. 526-27.]

Rejecting our view that the action of the workers and peasants is necessary to carry out and defend the key socioeconomic transformations, yet asserting that these transformations took place in Kampuchea

in the absence of the workers as the driving force (p. 339, col. 1), Comrade Mandel is left only with the Khmer Rouge bureaucracy as the agent of social change. Rejecting the theory of a new class, Comrade Mandel is thus put in the position of ascribing a working-class nature to the Stalinists, of considering the Pol Pot bu-

reaucracy to be a working-class bureaucracy, and the Khmer Rouge army (the "army of the bureaucracy") as a working-class army.

All of these positions point in the direction of revising some of the main theoretical conquests of the Trotskyist movement.

IV. Workers States and Workers and Farmers Governments

To support his argument on the nature of the Kampuchean state under Pol Pot, Comrade Mandel devotes an entire section to the question: "What Are the Criteria for Defining a Workers State?" He gives several answers to this question, each somewhat different from the others.

In one definition—which he asserts to be "the unchanged majority position of the Fourth International on this subject for at least a quarter of a century"—he not only posits the need for smashing the old bourgeois state and depriving the bourgeoisie of its political and economic power, but also the need for the economy to evolve, "based upon new production and property relations, of a noncapitalist nature. . . ." (p. 338, col. 1.)

This definition is too abbreviated, but it at least has the merit of indicating the necessity for forging new economic relations "of a noncapitalist nature"—more precisely, historically *progressive* new relations in the interests of the working class. As we have seen, it is exactly in relation to this criterion that Comrade Mandel's discussion of Kampuchean society under Pol Pot runs aground.

Perhaps this explains why Comrade Mandel does not stick to this brief definition. For most of his discussion, he employs a criterion that is more abbreviated still: ". . . the destruction of the bourgeois state leads to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished" (p. 338, col. 2).

In line with this simple criterion, Comrade Mandel argues that the Soviet-occupied countries of Eastern Europe became workers states in 1946-47 and that China became a workers state in 1949. His argument boils down to this: Given the smashing of the old state apparatus, the transformation of property relations was bound to follow.

Since Comrade Mandel makes no explicit distinction between these statements of his position and his earlier summary of what he calls the position of the Fourth International, unwary readers may assume that all the rest is likewise "the unchanged majority position of the Fourth International." On the contrary, the position that Comrade Mandel now advances on these questions does not conform to the positions previously adopted by majority vote (including the vote of Comrade Mandel). He is entitled to change his mind, of course, but it strikes us as strange, to say

the least, that he does so while appealing to the authority of past positions that contradict his current views.

Theory of the State

To clarify the discussion, therefore, we propose to summarize our main theoretical conquests on the question of the transition to a workers state. These positions were developed by the world Trotskyist movement in the course of analysing the now numerous social transformations of the twentieth century. In doing so, we will show how Comrade Mandel goes wrong, and explain how our view is in harmony with the facts and offers a consistent explanation for the socialist transformations in East Europe, Asia, and Cuba.

The establishment of a workers state includes these basic steps:

1. Smashing the bourgeois state apparatus. This normally occurs in the course of an insurrection or civil war leading up to the collapse of the old regime (although aspects of civil war continue throughout the whole process in which a workers state is created).

2. Establishing a workers government or a workers and farmers government. That is, a government independent of the old ruling classes, which mobilizes the power of the workers and their allies to implement progressive social measures that more and more challenge the economic prerogatives of capital.

3. The overturn of capitalist property relations through the expropriation of the decisive sectors of the economy and their coordination through a planned economy and a state monopoly over international trade.

The mobilization and active participation of the working class and its allies in this process is essential in order to break the economic power of the bourgeoisie and lay the foundations for progressive new economic and social relations.

These developments do not all occur at the same time or in a rigidly separate sequence of phases. They are part of a revolutionary social process that has concrete historical particularities in each country where it has occurred. But no workers state has thus far been established or consolidated without the accomplishment of these tasks through the active involvement of the toiling masses.

The October Revolution

How does this correspond with Lenin

and Trotsky's views on the regime installed by the October 1917 revolution? Stressing the workers' exercise of power through the soviets, they often referred to the workers state as existing from the time that the Bolshevik-led soviets took power in 1917, even prior to the economic transformations.

With the rise of Stalinism, however, the political conquests of the Russian workers and poor peasants were reversed in key areas. The soviets were destroyed as instruments of the workers; so was the party. Trotsky defined this transformation as a political counterrevolution, while maintaining that the economic conquests of the revolution still survived, differentiating the Soviet state from a capitalist state.

This put the spotlight on the importance of transforming property relations in the establishment of working-class rule. It was in this framework that Trotsky began reviewing the transformation process in the Soviet Union, stressing the key economic measures that were accomplished only in 1918.

The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to autumn 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers' control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers' soviets ruled side by side with workers' soviets, and often elbowed them aside.

Only towards the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. But even here it is necessary to make certain large reservations. During those initial years, the dictatorship was geographically confined to the old Moscow principality and was compelled to wage a three-years' war along all the radii from Moscow to the periphery. This means that up to 1921, precisely up to the NEP, that is, what went on was still the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat upon the national scale. ["The Class Nature of the Soviet State," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p. 106.]

Trotsky did not develop this idea at any length. There was no pressing need—he was centering his analysis on Stalinism, rather than on the process of transformation through which a workers state is created. But it is clear that the task of correctly analyzing Stalinism required

stressing the property relations that lie at the foundation of every state, that are defended by that state, and that ultimately shape its policies. To have continued stressing strictly the political change—the seizure of power by the soviets, by which both he and Lenin had declared the establishment of the workers state in October 1917—Trotsky would have been unable to explain why it was not true that the dictatorship of the proletariat had been destroyed by the Stalinist bureaucratic caste.⁸

Lessons of the Shachtman Fight

Developments in the early years of World War II threw new light on the process of social revolution. With the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939, the Nazi regime invaded western Poland; soon afterwards, the Red Army moved into eastern Poland (including areas of the western Ukraine and Byelorussia that had been part of the Polish state). This provoked a major internal discussion in the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International, with a minority rejecting the longstanding policy of defense of the Soviet Union in wartime. In the course of answering the Burnham-Shachtman minority, Trotsky had occasion to consider the social dynamics set off by the Red Army's occupation of territory that had been capitalist.

My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a "bureaucratic revolution" of the proletariat is possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of "bureaucratic revolution" but only a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to

8. After the post-World-War-II overturns some Trotskyists, looking back on the Russian Revolution, characterized it as a workers state from the time of the seizure of power in 1917, on the basis of *confidence* that the Bolsheviks, a revolutionary leadership based on workers and peasants soviets, would defend the fundamental interests of the working class and inevitably proceed to overturn capitalist property relations. However, this criterion is strictly subjective (an evaluation of the qualities of the Bolshevik leadership) rather than socioeconomic and objective, as the criteria to define a state should be.

Since we know that the Bolsheviks did actually proceed to carry out the socioeconomic overturns, no practical problem arose from this loose use of terminology. But when power is conquered by less trustworthy leaderships than the Bolsheviks, and when we do not have the benefit of hindsight, the deficiency of this criterion of confidence is evident, for it can lead to the political disaster of adaptation to a petty-bourgeois leadership.

And even if a leadership that conceives of itself as Leninist does take power, it cannot be granted a blank check; it will remain to be proved whether it is Leninist by what it does.

accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be fit for nothing but the ash can.

This impulse in the direction of socialist revolution was possible only because the bureaucracy of the USSR straddles and has its roots in the economy of a workers' state. The revolutionary utilization of this "impulse" by the Ukrainian Byelo Russians was possible only through the class struggle in the occupied territories and through the power of the example of the October Revolution. Finally, the swift strangulation or semi-strangulation of this revolutionary mass movement was made possible through the isolation of this movement and the might of the Moscow bureaucracy. Whoever failed to understand the dialectic interaction of these three factors; the workers' state, the oppressed masses and the Bonapartist bureaucracy, had best restrain himself from idle talk about events in Poland. [*In Defense of Marxism*, pp. 130-131.]

In June 1941, with Hitler's attack and invasion of the USSR, the process that Trotsky pointed to came to an end in Poland. Nevertheless, Trotsky's initial thinking on the above question proved useful for the Fourth International in considering the situation after World War II, when the Red Army stood astride much of Eastern Europe. While rejecting the idea of a "bureaucratic revolution," the Fourth International had to consider the dynamics of a "bureaucratic impulse" to social revolution, to a social revolution that lacked the independent organization of workers councils, as had arisen in the 1917 Russian revolution.

Post-World-War-II Eastern Europe

The Fourth International expected that the Second World War would be followed by a revolutionary upsurge of worldwide scope. It assumed, however, that successful socialist overturns would occur along the general outlines of the Russian revolution, that is, through revolutionary upsurges of the workers and their allies in which soviets would emerge and mass parties similar to the Bolshevik Party, capable of leading the conquest of power, would be built.

Events in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe unfolded differently. Although the 1944-45 wartime victories of the Soviet army sparked mass uprisings, the Kremlin moved quickly to prevent a radical social transformation and the overturn of capitalist property. Coalition governments with prominent bourgeois politicians were set up, and a weakened capitalist system was preserved in the name of "peoples democracy." The property of the old landlord classes, however, was expropriated and a radical agrarian reform carried out.

Stalin intended to use Eastern Europe as a buffer to protect the USSR against future invasions, but he sought to preserve capitalism there in the hopes of reaching a postwar accommodation with U.S. imperialism.

The imperialists, however, decided the relationship of forces was in their favor

and adopted the aggressive Cold War "containment/rollback" line. The promise of Marshall Plan aid was used to encourage the East European capitalists to defy the Soviet occupiers and deepen their economic sabotage. In face of this pressure, Stalin was forced to abolish the coalition governments in the 1946-48 period.

When the imperialists continued their anti-Soviet drive, the local Stalinist parties were ordered to organize the expropriation of capitalist property—a popular move due to the unemployment, inflation, and social dislocation that had resulted from preserving the outmoded system. Tight bureaucratic control, backed by the Red Army, prevented the active participation and mobilization of the masses from going beyond the limits set by Stalin. Subsequent Kremlin-backed purges (such as the Slánsky trial in Czechoslovakia) sought to rid the indigenous Stalinist parties of any figures who had any independent standing and might lean on the support of the workers and peasants at home against Moscow.

In this way, deformed workers states came into being. The Yugoslavian revolution is an exception. There the transformation bore more similarity to that in China.

The Fourth International had an extensive discussion of these developments. There were some false starts, such as the incorrect utilization of concepts like "structural assimilation" into the Soviet economic system, and "dual power." Other aspects of the resolutions adopted are also open to criticism. But the basic method employed in the analysis, and the basic conclusions as to how the workers states came into being, deserves to be maintained.

Comrade Mandel now sets 1946-47 as the dates for the establishment of these workers states. The Fourth International, with Comrade Mandel's supporting vote at the time, placed the qualitative change in 1949. This might seem to be only a minor discrepancy in dates. However, it represents a significant political reevaluation by Comrade Mandel.

By setting the dates as 1946-1947 he apparently takes the collapse of the coalition governments as the decisive events in establishing workers states. (Actually this did not happen in Czechoslovakia until February 1948.) This is in line with his current view that the destruction of the old bourgeois state apparatus and the elimination of bourgeois parties from the government lead inevitably to all the other socioeconomic changes.

In contrast, the adopted position of the Fourth International—the "unchanged majority position of the Fourth International on this subject for at least a quarter of a century"—places the qualitative change in 1949, because that was when the key sectors of capitalist property were expropriated. The socioeconomic changes

were not at all viewed as automatic.

Comrade Mandel has also revised our previous view of the role of the working class in the overturns. Whereas he now describes that role as "nonexistent or extremely marginal" (p. 339, col. 1), and draws from this the conclusion that mass participation of the working class was not necessary in Kampuchea either, the Fourth International had a different assessment.

The "Resolution on the Class Nature of Eastern Europe," adopted by the Third World Congress in August 1951 acknowledged that a revolutionary upsurge comparable to that of the Russian revolution did not occur. But it stressed:

That does not mean that the bureaucracy completely deprives itself of mass action in destroying the bourgeoisie. It mobilized the masses *bureaucratically*, varying in scope from country to country and according to the given conditions, organizing them, for example, into "committees" of various kinds which played a certain role in disarming the bourgeoisie and in its economic and political expropriation. This bureaucratic mobilization of the masses, which is still proceeding in the struggle against the remnants of the possessing classes and especially against the well-to-do peasantry and the Catholic Church, is necessary because the bureaucracy is not an independent social force, a class, but supports itself partly upon the proletariat to struggle against the bourgeoisie even while lacing the masses at the same time into the straightjacket of its bureaucratic and police control. [The resolution is available in the "Education for Socialists" bulletin, *Class, Party, and State and the Eastern European Revolution*, p. 55.]

This question was a thorny one for the Trotskyist movement at the time, because the changes in East Europe had not followed the pattern of the Russian revolution. There was neither a comparable revolutionary upheaval, nor a comparable revolutionary leadership. As the reporter to the World Congress on the 1951 resolution, Pierre Frank discussed this problem, which had led us into initial errors that were finally surmounted at the 1951 Congress.

Among the causes of error on our part was the absolute juxtaposition of the action of the masses and that of the bureaucracy. We said: A workers' state is not the creation of bureaucratic action, but only of the revolutionary action of the masses. The bureaucracy, as we well know, never or almost never eliminates the action of the masses in its interventions; what it seeks to suppress is the action of the masses which it cannot rigorously control; but it is very well able to utilize the action of the masses which it can control in order to attain its own objectives at a given moment.

That was also true in the buffer zone countries. It placed the workers' movement there under its tutelage, it proceeded from purge to purge, it destroyed all initiative of the masses, all independent action to a considerable degree, but it nevertheless mobilized these masses in a form it completely controlled for the purpose of being able to proceed to the important changes it

deemed necessary in the buffer zone countries. [Ibid., p. 50.]

The comparison with the events in Southeast Asia is striking. In Southern Vietnam, controlled mass actions were also used to carry out the decisive expropriations. This was not the case in Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge, once in power, moved to crush the workers and peasants, not to mobilize them. The expropriations were carried out without the participation of the toiling masses. In fact, the masses of poor, working peasants and artisans were themselves expropriated.

To present his current view as harmonious with past positions of the Fourth International, Comrade Mandel is led to reject the importance previously placed on the mass mobilizations.

The importance of mass participation was important from another point of view. This, too, was explained by Pierre Frank in his report to the 1951 World Congress:

Another very important point. The buffer zone experience has revealed—and even bourgeois observers have testified to this—that the working masses of these countries, although very hostile to the bureaucracy, are very attached to the transformations in the system even though they were achieved bureaucratically. . . . The social transformations not only live in the existing property relations but also in the consciousness of the toilers although these social relations occurred not in a revolutionary but in a bureaucratic way. That is a very important element for a proper appreciation of the buffer zone countries. [Ibid., p. 51.]

Pierre Frank's report at that time helped prepare the Trotskyist movement to accurately assess the Hungarian revolution of 1956, a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy in which the workers fought to retain the fundamental socioeconomic changes that they had helped to make.

This is also relevant to the situation in Southeast Asia. It helps explain the attachment that the South Vietnamese masses have to the changes they were instrumental in carrying through, as well as the pro-Vietnamese and anti-Pol Pot attitude of the Kampuchean masses after the overthrow of Pol Pot. The Kampuchean masses felt no attachment whatever to the institutions set up by the Khmer Rouge not only without their participation, but at the cost of tremendous social dislocation and suffering. Only with the fall of that counterrevolutionary regime has the door now been opened to further steps forward by the Kampuchean masses.

Rewriting Recent Chinese History

The differences between us are posed in sharpest form in Comrade Mandel's discussion of the Chinese Revolution. He holds that "the dictatorship of the proletariat was established in China in 1949, as it had been in Russia in October in 1917." It is in this specific connection that Comrade Mandel strips his theory down to its essen-

tials: "the destruction of the bourgeois state leads to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished" (p. 338, col. 2).

How does Comrade Mandel's current view compare with the previous positions of the Fourth International?

The Chinese revolution was the greatest revolutionary event of the post-World-War-II period, and the Fourth International followed its development closely. The key issue after October 1949—when Chiang Kai-shek's forces fled the mainland and the peasant armies led by Mao entered the cities—was what course the new regime would pursue with regard to capitalist property relations.

The Mao regime, while carrying out many important social and political reforms, consciously oriented toward preserving capitalism. Strikes were suppressed. It proclaimed the stage of "New Democracy" and described itself as a coalition government defending the interests of the national bourgeoisie. But neither the imperialists nor the local capitalists had any confidence that this regime could prevent the overturn of private property and defend their interests. Rather than responding favorably to Mao's overtures, they sabotaged the economy.

Washington probed the possibility of rolling back the Chinese Revolution militarily. Troops of the imperialist army drove deep into North Korea and the U.S. ruling class even considered a nuclear attack on China.

Even in face of this direct imperialist threat, the Mao regime delayed the final confrontation with bourgeois property forms in China. In mid-1950, it resumed the land reform, extending it on a massive scale into South China. This broke the power of the landlords and rich peasants and marked the emergence of a workers' and farmers' government.

But it was not until mid-1952 that a direct attack on the remaining capitalists and the Kuomintang holdovers in the civil service bureaucracy was finally undertaken. This began with the "Five Anti" campaign against capitalist owners of industry in early 1952, which placed severe restrictions on their economic independence from the state. The trade unions were mobilized in late-1952 in a process that led to the expropriation of capitalist industry and commerce in 1953 and the inauguration of the First Five-Year Plan.

It was only after this that the Fourth International as a whole concluded that a workers state had been established (a deformed workers state, due to the entrenched Stalinist bureaucracy).

With hindsight it is obvious that the fall of Chiang Kai-shek was the first step in a process that eventually led to a workers state. And it can be plausibly argued that this was a likely outcome. But Comrade Mandel now holds that it was a *forgone*

conclusion.

The Fourth International proceeded differently at the time. A resolution, "The Third Chinese Revolution," adopted by the International Executive Committee in May 1952, stated:

The establishment of the People's Republic of China is only the beginning of the Third Chinese Revolution. It represents the *beginning of a process of permanent revolution* which is unfolding before our eyes.

The resolution drew the following conclusion about the stage of development of this process in 1952:

We characterize this government as a *workers' and peasants' government* because, on the one hand, it has broken in practice with the historical interests of the bourgeoisie to enter upon the road of revolution, and because on the other hand it has not yet completed the destruction of the power of the bourgeoisie, nor liquidated the dual power from top to bottom of the state apparatus. *This workers' and peasants' government will only be a short, transitory stage along the road to a dictatorship of the proletariat, toward which the dynamics of the national and international situation is more and more propelling it.* [Fourth International, July-August 1952, pp. 113, 116. Emphasis in original.]

The reporter on this resolution was none other than Ernest Mandel, who specifically characterized the government as "a workers and peasants government which has in practice already broken the coalition with the bourgeoisie and is rapidly advancing toward setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat." (His report was published in *The Workers and Farmers Government*, by Joseph Hansen, an "Education for Socialists" bulletin, p. 57.)

In defending this position, Comrade Mandel indicated the role that the working class would have to play in overturning capitalism:

It is precisely the general attack against bourgeois property, the future and decisive left turn of the Chinese CP, which, by compelling the latter to mobilize the *city proletariat* on a vast scale for the first time, will mark the apogee of the revolution. If we state today that there is a proletarian dictatorship in China how would we characterize this decisive phase which lies ahead of us? How would we characterize the phase in which not only will the bourgeois representatives be truly eliminated from the central government and the old bourgeois state apparatus in the south destroyed, but in which undoubtedly and for the first time the proletariat will in action assert as a *class* its leading role in the revolution? [Ibid. p. 56.]

Except for an ambiguity concerning the use of the term "dual power," that analysis stands up pretty well.

A minority opposition to the above assessment was presented by Comrade Favre-Bleibtreu, a leader of the French section at the time. He argued that China had become a workers state in 1949, that the question of the class character of the state "can be answered only as a function of a single decisive criterion: which class holds the essential elements of coercion?"

(Ibid. p. 58.)

Comrade Mandel answered him as follows:

Bleibtreu commits a mechanistic and formalistic error. . . . Must the bourgeoisie make a counter-revolution to reestablish its power? he asks. Yes. Must the proletariat make a revolution to complete the realization of the revolutionary tasks? No. Therefore we are confronting a workers state. Bleibtreu forgets a little thing: that the struggle between the revolution and counterrevolution *is still taking place*, that the civil war of the bourgeoisie of which he speaks is not a thing of the future *but is now unfolding in China*. That is what we are talking about when we say that the permanent revolution is unfolding before our eyes in this immense country. When we try to apply the categories of formal logic to movement, mistakes are inevitable. [Ibid., p. 59.]

Real Life, Not Word Play

Comrade Mandel's 1952 argument should be kept in mind as one hears him in 1979 trying to place us in a logical contradiction. "How could a bourgeois state be used to abolish capitalism?" he asks (p. 338, col. 2).

The contradiction suggested by Mandel is not a problem in real life, but derives from the schematic way in which Comrade Mandel poses the question.

What is the state? "Special bodies of armed men" and other means of coercion, said Lenin, after Engels. These special bodies, they explained, are used to uphold a particular economic system of class rule.

This Marxist concept of the state is used in a twofold sense. It has a narrow meaning: the apparatus of coercion—armies, police, jails. And it has a broader meaning: the general socioeconomic system that the coercive apparatus upholds.

Normally, the two meanings coincide, and this poses no problem. But in understanding the process of change from one socioeconomic system to another, terminological precision becomes important. A new set of "armed bodies" can replace the old ones very quickly—in the course of revolutionary upsurge or civil war, for example. But new social relations take time to be put into place. There is, therefore, generally a period in which the old bourgeois state apparatus has been largely replaced but new socioeconomic relations have not yet emerged.

The real question, then, is not posed in Comrade Mandel's schematic way, but as follows: What is the class nature of the state during this transitional situation?

We answer: As long as capitalist property relations predominate, the class nature of the state remains capitalist. Insofar as the new government apparatus, including the coercive apparatus, is independent of the capitalist class; begins to implement a program of social advances in the interests of the workers and farmers; mobilizes them in support of these measures, even if in a limited way; and makes inroads into economic power of the

bourgeoisie—it should be designated a workers and farmers government. If that workers and farmers government mobilizes the masses and expropriates capitalist property, a new workers state will come into being. If not, the workers and farmers government will be toppled and the capitalist state apparatus reconstructed.

This formula accounts for the actual process of change.

Does Comrade Mandel think this is contradictory? If so, the contradiction is not in our terminology or our method, but in the reality itself—a period of transition, with elements of both the old society and the new in conflict. The "contradiction" is only a seeming one, a problem for those who think in fixed and fast categories. It is not a problem in the real-life process.

The alternative that Comrade Mandel advances is that the workers state comes into being from the very moment that the bourgeois state apparatus is destroyed: "the destruction of the bourgeois state leads to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished" (p. 338, col. 2).

At first sight, this formula seems to avoid logical contradiction. From capitalist state to workers state—the transition is clear cut and fixed, the categories are mutually exclusive. But as the Comrade Mandel of 1952 would say, "when you try to apply the categories of formal logic to movement, mistakes are inevitable."

Comrade Mandel's current theory is a big political mistake: it presupposes the *inevitability* of the overturn of capitalist property relations and it eliminates the necessary role of the working class in establishing new relations of production. This in turn leads toward placing political *confidence* in the capacity of the given leadership to carry through the socioeconomic transformations, whether the leadership is Leninist, Stalinist, or petty-bourgeois nationalist.

Whereas the 1952 resolution of the Fourth International, for example, stressed the social and economic tasks that still remained to be carried out, in opposition to the program of the Mao leadership, Comrade Mandel in 1979 presents a different view:

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. [p. 338, col. 2]

Really? Mao's "new democracy" line was just a rationalization to avoid recognizing that he had really been carrying out the socialist revolution? To avoid succumbing to the temptations of Trotskyism?

Comrade Mandel can do better than that.

In reality, the "new democracy" policy had a definite political purpose. It was designed to assure the imperialists and native capitalists of Mao's interest in reaching an accommodation with them. This very real attempt to come to terms with the capitalist class is why confidence in Mao was not justified.

Only when Mao's offers to imperialism were rebuffed did his regime, under the pressure of the workers and peasants, move against the last preserves of capitalism.

Comrade Mandel, analyzing China in 1952, correctly stressed that the transition was not yet accomplished, and that revolutionary Marxists should be explaining the still remaining tasks of the revolution.

Writing in 1979, however, he has forgotten all this, in favor of a new concept that a workers state immediately arises whenever an old coercive apparatus of the capitalists is destroyed by a force that he regards as in some way "tied to the working class."

He has not only adopted Bleibtreu's old view, but has apparently incorporated it so completely into his thinking that he forgets his own past polemic against Bleibtreu. He presents the then-minority view as "the unchanged majority position of the Fourth International on this subject. . ."

Actually, Comrade Mandel is not entirely consistent in his timetables. While he presents the transition to a workers state in China as immediate (dated in 1949), he allows for a short period of transition in Eastern Europe (dated 1946-47 rather than 1944-45). A similar discrepancy is apparent in his discussion of Kampuchea and Vietnam, with the supposed workers state emerging in Kampu-

chea in 1975, while for Vietnam (p. 342, col. 1) the possibility of a transition period to July 1976 is envisaged. He never makes clear the reason for these inconsistencies.

If it is not merely attributable to haste and carelessness, then he will face a big problem; for to grant a period of transition will go a long way to undercutting his essential argument. What, we could ask, was the nature of the state in these transition periods?

The most curious turn of Comrade Mandel's thought occurs when he ascribes to us the view that the fall of Pol Pot led to the "sudden popping up of a 'new workers state' in Kampuchea" (p. 344, col. 1).

Of course, we never said any such thing, despite the quotation marks that Comrade Mandel has placed around the phrase "new workers state."

Why has Comrade Mandel attributed the "popping up" theory to us? It makes no sense; it is so out of harmony with our whole theory of the transitional period.

It is particularly strange that he attributes to us the theory that workers states suddenly "pop up," when in fact that is his own theory.

It is Comrade Mandel, and not us, who holds that the Khmer Rouge "tried to destroy all the elements of the bourgeois state and of the capitalist class in one stroke after its April 1975 victory" (p. 335, col. 2). It is Comrade Mandel who says that the "forced collectivization and deportations"—which began on the day the Khmer Rouge arrived in Phompenh!—"were criminal policies applied by the ruling bureaucracy *within the framework of the already existing workers state*" (p. 340, col. 1).

That's a "popped-up" workers state if ever there was one!

But what is the present-day situation after the fall of Pol Pot? It poses no mystery from the standpoint of the theoretical positions that we and Comrade Mandel once held in common, along with the majority of the Fourth International.

We have held that the overthrow of Pol Pot was a step forward for the workers and peasants of Kampuchea. It marked the opening of a period in which they could fight for a workers and farmers government and the creation of a workers state—a struggle that was blocked for almost four years by the brutal reaction imposed by the Khmer Rouge.

Comrade Mandel, however, does have a problem. Look what happened to the old state apparatus. The Khmer Rouge administration has disappeared. The bulk of Pol Pot's military forces has been shattered or driven into Thailand. The labor camps in which it held a majority of the population are being dissolved. And the entire economy is being reorganized, almost from scratch.

Hasn't Pol Pot's state apparatus been crushed in Kampuchea just as thoroughly as Lon Nol's was crushed before it?

It would seem that it is Comrade Mandel's methodology that would yield surprising questions: has a new state "popped up" in Kampuchea? If so, what is its class character?

It may be argued that since the Mao regime did after all eventually abolish capitalist property relations, the dispute over the inevitability of the process is moot, or at most of purely academic interest. However, the Cuban and Algerian revolutions, which had quite different outcomes, made the issue timely again, and showed that the process was not inevitable at all.

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Comrade Mandel makes no mention of the Cuban revolution in his discussion of the criteria for defining a workers state. The omission is not surprising, since the Cuban revolution reaffirms the general analysis that we have put forward and that he rejects.

The July 26 Movement came to power in Cuba in January 1959. Several years of guerrilla struggle, accompanied by a growing mass support for the social and economic goals of the July 26 Movement, were capped by a general strike throughout the country as Batista fled and the guerrillas marched into Havana.

The new coalition government included bourgeois political figures. However, new governmental institutions, like the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), were established and run by the radical petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership around Fidel Castro. The old military and police apparatus of the Batista regime were dismantled. The rebel army, and later the militia, were the new armed bodies.

The destruction of the old bourgeois state had been accomplished, but the majority of the Fourth International at the time did not consider that this would automatically lead "to the establishment of a workers state, even if private property is not completely and immediately abolished."

The Castro leadership was undoubtedly more radical in orientation than the Stalinists, but it still remained to be seen what policies it would carry out.

In face of pressure from U.S. imperialism and their own bourgeoisie, Castro and the central core of the July 26 Movement made their choice and showed their revolutionary caliber. In order to pursue a thoroughgoing agrarian reform, stand up to imperialism's pressures, and implement other radical-democratic measures they had promised, the Castro leadership broke with the bourgeois forces in the coalition government and moved toward even greater reliance on the mass support of the workers and peasants.

The resulting workers and farmers government mobilized the masses and organized the expropriation of remaining capitalist property. Unlike the Stalinists, who bureaucratically controlled and limited the mass revolutionary mobilizations in other countries, the Castro team was a revolutionary leadership. They educated, inspired, and led the masses. The workers seized the factories and poured into the streets in the millions to demonstrate their support for the revolutionary measures. In this process, the Castro team itself evolved from a radical petty-bourgeois nationalist grouping to a leadership basing itself squarely on the proletarian masses.

The Fourth International, although divided at the time into two public factions, was virtually unanimous in deciding that



Kampuchean anti-Pol Pot fighters

it was the expropriations of August-October 1960 that finally established a workers state in Cuba. The smashing of Batista's armed forces and the breakup of the coalition government were necessary steps along the way, but they were not sufficient. The culminating step of the economic overturns still had to occur.

What was the nature of the Cuban state from 1959 to mid-1960? Not yet a workers state, it remained a capitalist state. "How could a bourgeois state be used to abolish capitalism?" someone may ask, just as Comrade Mandel asked in relation to China.

It wasn't.

A workers and peasants government was established, resting on the anticapitalist mobilizations of the Cuban masses, and this government led the workers throughout the process of destroying the economic power of the bourgeoisie and establishing a workers state. The workers and farmers government marked a transitional stage in which the bourgeois state, based on the old socioeconomic relations, was being abolished through great class battles, but a new state, defending new socioeconomic relations, had not yet been established.

The public faction of the Fourth International to which Ernest Mandel belonged at the time drew a similar assessment in the documents adopted at its Sixth World Congress. The resolution on "The Colonial Revolution: Its Balance Sheet, Its Problems, and Its Prospects," said the follow-

ing about the period prior to the nationalizations of late 1960:

By the scope already attained by the agrarian reform, by the few measures of nationalization of foreign imperialist enterprises, by the thorough purge of the state apparatus, and by the creation of militia and people's tribunals, the Cuban revolution has already gone considerably outside the frame of capitalism without having completely broken it and replaced it by a state of a new type based on a nationalized and planned economy. [*Fourth International*, (Colombo, Ceylon), No. 12, Winter 1960-61, p. 46.]

The resolution "On the Nature of the Cuban Revolution" took account of the nationalizations of late 1960 and said:

In the eminently transitional period through which the revolution is now going, Cuba has ceased to be a capitalist state, and is becoming a workers' state through the application of the nationalization measures of October 1960. [*Ibid.*, p. 48.]

Although the document does not use the term "workers and farmers government," the basic concept of the process of revolutionary transition is the same.

If Comrade Mandel still accepts this view of the Cuban revolution, how can he square it with his new theory on East Europe and China, and with his current view on Vietnam and Kampuchea? If a transition process did occur in Cuba, why not elsewhere?

But if Comrade Mandel has developed a

new view of the Cuban revolution, when would he place the qualitative transformation? In January 1959, when the Rebel Army walked into Havana? In late 1959, by which time the coalition government had broken up? One would have had to be a remarkable prophet in those days to have stated with assurance that the economic transformations would occur.

Perhaps this dilemma explains Comrade Mandel's omission of the Cuban example.

The Algerian Counterexample

Comrade Mandel also omits the Algerian example, although here too there was a serious, considered discussion in the Fourth International. The Algerian example proves that the process of establishing a workers state does not automatically flow from the destruction of the old armed apparatus, the removal of bourgeois ministers from the government, and the establishment of a workers and farmers government.

After a long struggle, French imperialism was defeated in Algeria in 1962 and the National Liberation Front and its rebel army came to power. This opened up the possibility for a socialist revolution. The coalition government that had been initially set up soon divided, after President Ben Bella decreed expropriations and other measures in the interests of the workers and peasants. These actions and the mass mobilizations encouraged by the regime convinced the Fourth International that the Ben Bella government was a workers and farmers government. The parallel with Cuba, a fresh and closely followed experience for the Trotskyist movement, was clear.

But the Ben Bella wing of the NLF proved to be less firm than the Castro leadership in Cuba. It slowed down the pace of revolutionary change in the hope of preserving imperialist assistance and preventing further splits in the NLF. As a result, bourgeois forces had an opportunity to consolidate their power within the state apparatus and the army, while the mass movement declined. The workers and farmers government began to lose its base.

In the end, it required only a military coup by Boumediene in 1965 to topple the Ben Bella regime. The process from revolutionary victory over the old coercive apparatus, to formation of a workers and farmers government, to a workers state proved not to be automatic at all.

As late as 1969, the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International reaffirmed the view that Algeria under Ben Bella had had a workers and farmers government, and that it had been correct to give the government critical support in that period. The 1969 resolution added: "The Fourth International never used the category of workers and peasants government in the Algerian context as a synonym for a dictatorship of the proletariat. The state structure was always correctly

analyzed as bourgeois." (This resolution can be found in the "Education for Socialists" bulletin *The Workers and Farmers Government*, by Joseph Hansen. Also available in *Intercontinental Press*, March 16, 1970, p. 231.)

A workers and farmers government, within a still-bourgeois state—this, Comrade Mandel, please note, "has been the unchanged majority position of the Fourth International on this subject for at least a quarter of a century."

Application in Southeast Asia

This theoretical heritage has great value in helping us understand the recent developments in Southeast Asia.

It is the key to explaining the overturns in southern Vietnam. It enables us to answer what Comrade Mandel considers to be an insurmountable problem in relation to Vietnam: "How can one have a single state that is both a workers state and a bourgeois one?" (p. 342, col. 1).

The toppling of the Saigon regime in 1975 and the dissolution of its army and police struck a giant blow to the capitalist socioeconomic system in the South, as had similar events in Cuba and China. The old coercive apparatus was replaced, mainly by armed forces under Hanoi's control, as in East Europe. But the fate of capitalist property relations in the South remained to be settled.

The new regime was under even greater pressure than Mao or Castro had been to move against capitalist property relations, because of the link with the North Vietnamese workers state and because of the desire of the workers and peasants in both parts of Vietnam for unification.

The relationship of forces clearly favored further advances for the Vietnamese revolution, rapid unification of the country, and the establishment of a single economic system. But these changes could not and did not occur instantaneously. Nor were they absolutely preordained. Nor could the Vietnamese Stalinist leaders be counted on to press them forward.

A period of transition set in, a period in which Vietnam experienced an internally contradictory situation: a workers state already existing in the North; capitalist property relations not yet overturned in the South. Comrade Mandel's question—"How can one have a single state that is both a workers state and a bourgeois one?"—is simply a rhetorical device to avoid taking cognizance of this contradictory internal situation in Vietnam.

In fact, the bureaucratic caste in Hanoi sought to hold back the social overturn. In hopes of obtaining aid and diplomatic deals with the imperialists, it initially installed a separate government in the South, and promised to preserve capitalist property relations there. As Vietnamese CP leader Le Duan put it, "socialist construction" was the task of the North, while building "a fine national democratic re-

gime, a prosperous national democratic economy" was the task of the South (*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, April 9, 1979, p. 363.)

But mass pressure for measures to stop inflation and hoarding, and the imperialist decision to place Vietnam under economic boycott, forced a change of course similar to that which occurred in China. The regime in the South, which more and more took on the character of a workers and farmers government, speeded up plans for reunification, and a single government was established in July 1976.

But problems remained. As the Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan* put it on April 13, 1978, "the capitalist economy continued to rule the roost" in the South (*Ibid.*, p. 366).

The dominance of capitalist merchants in the southern economy continued to exacerbate unemployment and shortages, provoking great mass discontent. In early 1978 the Hanoi leaders made the decision to expropriate the remaining capitalist property and break the economic power of the bourgeoisie in the south. A March 23 decree nationalized 30,000 commercial and business enterprises. Tens of thousands of people were mobilized in Ho Chi Minh City to seize the offices of nationalized businesses, and take other measures to make sure the decrees could not be circumvented.

The anticapitalist measures and mass actions of March-April 1978 marked the definitive abolition of capitalist property relations in the South. It is from this time that one can speak of a workers state throughout all of Vietnam. Until then, the decisive defining characteristic of the state—the property relations it defends—remained to be settled in the South.

True, the 1975 victory gave a great impulse in this direction, and the final outcome was likely given the existence of the workers state in the North. But it was not inevitable. If the socioeconomic changes had been delayed too long, then a different dynamic would have set in; the capitalist property relations in the South would have been an internal source of infection undermining the viability of the northern workers state. In fact, there is evidence that many Vietnamese CP cadres in the South were being corrupted and bought off by the southern bourgeoisie. If this process had deepened, the imperialists would have been afforded a new opportunity for intervention.

It is for precisely these reasons that it is vital to stress the political tasks of the transition period—not as a prognostic, but as a guide for action. Comrade Mandel's 1952 arguments about China in this respect apply with great force to Vietnam in 1975-1978.

For Comrade Mandel, however, "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" (p.



Phnompenh on April 17, 1975, the day the Lon Nol regime fell

342, col. 1). From his standpoint, the overturn of property relations was simply an administrative detail that flowed inevitably from the establishment of the workers state.

Comrade Mandel's belittling of the tasks that still had to be achieved explains his dismissal of the importance of the mass mobilizations that took place in the spring of 1978. But why, may we ask, did the Vietnamese regime feel obliged to organize mass participation to carry through its anticapitalist measures? Aren't such mobilizations a risky undertaking for Stalinists? And why has mass participation gone hand in hand with every overturn of capitalist property relations (except the supposed "socialist" overturn in Kampuchea)? Comrade Mandel's theory cannot explain this.

The Same As Kampuchea

Belittling this issue in Vietnam, Com-

rade Mandel tries to explain it away in Kampuchea. "Surely," he says, "for a Marxist, the *origins* of property relations are less important than their *contents*." If one bases one's case "on the single thin thread of the 'origins' of nationalizations and on them alone," he claims, then "the razor-sharp factional minds of the state capitalists will find no difficulty in cutting through that thread" (p. 339, col. 2, emphasis in original).

But, as we have explained, we do not base our case on the origins alone. Comrade Mandel knows this very well. We would suggest to him that it is his position—leaning toward the idea that it is possible to have the socially progressive content of a socialist revolution without the proletariat as the driving force of the qualitative change at its origins—that will open him up to attack from the state capitalists or bureaucratic collectivists, whether their minds strike him as razor-

sharp or even somewhat less so.

Comrade Mandel claims that our theory leads to an anomaly:

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. [p. 339, col. 2]

No. In our view, fundamentally different "historical conditions" cannot lead to identical socioeconomic systems. We see nothing identical between Vietnam and Kampuchea between 1975-78.

Once in power, the Pol Pot regime did *not* respond to the needs of the workers and peasants. It did *not* mobilize the toiling masses. It was *not* a workers and farmers government. And it was precisely for this reason that it could not set up the new productive relations of a workers state. The class nature of the state in Kampuchea was the opposite of that which came about in Vietnam.

It is not us, but Comrade Mandel, who has the problem. While he acknowledges the different historical conditions and course of events in Vietnam and Kampuchea, at the same time his position assumes that the two countries must have had "identical property relations, identical relations of production, identical socioeconomic systems, and identical laws of motion."

In short, Comrade Mandel's erroneous theory leads him to mistake a capitalist state for a workers state in Kampuchea; it leads him to take Pol Pot's reactionary measures for a "radical social revolution," while minimizing the genuine social revolution in Vietnam.

Following the logic of his theory rather than the evolution of the facts, Comrade Mandel could not explain the intensifying imperialist campaign against Vietnam or the growing links between Pol Pot and imperialism. So he simply chose to ignore these developments.

Failure to recognize the fundamental social and economic causes underlying the Indochina conflict led Comrade Mandel toward flimsy explanations, such as "historical enmity" between the Kampuchean and Vietnamese people, or Hanoi's supposed drive for "hegemony" in Indochina.

The end result was that when war broke out—with the Kampuchean masses and the Vietnamese workers state on one side; and the Pol Pot gang, Bangkok, Washington, and Peking on the other—Comrade Mandel could not find his way to the working-class camp in the battle.

That political catastrophe is the final test of the deficiency of his theory. Our record in the war stands as verification of our theory—the one the big majority of the Fourth International has held in common for so many years. □