

BOLIVIA

A HISTORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE

ARTICLES FROM WORKERS POWER,
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TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

PLUS

THE BOLIVIAN REVOLUTION OF 1952
FROM REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

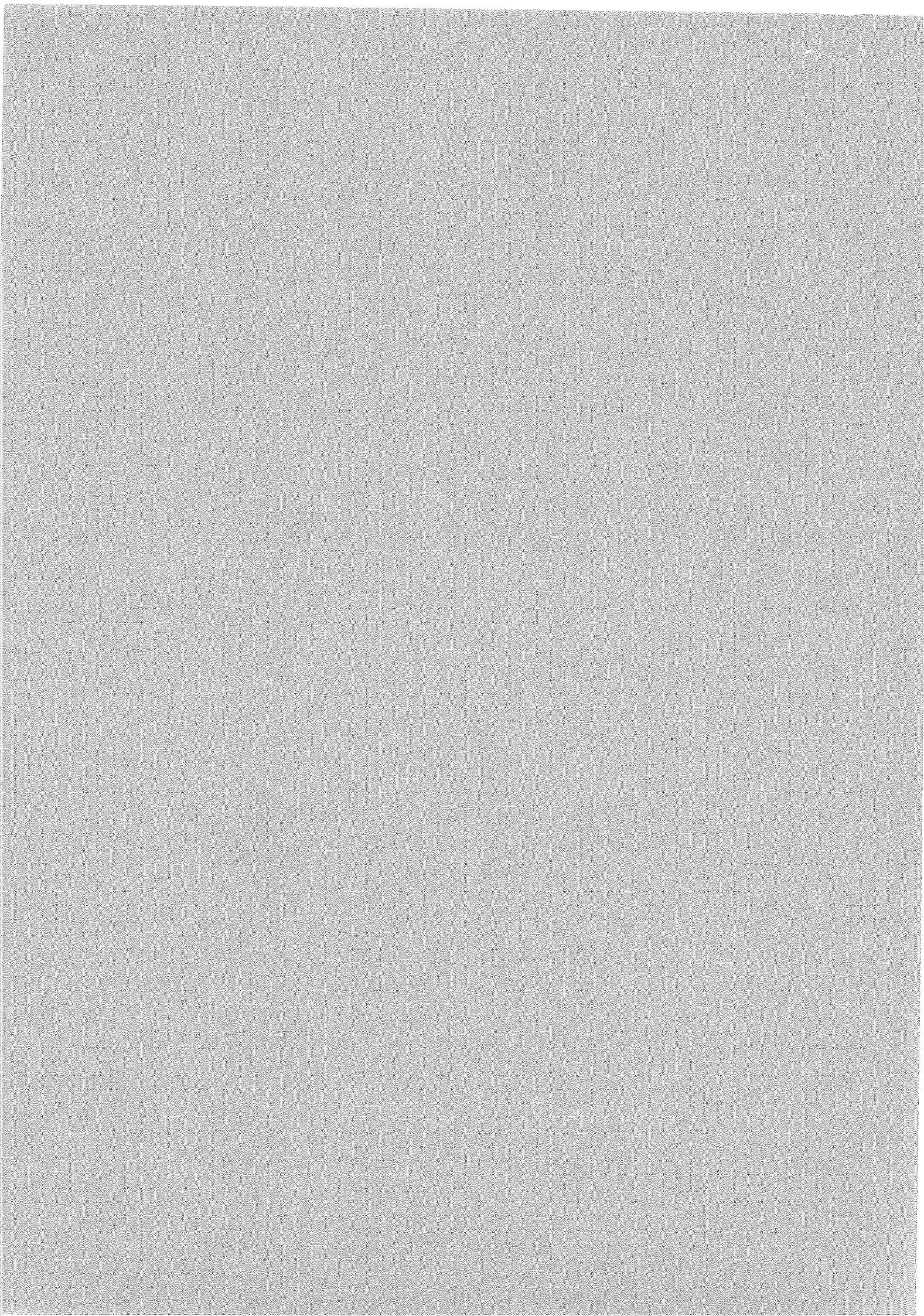
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A REVOLUTION DISARMED

BOLIVIA IS A landlocked country of no more than 6 million people, with the majority of its population, about 80%, still working on the land as peasant farmers. Historically it has been one of the countries most exploited by imperialism. Its economy was massively dependent on the export of tin to the imperialist powers - most importantly the USA. Exports of tin amounted to 75% of all exports by the 1920s and still amount to over 50% today. Tin production by the turn of the century had come to be dominated by three massive mining firms - Aramayo, Hochschild and Patiño - which controlled 80% of the industry and dominated the government. This oligarchy, known as the "Rosca" came to be based outside of Bolivia, firmly integrated into the business communities of the imperialist heartlands.

The enormous superprofits extracted by imperialism from Bolivia and the resistance to paying taxes of the expatriate "Rosca" kept the Bolivian state chronically impoverished. It was completely at the beck and call of imperialism and cruelly subject to the vagaries of the world tin market. The 1920s and 30s saw Bolivia racked by economic crises as the world slump produced a dramatic fall in tin prices. The failure of Bolivian capitalism produced a number of movements, often based in the army and drawing support from the financially squeezed urban petit-bourgeoisie, which attempted to challenge the grip of the "Rosca" and negotiate a better deal with imperialism. The MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) founded in the 1940s was the most influential nationalist party during this period and became the leading force in the 1952 revolution.

Starting as an attempted putsch by the MNR and sections of the military, the April 1952 revolution became an armed insurrection led by the most powerful section of the Bolivian working class - the Bolivian tin miners. It broke the army regime and placed Paz Estenssoro and the MNR in power. The MNR government was a capitalist government, despite its revolutionary nationalist rhetoric. Under the pressure of massive peasant land seizures it carried out a major land reform programme in April 1953. Forced by miners' strikes and demonstrations, it was compelled to nationalise the three major mining groups of the "Rosca" and form COMIBOL, the state mining company.

But the regime exposed the chronic political weaknesses of the Bolivian working class and its parties. In a situation approaching dual power, where the regime was a highly unstable one, the left was unable to win the masses from the MNR. Indeed, it did the opposite. The COB supported the government, having five "worker ministers" installed alongside the MNR.

THE ROLE OF THE P.O.R.

The POR, at that time a united party, wholeheartedly supported the entry of the "worker ministers" into the government. They extended critical support to it as a government in so far as it was progressive and "fought the Rosca." A resolution of the POR 10th Congress (June 1953) reprinted without criticism by Lora in later years states: "Far from advancing the slogan of the overthrow of the Paz Estenssoro regime we support it in order that it resists the offensive of the Rosca and we call on the international proletariat to defend unconditionally the Bolivian revolution and its transitional government." (G. Lora, "Bolivia: de la naissance du POR a l'Assemblée Populaire", p.35). Whilst it is justified that revolutionaries would defend arms in hand any such democratic government against domestic or imperialist reactionary attack, it is wrong to give it political support. In fact, the POR failed to expose it as a bourgeois government incapable of fighting reaction, failed to call for its replacement by a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government and failed to raise to the fore agitation for the arming of the workers and peasants and the dissolution of the standing army.

The failure to seize the revolutionary opportunities afforded by the April 1952 revolution was to cost the Bolivian workers and peasants dear. The government demobilised the masses, rebuilt the army and in alliance with the Bolivian CP crushed the left in the COB. By 1964, the army was sufficiently confident to strike at the MNR government and re-introduce military rule. The regime of General Barrientos, which was marked by its subservience to imperialism and its repression of the trade unions, involving it in a series of massacres of mine workers, lasted until 1969 when the general was killed in a helicopter crash. He was replaced by General Ovando.

It is rare that the same political leaders are offered a second chance to carry out their respective programmes. Yet 1970 in Bolivia offered just such a chance to the leaders who claimed to be fighting for socialism in Bolivia. It was a chance that proved that they had learnt nothing from their previous mistakes.

The events of October 1970 bore a striking similarity to those of April 1952. General Ovando, under the impact of the apparent success of the

This article covers the revolutionary events that shook Bolivia between October 1970 and August 1971. We offer no apologies for examining events that took place more than ten years ago in a small country in South America. First, those events are rich in lessons for revolutionaries seeking to develop a programme which can lead to victory and working class power in the imperialist world. Secondly, many of the leading figures and parties in this period of struggle, Juan Lechin, leader of the COB (Bolivian Trade Union Centre), the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB), Guillermo Lora, leader of POR (Lora), Hugo Gonzales Moscoso leader of POR (Gonzales) are still contenders for leadership within the Bolivian workers' movement. They will undoubtedly continue to play an important role, following the return to civilian government in September last year. Therefore an examination of the politics which inform their parties, and their record during the revolutionary crisis of 1970/71, has much more than academic interest. Parts of this article are taken from a forthcoming book published by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group on the Fourth International (see advertisement elsewhere in this paper.) We invite supporters of either Lora's organisation, POR(MASAS), affiliated to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency or of Gonzales's POR (COMBATE), affiliated to the USFI, to reply to the criticisms made in this article.

nationalist generals in Peru, proceeded to try and renegotiate a better deal with US imperialism. The nationalisation of Gulf Oil was to earn him the enmity of US imperialism and ensure an attempted right-wing coup. On October 4th 1970, General Rogelio Miranda obliged the US government and staged an attempted coup. However, sections of the army hesitated and the COB called a general strike against the coup attempt. Miners armed with dynamite poured into La Paz as the working class responded massively to the call. A "Comando Politico" was formed to organise the resistance. This political command was made up of trade union leaders from the COB, including Lechin; organisations such as the Student Federation and Peasants of the Independent Bloc, as well as political parties; the MNR, the PCB and POR (Lora), and others.

"LEFT" BONAPARTISM

Having failed to achieve a swift coup the army found itself facing a crisis similar to April 1952. It had to head off at all costs another defeat for the army at the hands of the armed workers. It chose to put forward its "left" bonapartist face, in the figure of General Juan Jose Torres whose base lay in the airforce. Torres announced himself in rebellion against both Miranda and Ovando, making a broadcast from the El Alto airforce base declaring for "an anti-imperialist revolutionary government of soldiers, workers and students." Time magazine revealed how this "rebellion" was organised with the connivance of Ovando: "After meeting with Ovando, General Torres sped to a military base outside La Paz and quietly rallied left support. When leftist Air Force pilots, flying vintage Mustang fighters strafed the presidential palace, taking care to fire only into the air - it was all over." (Time 19.10.70).

In fact the general strike had already broken the coup, and Torres provided a way out for the army, even if it meant temporarily risking a "left" general, while they reorganised their forces. Torres was quick to oblige. On assuming office he offered Miranda a post "commensurate with his military rank" (reported in Le Monde, 26.10.70) while General Roque Teran, a renowned right-winger, was appointed commander in chief.

While Torres was reassuring the military, and in fact assuring his own future downfall, he was also

building up his reputation as a left nationalist amongst the masses. On his inauguration, in front of a crowd estimated at 40,000 in the Plaza Murillo, La Paz, he declared: "We have signed a pact of honour with the COB and Universities to build a truly Bolivian and popular government." (Quoted in Bohemia, 16.10.70). Indeed the first part of this was true. The following day Lechin announced: "We give full support to General Torres, to whose government we have appealed to purge itself of pro-american elements and from which we demand constitutional liberties and guarantees." (Intercontinental Press, 19.10.70)

The Political Command had been in negotiations with Torres since the first day of the coup. On coming to power Torres offered the Command 25% of the ministries in the new government (making sure of course the key ministries of the interior, finance, etc were not on offer.) Later this was increased to 50%.

Despite the previous opposition of the miners' unions to a return to the "negative experience of so called co-rules" which represented "a betrayal of the historic role of the workers' movement" the majority of the Political Command jumped at the opportunity to enter the government. What is quite clear is that even the POR (Lora) supported the entry of "worker ministers" into the Torres government, repeating their errors of 1952. Lora makes this clear in his own description of events: "But the opportunist tendency was brought under control since the Comando Politico was persuaded by the POR? WP) to attach such conditions for accepting the ministries that they would have been effectively removed from the control of the President. Thus the ministers would be appointed by the Comando, which would mandate them and recall them at any time; a political advisor would work alongside each minister etc. However, this experiment was never put to the test, since Torres withdrew his offer." (A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, by G. Lora.) This interesting "experiment", as Lora chooses to call it, was nothing new at all. It was no more than an agreement to enter a bourgeois government and had it been realised would have been no different from the Menshevik entry into the Russian Provisional Government; and this after the experience of 1952!



Bolivian tin miners

A revolutionary policy should have involved a fight within the Political Command for the workers' and peasants' organisations to take power. It should have argued to break off negotiations with Torres, to kick out the MNR, and for a call to every factory, mine and workplace to elect delegates to local soviets and to a national soviet, convened by the political command. It should have called on workers to form their own militias and for the formation of soldiers' committees in the army, these to send delegates to the soviets. It should have fought for a workers' and peasants' government directly accountable to the soviets, in order to open the road to the formation of a proletarian state. The POR (Lora) did none of this and the Political Command effectively ceded power after the aborted negotiations on "power sharing". Defending this position at a later date Lora demonstrates a chronic tailism with regard to the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the masses. Speaking of October 1970 he says: "At this time to put out the slogan for seizing power would have been the idea of a madman. This slogan did not correspond to the dominant mood of the masses who did not yet feel it an immediate need to build and construct their own government." (De la Naissance du POR a l'Assemblée Populaire.) That is, as long as the masses supported Torres it was madness to raise the need for their own government!

The explanation of the POR(Lora)'s failure to raise these demands during this crucial period lies in its opportunist use of the anti-imperialist united front tactic. As in 1952, with its position of "critical support" to Paz Estenssoro, the POR confused the defence of a bourgeois government against the threat of a right wing imperialist-backed coup, with extending political support to such a government. This position had led to its acceptance of "worker ministers" in 1952. It actually meant maintaining an anti-imperialist front with a section of the bourgeoisie on a strategic basis.

There is further evidence that the POR(Lora) did little to challenge the illusions of the Bolivian masses in the left Bonapartist Torres. On the crucial question of arming the workers and developing slogans and actions directed towards the breaking up of the bourgeois army the POR either remained silent or sowed illusions in Torres. Lora obviously expected the "force of events" to compel Torres to arm the workers. He blandly stated: "Everyone (the POR included -? WP) supposed that Torres, a friend of Ovando, would in view of the difficult situation he confronted have no alternative but to arm the people, as the only way of strengthening his own position. But as time passed the hope grew fainter that a clash between opposing sectors of the military would enable the masses to arm themselves."

Lora and the POR were calmly waiting for a clash in the army between "progressive" and "reactionary" forces, rather than fighting for the arming of the workers and the organisation of rank and file soldiers for a sharp clash with Torres. Yet, Torres had kept the army intact and its dyed-in-the-wool coup-makers in the general staff. The burning issue, literally in a life and death struggle for the working class, was the struggle to break up the army as a weapon of reaction, to win the rank and file soldiers to the side of the workers, thereby guaranteeing that the workers would be armed and prepared for the inevitable coup attempt. By the time the POR (Lora) decided that Torres was not going to arm the workers it was too late. The army was making ready to strike back.

THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

In January 1971 the right wing struck back and attempted to overthrow Torres. The coup based on General Banzer's cadets and elements of the Ingavi regiment, which had been the backbone of the October 1970 coup, again was met with a general strike in support of Torres. The coup collapsed, while 60,000 gathered in La Paz in answer to the COB's call for a general mobilisation. To chants of "Torres, socialism, socialism, socialism," Torres' reply that "I will do what the people want me to do" was greeted with wild applause.

A direct result of the coup attempt was the call for a "People's" or "Popular" Assembly, put out by the Political Command. The Assembly, when it was convened, was to have a majority of workers' representatives. Workers' organisations had 132 or 60% of delegates, 23 came from the Independent Peasants Confederation, 53 were allocated to petit-bourgeois elements such as professionals, teachers, students etc. As the name implies, the People's Assembly was seen as the representative of an anti-imperialist united front. Indeed the MNR, the grave-diggers of the 1952 revolution, were only excluded when Torres attacked them for their involvement in the January attempted coup! The political parties of the Political Command, all of whom were to be represented in the Assembly, each developed their own perspective for the Assembly. The Stalinist PCB wanted to build it as a popular front on the Chilean model in order to mobilise support for Torres. The POR(Lora) saw it as part of a "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist United Front" but at the same time declared it an organ of "dual power" and a soviet-type organisation, which has made for the predominance of the proletariat in the revolutionary process.

In fact the Assembly was a hybrid body. It was a proto-soviet whose worker representatives could have been transformed, under the correct political

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

leadership, into a real leading soviet. On the other hand it was also a potential constituent assembly, with all classes represented on a national scale. In which direction the People's Assembly developed depended on how the revolutionary forces within it fought to build it.

A revolutionary strategy should have involved ensuring that all delegates were elected by rank and file factory and workplace committees (many delegates were elected by the trade union leadership). It should have concentrated on building other soviets outside of La Paz, spreading them on a national scale, calling for the construction of soldiers' committees in the army and for their delegates to attend such soviets. Only with such a network of local soviets would the Assembly have truly become a central, national soviet. It should have supported and encouraged the peasant land seizures that were taking place and organised the building of poor peasants' committees. Revolutionaries should have raised the slogan "All power to the Popular Assembly" and counterposed the call for a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" to the bonapartist regime of Torres. Above all they should have fought for the arming of the workers, and the formation of a workers' militia.



Guillermo Lora

This was not the perspective of the POR(Lora). The POR opposed the slogan of "All power to the People's Assembly" as "ultra-left". "The Assembly should put itself at the head of an insurrection, but it is only at the opportune moment, that is to say, when the masses have concretely begun to dispute state power with the military government, that the slogan "All power to the Popular Assembly" should have been raised. To do this in May or June 1971 would have been just empty rhetoric, an irresponsible game, no matter how carefully people believed they were elaborating the slogan."

It is the merest demagoguery to stigmatise the call for a workers' and peasants' government or the expression of no confidence in Torres as an immediate and adventurist call to insurrection. This demagoguery is an infallible sign of Menshevism.

By posing the question of power before the masses, by developing concrete slogans that point in this direction, revolutionaries help lead the masses forward towards a revolutionary solution. The refusal to do this is an abdication of the tasks of a revolutionary leadership in favour of waiting for the spontaneous upsurge of the masses. Lenin did not wait for the masses to spontaneously call for a soviet state in 1917. He raised the slogan "All power to the soviets" - even whilst they were led by Mensheviks - as a means of winning the masses to the struggle for a soviet state. In Bolivia the alternative to developing the Popular Assembly into a genuine soviet and doing this, in part, through the call for "all power" to it, was to confine it to being a talking shop, while relying on and supporting Torres' regime until the danger from the right had passed.

In practice the Popular Assembly which had effectively one session lasting a few weeks became a parliament, representative of the masses but without any power. Torres, who at first refused to recognise it, later declared it a "consultative" body. Within the Assembly it appears that the POR(Lora) and the PCB acted as a voting bloc, while Lechin balanced between this wing and the peasant and student organisations. When the question of co-management of COMIBOL came up, following a proposal to develop "workers' participation" in the industry, the POR(Lora) again showed its inability to offer an independent class lead. Torres' offer was quite clearly designed to win support from the workers in order to demobilise them in their independent struggle. Participation in a key industry would, via the medium of state appointed union bureaucrats, undermine an independent struggle for workers' control of the industry. Under these circumstances participation, itself, was not ruled out. Trotsky was clear that within state-capitalist enterprises in semi-colonial countries, participation could, only could, further the struggle for real workers' control. However, he was clear that in no way should such a tactic be dressed up as the strategy for socialist revolution. Writing of Cardenas' attempt in Mexico in 1939 to enlist the participation of workers within the nationalised oil industry Trotsky stated: "It would of course be a disastrous error, an outright deception, to assert that the road to

socialism passes, not through the road of proletarian revolution, but through nationalisation by the bourgeois state of various branches of industry and their transfer into the hands of the workers' organisations"

In Bolivia it was particularly urgent to dispel the illusion that Torres' nationalisation plus participation was a path to revolution. It was designed to be a block to revolution. However, Lora, when the Assembly agreed to accept co-management with an equal number of workers and company representatives on boards, plus the right to appoint a general manager, precisely fell into the trap of suggesting that this was a revolution by the back door: "Whoever controls Bolivia's mines becomes master of the country. Proposing control of the mines by the working class implied making the official government unworkable and relegating it to a totally useless role... Sooner or later the question of power would arise. Moreover the struggle to secure this co-participation was the best means of mobilising the masses towards the capture of power." (Our emphasis).

If the POR(Lora) offered few correct tactics during this revolutionary period neither did its twin POR(Gonzales). This group as part of the USFI was fully committed to the guerrillaist strategy adopted at the Ninth World Congress. The politics of "guerrillism" had an even more disastrous record in Bolivia than in other South American countries. Guevara's guerrilla "foco" had been hunted down and wiped out by Bolivia's US trained counter-insurgency forces in 1967. Remnants of Guevara's organisation the ELN still existed and in July 1970 about 100 guerrillas, many ex-Christian Democratic youth, opened a new guerrilla war in Teoponte. Four months later only six survived having been mercilessly hunted down by the Bolivian military.

This was the perspective the POR(Gonzales) not only advocated for the Bolivian masses but was actively involved in. As a result they had little involvement in the mass struggles which prevented the October 1970 coup, seeing them as merely side shows to the "real" armed struggle. Thus they could argue in a statement issued shortly after the October mobilisations: "The revolutionary process ripening in the vitals of the people in the depths of the mines, in the factories and universities... has its fullest expression in the armed struggle and guerrilla warfare." (POR (Gonzales) Statement, Intercontinental Press, Nov. 1970).

The POR(Gonzales) as a result were not part of the Political Command and were bureaucratically excluded as a political party from the Popular Assembly on the initiative of the POR(Lora)/PCB bloc. While the POR (Gonzales) made a number of correct criticisms of POR(Lora) for instance, over the negotiations with Torres, they remained politically crippled by their "guerrillism" and "processism". While they called for an armed struggle to overthrow the capitalist regime of Torres, they were incapable of developing any slogans or tactics which addressed the crucial questions of soviets, soldiers' committees or workers' militia. The struggle for power and the arming of the workers, was seen exclusively in military-technical terms. The construction of a "People's Army" was seen in total isolation from the political struggle and its impact on the rank and file troops. Their attitude to the Assembly was one of passive propagandism equally as fatal as Lora's approach: "The left wing to which the POR(Gonzales) belongs has developed the idea that the Popular Assembly would be a body that would discuss national problems and solutions for them but would leave the power in the hands of the mass organisations (unions, popular militia or People's Army.)" (Interview with Gonzales Moscoso, Rouge, 17.5.71).

So both the parties which claimed to represent Trotskyism within the Bolivian working class were incapable of tackling the fundamental problems of a revolutionary situation. Although their centrism



General Banzer

took different forms, POR(Lora)'s adaptation to the petit-bourgeois nationalist Torres regime, POR(Gonzales)'s adaptation to the petit-bourgeois Castroite and Guevarist currents, made both parties shy away from the crucial tasks confronting them - the construction of soviets and the fight for power and the interlinked task of breaking up the bourgeois army. Both saw this latter task as primarily a technical one. Trotsky, drawing on the experience of the 1905 revolution, summed up the importance of political agitation and mass struggle in the fight to break up the army: "The Army's political mood, that great unknown of every revolution, can be determined only in the process of a clash between the soldiers and the people... the majority hesitates and awaits an impulse from outside. This majority is capable of laying down its arms, or eventually of pointing its bayonets at reaction, only if it begins to believe in the possibility of a people's victory. Such a belief is not created by political agitation alone. Only when the soldiers become convinced that the people have come out onto the streets for a life and death struggle - not to demonstrate against the government but to overthrow it - does it become psychologically possible for them to 'cross over to the side of the people.'" (Trotsky, 1906)

The POR(Lora) with its critical support for Torres and the POR(Gonzales) with its disdain for mass struggles failed miserably to provide any such leadership to the working class rank and file of the Army. This is all the more criminal when we consider how willing and able to carry through this task the Bolivian proletariat had shown itself in 1952 and 1971.

BANZER'S COUP AND THE AFTERMATH

On the 19th August 1971, the Army struck. Led by General Banzer and supported by the MNR and the right wing generals whom Torres had kept in place, the army occupied key cities. As late as the 23rd August the Political Command and the POR (Lora) were still pleading for arms from Torres. The results were predictable. Torres refused to give arms on the grounds that it would split the army. As the army moved on La Paz, having crushed resistance in

other cities, students and workers put up a heroic, if hopeless, resistance to the coup. According to one estimate between them they mustered 2,000 antique Mausers against the major forces of the Bolivian army and airforce. Hundreds were killed in the coup which ushered in eight years of brutal repression.

In exile, the parties of the People's Assembly proceeded to form a "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist United Front". Despite tagging on the word "Revolutionary" this front was in fact a popular front built around a purely democratic programme of struggle. In its ranks were the POR(Lora) the Pro-Moscow and Pro-Chinese CPs, the POR(Gonzales), various other parties and General Torres!

Lora's POR had the most clearly worked out position on the nature of this front. In their programme they argue that while before the coup the perspective of insurrection and socialism was on the agenda, after the coup it was a matter of fixing direct objectives. These objectives turn out to be entirely democratic: "the reconquest of democratic guarantees... defence of trade union organisations, recognition of their federations and confederations... respect for human life and well-being of prisoners". (Programmatic Bases of the POR - G. Lora.)

While obviously a revolutionary party would fight for such demands, alongside all other parties, to limit the struggle in advance to this is pure stegalism. To join in a bloc with the principal betrayer of the revolution was nothing less than crossing class lines. Lora's programme argues: "Anti-imperialist fronts can be grouped into two categories: anti-imperialist fronts led by the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie and those led by the proletariat. Stalin joined and defended the first type."

But if the proletariat, or parties claiming to represent the proletariat, subordinate their programme to that of the bourgeoisie or petit-bourgeoisie, it makes no difference who leads it in struggle, it is a popular front tying the working class to the chariot wheels of the bourgeoisie. What were the aims of the FRA? "the need is undeniably to build a fighting unity with all the revolutionary democratic and progressive forces so that the great battle can be begun in conditions offering a real perspective for a popular and national government." (Manifesto of FRA, Intercontinental Press, Dec. 1971). It pointed out that the "task is to close ranks around the FRA, organised by the forces that fought in the battle of August (Torres 7-WP) to win the battle for the people." It bound all organisations to the "fundamental line of the founding documents" and in case anyone dared to criticise this popular front it declared any form of "sectarianism in this respect to be "counter-revolutionary."

By joining such a front a "Trotskyist" party was not only covering up for the betrayers of the revolution but was tying the proletariat to the bourgeois programme. This is what both the POR groups were doing. The POR(Gonzales) tried to cover its traces by saying its participation had only "a tactical character" (!) while criticising itself for not publishing its criticisms of the manifesto. (If it had, it would of course, have been thrown out). The POR(Lora) defended and continues to defend to this day its record and its tactics, both of which were endorsed by the Lambert led Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Forces International which it had joined shortly earlier.

The tragedy of the Bolivian revolutions - 1952 and 1970/1 - was that no revolutionary organisation existed which could have led Bolivian workers and peasants in a struggle for genuine proletarian power. It proved once again that a centrist leadership is invariably unable to lead a revolution, and will, if it is a serious force within the proletariat, contribute to its bloody defeat. ■

by Stuart King

POGROMS FOLLOW P.L.O. DEFEAT

With developments in the Lebanon and the results of the Palestinian National Council, the scale of the defeat inflicted on the Palestinians in the summer of 1982 becomes ever more clear. In the Lebanon, having achieved the withdrawal of the bulk of the PLO fighters, the Lebanese Phalangists are now conducting a series of terror campaigns to drive Palestinians out of their homes. Aided and abetted by the Israeli troops, their aim is to drive them first into the now undefended camps and later, using the fear of repetition of the Sabra and Shatila pogroms, to drive them out of Lebanon altogether.

Israel clearly intends to hang on in the Lebanon, despite friendly US pressure, until as much as possible of this "sanitisation" is carried out. Her demands for permanent military posts inside Lebanon and the strengthening of Israel's puppet, Major Haddad, in the Lebanon demonstrates the Zionists determination to reduce the Lebanese government to an Israeli protectorate if they can get away

with it. At the same time it has placed Sharon, the real butcher of Sabra and Shatila, in charge of the enormously expanded Zionist settlement programme on the West Bank. The massive financial incentives for settlers are only possible because of American financial largesse to the state of Israel.

The ramifications of the defeat have reverberated through the PLO. Arafat has been desperately trying to manoeuvre the whole of the PLO to accept the American peace proposals, whilst Libya and Syria are willing to split the PLO in pursuit of their own national interests. But the basis that the more militant sections of the PLO had for resisting compromises with US imperialism has been severely undermined. Instead of a powerful armed base in the Lebanon, with freedom of movement and training for the various PLO armed wings, the bulk of the fighters are now locked up in what amount to virtual prison camps in the eight "friendly" Arab countries which offered to be their hosts.

Arafat banked on this weakness to be able to bring all the PLO factions into line at the Palestinian National Council. While the fiery debates took place before the besuited and well dressed ranks of professors, doctors and professionals who domin-

ate the PNC, the real discussions took place elsewhere.

George Habash, head of the Peoples Front for the Liberation of Palestine could declare resoundingly during the daytime debates: "The Reagan Plan says No to a Palestinian state, No to the PLO. Well, we say No to the Reagan Plan, No to the US and No to any plan that denies our rights."

But during the evening sessions conducted by the faction leaders at Arafat's secret base in Beirut, Habash's and other rejectionist leaders' No sounded less resounding. The Reagan plan was considered "a sound basis for a just and lasting peace"; it was "insufficient". The Fez Plan proposed by the Arab League in November 1981 - which contained implicitly the right of Israel to exist as a state - was accepted. On Jordan, the Council accepted a part of Reagan's plans; the principle of "confederation" with the Jordan of King Hussein the perpetrator of Black September.

This new alliance between Arafat, Habash and Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front may be a fragile one. It is based on the weakness of the leadership of the Palestinian masses and the dispersal of their leading fighters. Above all it depends on the ability of Arafat to deliver the promises made to him by American imperialism concerning the West Bank and the Lebanon. Those promises are unlikely to be kept. ■

Bolivia on a knife-edge: ARMY COUP OR REVOLUTION

THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT of Bolivia came to power as a result of a massive general strike against the military dictatorship of General Vidosa in October 1982. Under the impact of the world recession of the mid-1970s and the enormous corruption of a military junta totally tied to the cocaine smuggling industry, the Bolivian economy was near bankruptcy by the start of the 1980s.

An appeal by the Bolivian military to the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan in 1981 resulted in IMF demands for a huge devaluation of the peso measure which massively pushes up inflation in a country dependent on industrial imports, an end to subsidies on staple foods and an increase in food prices. The attempt to implement these policies produced an explosion from the workers and peasants. By September the COB had been pressured into calling an all out general strike, while peasant organisations, primarily the CSUTCB (the United Confederation of Working Farmers), set up road blocks on all the main highways. The country was paralysed. The demands of the strike were for immediate elections, the restoration of trade union rights and a guaranteed minimum wage.

The military, recognising a real threat of a revolutionary uprising, quickly entered into negotiation with the UDP (Democratic and Popular Unity). This was the electoral bloc which had effectively won the 1980 General Election, but whose presidential candidate Hernan Siles Suazo had been prevented from taking power by the military coup. Siles Suazo headed the major party in the UDP, the MNR-I, which had split from Paz Estenssoro's MNR-H over the latter's support for the military dictatorship of General Banzer (1970-76). Two other major parties which made up this coalition were the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) which started out as a pro-Cuban guerrilla organisation and moved rapidly to the right (it is now affiliated to the Socialist International) and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB).

COMPROMISE

These parties quickly reached a compromise with the military. They abandoned the call for immediate elections and agreed to respect the results of 1980, when their coalition received the largest number of votes (40%) and the presidency, but the Senate was left with a majority for the right wing parties - Estenssoro's MNR-H and Banzer's National Democratic Action Party (ADN). Through this "compromise" the military had ensured that no election would take place in a situation where the massive mobilisation of workers and peasants would have swept the right out and given the UDP a massive majority. This suited the UDP leaders just fine. Avoiding elections and continuing to face a Senate dominated by the right gave them a perfect excuse for not yielding to demands coming from the workers and peasants.

The miners rejected the compromise and continued on strike only to be morally blackmailed into calling it off by Juan Lechin - their leader - who threatened resignation if it continued. The COB proceeded to give the government their support.

Thus in October 1982 the UDP took power. A government of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalist parties in alliance with the most influential party in the working class - the PCB, Siles Suazo immediately demanded a "social truce" from the working class for 100 days on the basis of the terrible economic situation left by the military. The economic situation was indeed dire - for the masses. Unemployment was running at over



UDP supporters greet Siles Suazo

12.5% without taking into account the massive endemic unemployment (partial employment in street trading etc). Utilisation of industrial capacity stood at only 47% while the foreign debt stood at 3.9 billion dollars. The interest payments on Bolivia's foreign debt stand at 976 billion dollars, 300 million more than expected earnings! The nationalised tin mines (COMIBOL) had been run down dramatically with little investment and corrupt management. Comibol for instance was producing 36% less tin in 1982 than it was 20 years earlier and for a world market where the price of all raw materials including tin has collapsed with the slump.

Such a situation demanded an immediate set of measures to defend the workers and peasants' conditions. A government which really stood by the interests of the workers and peasants would have cancelled the enormous interest burdens, expropriated the private mining interests and subsidaries making huge profits out of Comibol, established a minimum wage protected against inflation and supported the expropriation under the control of the workers of any company laying off workers or sabotaging production. It would have supported the legitimate demands of the peasants for cheap transport by expropriating the right wing truck owners and establishing state control of transport. Most importantly it would have mobilised the workers, peasants and the rank and file soldiers, to disarm the military coup-mongers and create an armed workers' and peasants' militia.

"SOCIAL TRUCE"

Of course the UDP did none of those things. Quite the reverse it set out to solve the crisis at the expense of the working class. Their "social truce" in November 1982 involved a wage freeze, the establishment of a pathetic minimum wage of 8,500 pesos (none of the unions demand a wage minimum of less than 25,000 pesos) and a series of economic measures designed to placate the IMF - such as favourable treatment to the private mining sectors and agri-businesses. To cap it all the UDP had the cheek to call these measures part of a "New Economic Policy", likening it to the Bolshevik policy of the 1920s! The strength of the CP in the miners' union and the COB and the tacit support of Lechin minimised working class opposition.

In other periods these military regimes have been incapable of containing and repressing the organisation of the workers and peasants. In 1952 and again in 1970 the workers, using an insurrectionary general strike, defeated the military in open battle. However in both of these revolutionary situations the workers and peasants were betrayed by their own leaderships. The ruling class was obliged, temporarily, to advance its "left" nationalist wing to power. In 1952 this was the bourgeois nationalist MNR (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement) led by Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hernan Siles Suazo, in 1970 it was the "left" wing of the military headed by General Torres.

In both cases these governments were composed of representatives of the "nationalist" bourgeoisie, those sections of the capitalists and small businesses which gained least from the domination of imperialism. Indeed they were often driven out of business by the multinationals and demands of the international banks. Their programmes promised independent capitalist development utilising state capitalist nationalisations, in particular of the tin mines.

Because the strongest sectors of the Bolivian bourgeoisie, tied up as they were with imperialism, were opposed to such a strategy, both the MNR government and that of Torres were forced to turn to the working class and peasantry for support in their struggle with the imperialists and with their foes within the Bolivian bourgeoisie. Concealing their true class character behind a mass of anti-imperialist and "revolutionary" verbiage, they balanced between the working class and peasant organisations, which they prevented from seizing

By March 1983 at the end of the 100 day "Social Truce" numerous strikes broke out around wage demands. Despite PCB opposition the miners' union (FSTMB) occupied the Comibol headquarters demanding a majority of workers' representatives on the management board. Revolutionaries should have supported such a demand as laying the basis for real workers' control and abolishing the previous "participation" by the miners in their own exploitation. To express real control however the workers' representatives would have to be directly elected by, answerable to and recallable by the workers themselves with business secrecy having been abolished. Furthermore such workers' control would have to be rapidly expanded to the whole economy and could only be securely established under a workers' and peasants' government. The COB and the FSTMB leadership peddled a different conception, one that projected a workers' majority co-management as being the method by which the workers could control the society - a recipe not for struggle to take over the whole economy but for the co-management of Bolivian capitalism, a reactionary and utopian project, doomed to disaster.

In August the COB took this strategy onto the political plane by demanding "co-government" with the UDP i.e. for a number of "worker ministers" to join the government. "Co-government" has a disastrous history in Bolivia. Lechin himself sat as one of three "worker ministers" in the Estenssoro government of 1952. There they provided a left cover for a bourgeois government which was attacking the workers. Lechin attempted to repeat the experiment in 1970 with Torres only to be rebuffed. In both cases this class collaborationist strategy was supported by the POR (POR-Masas in 1970).

RE-RUN

Unbelievably in 1983 the same strategy is being actively supported in the Bolivian workers' movement today by the USFI section in Bolivia - POR Unificado (formerly POR-Combate). The POR (Masses) appears to have both strength and influence in one of the biggest and most militant mines in Bolivia at Huenuñi (in a joint state with dissident Maoists they won a majority in trade union

power, and the pro-imperialist oligarchy, whom they excluded from political office.

But the prime task of these "left" bonapartist regimes was to bureaucratically control and demobilise the mass movements which repeatedly threatened to escape their control and put in question capitalist property in general, in collaborating with these regimes to gut the revolutionary movement the leadership of the workers' movement - the Bolivian Workers Centre (COB) - under Juan Lechin played a treacherous role. Lechin, along with the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB) kept the workers' movement tied to these "anti-imperialist" regimes even when they openly turned to attack the workers' and peasants' interests and organisations. (See *Workers Power* No.40 March 1983 and *Permanent Revolution* No.2 Summer 1984 for analyses of these two revolutions.)

The organisations claiming to be Trotskyist in particular the POR (later POR-Combate and POR-Masas) provided no alternative lead to the working class - indeed they adopted wholly opportunist tactics towards both the governments of the MNR and of Torres. By disarming and exhausting the workers and peasant organisations these regimes paved the way for military coups backed by the most reactionary pro-imperialist sectors of the bourgeoisie - General Barrientos in 1964 and Colonel Banzer in 1971. In 1984 the same cycle threatens to repeat itself unless the Bolivian proletariat can create an effective revolutionary communist leadership, that can lead it to the seizure of power and the establishment of a genuinely revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. ■

elections at the mine against the PCB). Yet they are using this influence to peddle the same policies that led to disaster in 1952.

Leading USFI member Livio Maitan argues in *International Viewpoint*: "Today the demand for co-government implies specifically that the COB and the CSUTCB do not consider themselves to be represented by the UDP and President Siles Suazo, but that they want to represent the workers and peasants in government in an independent way." (Our emphasis-WP).

Thus this demand helps the masses to understand the class nature of the conflicts and political issues. It has an anti-capitalist potential." (I.V. 12 March 1984).

So Juan Lechin, with his 30 year record of betrayal, is to represent the Bolivian Proletariat in "an independent way". One blushes to point out such an elementary lesson to a so-called Trotskyist but whenever did a "worker minister" in a Bourgeois government prove to be independent of anyone except the working class? This project, far from helping the masses to call things by their real names, deceives and deludes them. Such a government is not an exercise in workers' education but a popular front which is one of the last political resources of the bourgeoisie against the proletarian revolution, one which in Trotsky's words "dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road to fascism."

Lechin's desires however were not to be granted. Siles Suazo rejected his demands for co-government and after retreating on new IMF measures following a 2 day general strike in December last year, returned to the attack 2 months ago.

The proposals which started the current crisis originated in a 4 year plan for the economy pushed by the PCB. In April the MIR, who had walked out of the government in January 1983 (in order to try and stitch up a solution with the MNR-H and ADN) were enticed back on the basis of a new austerity package which would satisfy the demands of the IMF.

On April 13th the UDP announced the toughest ever austerity package under the signatures of all the parties including the PCB - ministers of Mining and Labour. It involved a massive devaluation of the peso, the ending of subsidies on basic foodstuffs - a loaf of bread jumped from 12.5 pesos to 70 pesos a loaf. Food in general went up 480% fuel rose by 400% and railway transport 600%!

GENERAL STRIKE

The package was met by an immediate three day general strike, which even SP militants in the FSTMB and COB were forced to support. The Bank workers at the central bank struck and occupied their offices to prevent the devaluation. Lechin and the PCB did everything in their power to prevent the strike developing into an indefinite general strike - a demand being pressed by the factory workers.

The congress of the FSTMB which met just after the austerity package saw massive losses for the PCB in elections to the leadership, while the dissident Maoists and the Partido Socialista-Uno (a centrist grouping) gained considerably (POR-U lost ground in the elections.) However Juan Lechin was elected unanimously as General Secretary as he has been every year since 1941!

A further three day general strike was called over May Day with Lechin denouncing the factory workers of La Paz for organising for an indefinite general strike and threatening to resign in protest. As a result the government managed to divide the workers - settling with the oil and railway workers.

The COB leadership's policy of exhausting the workers with a series of 2 and 3 day general strikes was having its effect. The factory workers were forced back to work after several more days with their General Secretary Eduardo Siles declaring they "would resist any fresh calls for general strikes because they paid a high price for the last one." Not surprisingly the army chose this moment to declare its intention to "defend peace and public order" amidst rumours that two ex-generals who master-minded the coup against Siles Suazo in 1980 - Garcia Meza and Arce Gomez - were back in the country plotting a new coup with sections of the military.

The current situation in Bolivia is fraught with enormous dangers for the Bolivian masses. The policies of their leaders - the PCB, Lechin and co - are merely paving the way for a military coup to triumph over an exhausted workers' movement. Such a coup might initially have a demagogic left-nationalist character but if it did this would be but a stage to the consolidation of a vicious right-wing dictatorship. To avoid this the Bolivian workers need not more 2 and 3 day general strikes designed to "let off steam" and "moderate" the government policies, but an all-out offensive against it. It needs to launch an indefinite general strike which demands a complete end to austerity and which organises the workers and peasants organisations into their own councils or soviets which organise their own militias and appeal to the rank and file of the army to join their struggle against the coup mongers.

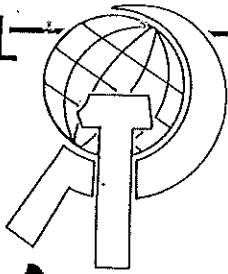
The Bolivian masses need a revolutionary party of the proletariat. One which unlike the POR-U refuses to peddle illusions in class collaborators like Lechin, but uses the united front tactic to demand that the leadership of the workers' parties break with the bourgeois parties and enter onto the road of struggle for a genuine workers' and peasants' government. ■

By Stuart King

BOLIVIA IS ONCE again convulsed in revolutionary upheavals. Once more there are reports of an imminent military coup. In mid-April and again at the start of May the country was paralysed by two three-day general strikes called against the government's planned austerity measures.

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America and has a history of alternating revolutionary upsurges and bloody military dictatorships. The country represents an extreme example of the impact of imperialist exploitation on the semi-colonial world. The domination of the economy by US imperialism - through its multi-national corporations, its banks and aid agencies and its control of the world commodity markets - has kept the masses in chronic poverty. The stunting of the country's economy has also led to a stunted and weak Bolivian bourgeoisie. In its majority totally dependent on and subservient to US imperialism.

The Bolivian toiling masses on the other hand have developed powerful trade union and peasant organisations. Led by the Tin Miners, the working class has a record second to none in Latin America in terms of tenacious revolutionary struggle against the super-exploitation and poverty imposed on them. Whilst the Bolivian proletariat has not been able to bring its revolutionary struggle to the conclusion of establishing its class power, the Bolivian bourgeoisie has been unable to hold political power through its parties. The result has been a series of military dictatorships - a form of bonapartism - which have governed in the interests of US imperialism and the IMF, with the support of those sections of the bourgeoisie most closely linked to the US and other imperialist states.



IN CRISIS

BOLIVIA; Failed General Strike Paves Way For Right

WITH ELECTIONS in Bolivia due for July 14th it now looks certain that one or other of the major right wing parties will triumph. Victor Paz Estenssoro's leader of the MNR - H, the man who helped demobilise the 1952 Bolivian revolution and pave the way for a military takeover, looks like beating Hugo Banzer's ADN (Banzer was military dictator between 1970-76).

The fact that these two parties will battle it out for first or second place shows the complete collapse of the support for the 'left' UDP government because of the role it has played since 1980 in undermining and demobilising the workers' and peasants' struggles.

The UDP came to power in 1980 as a result of a massive general strike which drove the military from power. It was a classic 'popular front' government made up of the bourgeois nationalist MNR-H, which drew much of its support from the peasantry and middle classes, the MIR, a right wing social democratic current affiliated to the Socialist International, and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB).

The government proceeded to use its support within the working class and peasantry to impose a series of austerity measures demanded by the I.M.F. In the early part of its existence it was enormously aided in this task by having the support of the COB (the Bolivian Workers' Centre) and of Juan Lechin, veteran trade union leader and opportunist. Lechin, aided by the PCB, justified support on the basis that the UDP was the 'lesser evil'. He argued that it would be replaced by a more right wing government or a military dictatorship if the workers put up any resistance to its austerity demands.

However quite quickly the traditional militancy of the Bolivian workers, led by the tin miners,

shattered the 'social truce' with the government. Since September 1982 there have been six general strikes called by the COB under the pressure of the growing economic crisis.

The Government's refusal to allow wages to keep up with inflation, which now runs at the phenomenal rate of 2300% per year, has caused enormous hardships. Shortages of food, medicine and spare parts for machinery, rocketing unemployment, a rampant black market and enormous currency speculation, have all contributed to the enormous falls in living standards. A recent UNICEF survey estimated that 80% of the population was living in poverty.

Throughout the various austerity packages imposed on the working class by the UDP, the PCB remained an active member of the government. Its position only became untenable when it suffered a crushing defeat in the COB elections in September 1984. With its own working class base in revolt, and with its own youth movement having split away, the PCB finally left the government. After two years of attacking the working class it had desperately to try and restore some left credibility before the elections. (The MIR had already left the government to try and stitch up a deal with either the MNR - H or ADN).

The COB leadership under Lechin had shown itself totally incapable of providing any strategy to defend the working class against the UDP offensive. The enormous militancy of the miners had forced the government to concede workers' majority co-management in COMIBOL, the state tin mining company. But divorced from a struggle to extend workers' control to other sectors of the economy, from a fight to nationalise under workers control the important private tin mining and gold mining sectors, from the struggle to control dis-

tribution and other necessities and stamp out the black market in speculation, the idea of 'co-management' remains the co-management of the crisis of Bolivian capitalism. Such a struggle would have meant above all a struggle to overthrow the UDP government and replace it with a workers' and peasants' government which would not only secure such gains but proceed to arm the workers and peasants against military reaction.

Even after the September Congress of the COB, which clearly signalled the need for a break with the UDP, Lechin could declare; "any other government in the present circumstances would do exactly what this one intends to do. Now at least pressure exerted by the workers allows us some conquests such as majority co-management in COMIBOL." (Quoted in *Latin American Weekly Reports* - 5.10.85) Lechin's alternative was the traditional one of the Bolivian workers' leaders - to push for 'worker ministers' in the government; where, no doubt, they would have played a similar role to the PCB, as agents of the bourgeoisie in getting the workers and peasants to make sacrifices.

Having exhausted the working class in a series of general strikes, which the COB directed not in order to overthrow the UDP, but to negotiate with it on withdrawing various austerity measures, the general strike in March was called after 10,000 miners arrived in the capital to put a series of demands on the government - for wage rises and a sliding scale to protect living standards from inflation. A demonstration of 50,000 on March 4th backed the demands. When they were rejected by the government, this time an indefinite general strike was called. It lasted a fortnight but was poorly supported by key sections such as the rail and oil workers. In addition it received no support from the peasant organisations. This strike ended with few government concessions and growing demands from the rank and file to recall the COB and hold its leaders to account.

PROGRESSIVE MILITARY

The Bolivian workers clearly recognised the threat that the present situation poses. One of the demands of the workers was for the postponement of the elections for fear of a right wing victory. At the same time they called for 'Siles Out'. 'Death to the hunger government - we've had enough of Siles' was one of the major slogans of March 4th. The Bolivian working class is confronted again by its historic weakness of having no political party which represents its interests, despite its long history of heroic trade union struggle. The PCB has compromised itself for the immediate future because of its role in the UDP government. The COB leaders have offered no alternative but to join the UDP government themselves. As a result of this impasse there is a growing danger of the workers looking to the 'progressive military' to take action to block the election of the ADF or MNR-H. Such a possibility is being openly peddled by Lechin's Group the PRIN. Such a course also has a disastrous history in Bolivia. Many of the present leaders of the Bolivian working class tied their followers to the coat tails of the 'progressive' General Torres, a policy which disarmed the workers' movement in the face of Banzer's right wing army coup in 1971 (see WP no. 40 March 1983).

As in Peru the USFI Section in Bolivia, POR-Unificado, found itself in a favourable situation with the restoration of parliamentary government and legality in 1980. It had survived, by its own accounts, the period of illegality well and was one of the first left groups to reorganise itself with a regular press and organisation. It also made some gains in the important Huanuni mines and within the miners' union. However the POR-U showed itself incapable of challenging the reformist and centrist misleaders of the Bolivian workers, preferring to adapt to their politics and thus 'pressure them to the left'.

Shortly after the UDP came to power, the POR-U, lagging along behind the COB leadership, refused to take up a position of intransigent opposition to the UDP; the strategic objective of the POR is to begin to prepare the masses for the continuation of their struggle under the UDP government...at present that does not involve all

out opposition to the government, but a strategy of pressuring it and exposing the capitulationist leadership' (*International Viewpoint* 1.11.82) A revolutionary position would have demanded complete opposition to the bourgeois government of Siles Suazo. Revolutionaries would have demanded the PCB break with this bourgeois alliance, and alongside the COB launch an immediate campaign for new elections to a constituent assembly. (The existing Assembly had been re-established on the basis of the rigged 1980 election and was dominated by right wing parties.) Within such a campaign communists would have fought for a workers' and peasants' government around a programme which could really defend the workers' and peasants' interests against imperialism and the bourgeoisie.

Indeed, falling behind Lechin's schemes the POR cover over whether they favour the elections going ahead. Instead of warning the masses of the dangers of believing that the progressive sectors of the army can be won to the workers' side, they compound them by declaring, "This unity must be widened by appealing to the commanders, commissioned and non-commissioned officers and soldiers not to fire on the people but to join ranks in defence of democratic freedoms and for national sovereignty against imperialism. They must take their place in the struggle of the masses..." (four emphasis IV 22.4.85)

'PREPARING THE WAY'

Again when the COB launched its campaign for 'worker ministers' in the bourgeois government, the USFI fell in with Livio Matlan, arguing that such ministers could represent the workers and peasants 'in an independent way', and that such demands had an anti-capitalist potential'. (IV 12th March 1984) Again the POR showed its willingness to fall in behind Lechin's demands which would have renewed the illusions of the masses in the UDP government and only undermined resistance to new attacks. Even during the most recent general strike the POR-U could not bring itself to openly call for the overthrow of the UDP government. Instead it talked of 'preparing the way for saying...Siles out! No Banzer, No Paz Estenssoro!'" It raised no demands for the formation of workers' and peasants' committees to build genuine organs of working class power - soviets. Instead it rummaged in the rag bag of past defeats and found a slogan from the 1971 debacle 'Advance towards the foundation of a National People's Assembly which must be transformed into a real people's parliament' (IV 22nd April 1985) The programme for such an assembly, we are informed, should be the programme of the COB, involving renouncing the foreign debt, wide spread nationalisation, a minimum wage and sliding scale and a monopoly of foreign trade. How this programme, inadequate as it is, will be implemented in the teeth of bourgeois and military opposition, we are not told. The question of arming the workers and peasants and paralyzing the military through revolutionary agitation among rank and file soldiers is never raised.

MISERABLE STRATEGY

Thus the USFI Section in Bolivia fails miserably to advance a strategy for working class power through an alliance with the impoverished peasantry. Instead they adapt to the historic weakness of the Bolivian labour movement - syndicalism and petty bourgeois nationalism. These weaknesses have helped to keep the Bolivian workers from taking up the tasks of building a mass revolutionary party. By keeping the workers' movement free of revolutionary communist politics it has been repeatedly rendered helpless when faced with a bourgeois nationalist regime - spouting anti-imperialist rhetoric but carrying out anti-working class measures. From critical support for such governments, with all the demobilisation and demoralisation this brings, it is but one short and bloody step to another right wing military dictatorship. Revolutionaries in Bolivia must do everything possible to alert the heroic miners and other sections of the working class against this outcome. Only working class power can put an end to the vicious cycle of Bolivian politics.

by Stuart King

Sendero Luminoso

A FURTHER PROBLEM for the Peruvian ruling class has been the growth of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) (SL) rural guerrilla movement, which has plunged the southern Andean provinces, Ayacucho in particular, into a virtual state of civil war. In response to an estimated 2,500 armed attacks by Sendero on local politicians, police and landowners in 1984, the government has deployed 6,000 army, marines and police. The weakness of Peru's parliamentary democracy has been shown by the creation of 15 Military Emergency Zones, placing over half of the country under military rule. There has been a wave of repression against the neglected Indian peasants of the Sierra (Andean highlands) - amongst whom Sendero largely operate - leading to 4,000 murders and at least 1,500 "disappeared" since Belaunde's civilian government took office in 1980.

Sendero Luminoso originated from a split in the pro-Chinese Peruvian Communist Party in 1970, led by Abimael Guzman (often referred as 'Comrade Gonzales') a philosophy professor at the city's university. The main issue of the split was Gonzales' stress on the need to begin armed struggle in what he characterised as a revolutionary situation in Peru in the 1970s. It was argued by SL that the Peruvian government - then the reforming military government of Velasco - was fascist, as were the subsequent governments of Bermudez and Belaundes' conservative civilian government.

Sendero describes itself as a Maoist organisation, associating itself with the "Gang of Four", (Mao's supporters in the Chinese Communist Party who were ousted by Deng Xiaoping's faction in 1976). Because it sees Peru as a "semi-feudal" country it is the peasantry, not the urban working class, which is seen as the major revolutionary force. In its major programme document "Let us develop the guerrilla war!", published in March 1982, Sendero argues for a "prolonged popular war" based on the peasantry to "surround the cities from the countryside". Furthermore, their Maoism is combined with a utopian attachment to the Inca and Indian cultures existing before the Spanish conquest. They reject as 'imperialist' modern technology and money, positions which have led many to characterise them as 'Pol Potists'. Their organisation is both elitist and cult-like, based around Comrade Gonzales.

Based on their belief that all left wing groups were "bourgeois workers parties" which preserved the fascist governments by participating in their fake election to the new constituent assembly, they withdrew from their involvement in

students' and teachers' organisations in Ayacucho in 1980. They began armed action around the 1980 elections, denouncing them as a farce and attacking a polling station in Cuchi, in Ayacucho province. Since then they have carried out attacks on the armed forces and local politicians in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac, combined with raids on power stations and police stations in the cities of Lima, Cuzco and Arequipa.

Although Sendero's leadership is generally made up of intellectuals, teachers and students, it has a large following amongst the poor Indian peasants of the Andean highlands. Fifteen thousand demonstrated in Ayacucho in 1982 at the death of guerrilla leader Edith Lagos - killed by the police. In the same year they were strong enough to occupy Ayacucho for the night and release 300 prisoners from the city jail.

However the poor response to Sendero's call for a 72 hour general strike in the municipal elections and their failure to disrupt the recent general elections - despite demanding a boycott - indicates not only the impact of army repression, but also the failure of their own strategy. They have largely ignored the urban working class and refused united fronts with peasant and workers' organisations against repression. Even among the peasantry their policies have alienated many sections of the population. Military elitism, the imposition of village leaderships, execution of not only landowners and rich peasants but middle peasants as well, a policy of attempting to starve the cities by making peasants burn their surpluses rather than sell them, thus adding to rural poverty, have all contributed to stagnation for SL.

Sendero maintains significant support because of the chronic poverty and long term government neglect of the Quechua speaking Andean peasantry. Their demands for land have always been met with government repression, which exorcises now indiscriminately drives more of the rural population to seek support from the SL.

Whatever the errors of Sendero Luminoso, it is the duty of the revolutionary left in Peru to support and defend them against the repression of the bourgeois state and its army, and denounce "lefts" like Barrantes who tacitly support government repression. Support for SL will continue as long as there is no revolutionary alternative put before the peasantry involving an agrarian revolution and the smashing of the landlord system and with the police and military apparatus which supports it. The present reformist and electorally orientated Peruvian left within the IU offers no such alternative. ■

BOLIVIAN WORKERS RESIST NEW AUSTERITY

WITHIN SIX WEEKS of his inauguration as President, Victor Paz Estenssoro has given notice to the Bolivian working class of what it can expect from his new government. Declaring a 'state of siege' on September 19th, Paz proceeded to order the arrest of thousands of trade unionists involved in a general strike against government austerity measures.

Juan Lechin, longtime leader of the COB (the Bolivian Trade Union Federation), together with its current general secretary Walter Delgadillo and leaders of the Oil, Bank and Telecommunications Workers were sent into 'internal exile' - banished to remote towns in the Amazonian jungle near Brazil.

Soldiers opened fire on striking workers in the capital La Paz, while others raided the trade union headquarters and university looking for strike leaders and 'political agitators'.

Paz is the 77 year old leader of the MNR-H and has been elected president three times before. In 1952 a general strike and insurrection, led by the Bolivian miners overthrew the existing military regime, and brought to power the 'National Revolutionary Movement' (MNR).

This party had enormous support amongst the workers and peasants at that time on the basis of its anti-imperialist pronouncements. Its leaders promised to free the country from the grip of imperialism, especially the USA, and from the exploitation of the multi-national corporations which made enormous profits out of Bolivia's natural resources, while its workers lived in abject poverty.

mobilisation

Under the pressure of the mobilised and armed masses the MNR government introduced a major land reform which broke up many of the larger estates and distributed land to the peasants. The major mining companies were nationalised and the state mining corporation COMIBOL was set up.

Despite its revolutionary and anti-imperialist rhetoric, the MNR remained a government which defended bourgeois property. Its strategy of developing Bolivian industry behind protective trade barriers and through state-capitalist enterprises like COMIBOL, was combined with a determination to demobilise the masses and reach a compromise with imperialism.



Paz Estenssoro

Within a few years the Paz Estenssoro regime had managed to divide the peasant organisations from the workers, re-build the shattered Bolivian army through US supplied aid and impose a US backed IMF 'stabilisation plan' on the workers which attacked jobs and living standards.

But this was not sufficient for the Bolivian ruling class nor their imperialist masters. As in many other Latin American countries the strength of the working class and its combativity in the face of attacks on its living standards demanded more extraordinary measures.

coup

Having weakened the workers organisations and defences, Paz himself was overthrown by a military coup. This regime of General



Juan Lechin leader of the Bolivian workers central (COB)

Barrientos guaranteed the Bolivian and US bosses stable and profitable exploitation through the massive repression of the labour movement.

This vicious circle of mass revolt headed off and contained by 'revolutionary nationalist' governments, who only pave the way for renewed military dictatorships, has become the tragic pattern of modern Bolivian politics.

Paz replaces his old ally the outgoing President, Hernan Siles Zuazo, leader of the MNR-I. The MNR-I, having split from Paz in 1970, took over the 'revolutionary' mantle of the MNR and formed the UDP government in 1980. Siles, like Paz before him, was swept into office after a general strike which forced the corrupt military junta to hand over power to a civilian government.

austerity

The UDP government which included the Bolivian Communist Party and 'socialist' MIR, proceeded, after a short time, to try and impose IMF demanded 'austerity' measures, only to be met by massive working class resistance. Between September 1982 and the elections in July there were six general strikes in Bolivia.

Despite their enormous heroism and self-sacrifice, especially from the miners, the Bolivian working class was once again crippled by its leadership. The entry into the government of the major 'left' parties, and the support initially given to it by the COB leadership, provided Siles with a left cover.

Even when the UDP was openly attacking the working class its leaders were unwilling to fight for an alternative kind of government, one which would have defended the interests of the masses and taken real measures to expropriate the bosses, arm the workers and disband the army - a Workers and Peasants Government. (see; Bolivia failed general strike paves way for right. WP73)

defensive

Under such leadership the series of general strikes became purely defensive, exhausting the resources of the masses, at best giving temporary respite from UDP attacks. Yet they provided no permanent solution to Bolivia's economic crisis.

Only a programme of action, which rejected placing the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the workers and peasants and which counterposed to it making the bosses and the imperialists pay the costs of their own crisis, would have been able to rally the rural masses and middle strata behind the proletariat. The immediate and complete cancellation of the debts to the International

as under the 'Cocaine Junta' of General Luis Garcia Meza of 1980/1, was given the Ministry of Defence!

Clearly Paz hopes this will give the reactionary Generals enough influence in Government to make them desist from launching a coup. Such concessions were tried without much success by Salvador Allende near the end of his 1970-73 government in Chile.

extension

That is why, by its very nature, such a struggle had to aim beyond the borders of Bolivia. The struggle would have dynamised the opposition to the tottering Pinochet regime in Chile, opened the possibilities of the Bolivian workers giving a lead to the masses of Peru and Argentina faced with similar attacks from their governments to pay their crippling debts to the imperialists.

Such a strategy was the only one that offered a way out of the disastrous cycle of military dictatorships imposed on the Bolivian people. Instead, the beneficiaries of the apparent stalemate between the UDP government and the organised workers was the right.

Hugo Banzer's ADN (Banzer headed the military dictatorship between 1971 and 1978) won the largest percentage of the votes in the July elections - 28% compared to Paz's 26%. He took over 50% of the votes in the capital La Paz. The MNRH scored heavily amongst the peasants, while Siles' MNR-I was decimated. Despite this Paz with the support of the MIR and other 'left' parties won the Presidency in the Congress.

sacrifice

Within days of his inauguration Paz was declaring to a meeting of Bolivian businessmen his plans for solving the economic crisis; 'The only alternative is work, sacrifice and to place ourselves in a completely realistic situation. This means going against the political approach we created and adopted (since 1952). We are breaking with this policy to adopt an entirely different one'.

The 'sacrifice' of course was not to be asked of his well fed

banks, the expropriation of the capitalists and all imperialist holdings, the taking over of the major retail distribution companies and placing them under workers control, stamping out the black market, the extension of credit to the peasants; these were the type of demands which needed to be fought for and mobilised around.

hostility

Of course, a government which implemented such revolutionary measures would have faced not only the ferocious hostility of its own bourgeoisie and its armed forces, (thus the importance of revolutionary work amongst rank and file soldiers) but also a virtual blockade by the imperialists.

The Paz government of 1985 is very different to that of 1952. The government knows that it will only be tolerated if it shows it can do what Siles could not do, break the resistance of the working class and drive down living standards in the interests of profit.

If Paz fails there is always a return to a direct military dictatorship. So aware is Paz of this that he has included in his 'democratic' government two well known 'Golpistas', figures who have been involved in previous military coups and their dictatorships. Luis Fernando Valle, who served in the military government of General Pereda in 1978 as well



Sana Jose tin mine

audience but their poverty stricken employees. The MNR's traditional anti-imperialist rhetoric and aversion to foreign investment has quickly been dumped in favour of policies which will attract US support and investment. Paz quickly announced Bolivia's 'willingness to pay' its \$4.8 billion foreign debt. Nearly \$1 billion is owed immediately in overdue payments to the international banks as the UDP had declared a unilateral moratorium in June 1984.

payments

Such payments can only be made at the expense of the workers and peasants. On 29 August a swingeing austerity package was introduced aimed at doing just that. Petrol went up 700%, domestic gas (widely used for cooking) went up 20 times, bread quadrupled in price, electricity and telephone costs are to rise ten fold. Most restrictions on imports and exports were lifted in the interests of this 'free market', while the currency was massively devalued. Other measures announced included the breaking up of COMIBOL into decentralised enterprises obviously aimed at weakening the miners' control over management and paving the way for future privatisation of profitable mines. He also announced the opening up of the Uyuni region, said to contain the largest deposits of Lithium and Potassium in the world, to foreign capital.

It was also these measures which led to the September general strike. Originally called for 48 hours by the COB leadership, such was the support that it was extended indefinitely. Paz immediately declared the strike illegal, a fact that did not stop the miners, factory workers, workers in telecommunications, teachers, bankworkers, the oil workers, railwaymen and many other sections making the strike solid.

lessons

The declaration of the state of siege and the use of the army against the strikers was deliberately aimed at weakening the union movement and demonstrating to the bourgeoisie and US imperialists Paz's determination to take on and defeat the working class.

The Bolivian workers must quickly learn the lessons of the past period and set about forging a new leadership in the struggle against the MNR government. Only by doing so can they finally settle accounts with the Bolivian capitalists and their Generals, as well as with their imperialist paymasters.

by S.King

BOLIVIA 1985

The Miners' March Days

In March 1985 thousands of Bolivian miners descended upon the capital, La Paz, and for more than two weeks held the city while the country was engulfed by a general strike. José Villa, active in these events, assesses their significance.

THE MORNING of 4 March 1985; around 15,000 miners are gathered in La Paz. Accompanied by tens of thousands of teachers, students, trade unionists and street traders, their protest resonates around the city all afternoon. Wherever they go they leave their calling card; explosions from detonator caps dancing loudly off the streets. These loud cracks intimidate the army and bring confidence to our ranks.

This was the scene that first morning. It was to be repeated daily for the next two weeks.

The trade union officials pleaded for the marchers to go back to their mines, but the miners shrugged aside their pleas. The key demands had yet to be won: a minimum living wage, a sliding scale of wages, and working class power! They pressed harder and harder. For days the President was a prisoner in his own palace; the roads in the city were blocked.

Nevertheless, this movement did not take power. Regaining their composure, the bosses launched a counter-offensive which was to inflict a heavy defeat on the miners and their supporters. How did this happen?

Bolivia is the poorest and least industrialised country in South America. The great majority of the population scrape a living from small plots of land or by running small shops. Yet the industrial workers play a central role in society, thanks to the importance of their work in the national economy. During and after the Second World War the political power of the miners transformed them into the vanguard of the popular and workers' movement. The miners had been the cornerstone of the resistance to the post-war oligarchic governments: they routed the army in the 1952 revolution.

In 1985 the miners numbered between 50,000 and 70,000, of whom 30,000 worked for COMBOL (the state mining corporation).

Unstable

Between 1978 and 1980 Bolivia was totally unstable. There were three presidential elections, four coups and seven presidents. A general strike stopped the bloody Natusch coup of 1979. In 1980 the Democratic and Popular Union (UDP) won the elections. The UDP had been formed as a popular front by the Communist Party (PC) and the MIR, around Siles Zuazo, leader of the MNRI. (See box.)

However, a coup by García Meza forced the UDP out of government. García Meza intended to impose a Pinochet-style dictatorship, eliminating the leaders of the left. Fortunately, he failed. There were three presidents in the military junta's two year life. The revolutionary upsurge of 1982 forced the military to put the UDP, which they had deposed, back in power with Siles at its head.

In the beginning workers had many illusions in the UDP. The PC, the principal party of the workers' movement, had two ministers. The COB and the peasants' confederation were led by members or supporters of the UDP.

But the UDP remained a "popular front"—a cross-class alliance lying the workers' parties to the "left"



Pensioners' protest, La Paz 1985.

bosses. But the popular front could not satisfy the workers' needs. At that time the whole of Latin America was suffering the effects of recession, sharp rises in debt servicing and a collapse in export prices.

In response to popular pressure the government put wages up, but paid for it by printing more and more money. The UDP offered the miners co-participation in state enterprises and a series of benefits which quickly evaporated in the heat of hyperinflation. The workers soon became disillusioned with the UDP.

In November 1984 manufacturing workers declared a general strike, occupying the factories and taking their bosses hostage. Not a single day passed without fresh strikes and demonstrations. March 1985 marked the twenty-ninth month of disillusionment with the popular front.

It was the PC and the MIR which had instigated "co-government" during the UDP's term in office by encouraging the COB to enter the cabinet. Juan Lechin, the miners' leader and head of the COB executive for four decades, tried to mediate between the UDP and the radical rank and file in order to dissipate the discontent. The PC's support for the government at this moment led to it losing its predominant place in the workers' movement. The MIR then split, with its left wing going on to form the MIR-Masas.

The COB held a congress in 1984. It was polarised between the official

struggle. Lechin suggested replacing Siles with another MNR leader. Deigadillo argued that General Sejas should launch a "patriotic" coup. The POR-Lora demanded the immediate imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat, although it gave no concrete explanation of how this was to be achieved.

Trotsky said that generally in revolutionary processes a moment arrives at which the vanguard of the movement becomes so radicalised that it spontaneously pushes towards power but the majority of the masses do not follow. The forces of reaction can take advantage of this to pass onto the counter-attack.

In Bolivia the miners and sections of workers in La Paz and the Andean plateau wanted to take power. But they were not armed and had not formed workers' councils and popular assemblies (soviets). Nor had they managed to split the army. The majority of the peasants, most students and the towns in the low lands and to the west were not integrated into the movement. In March 1985 the central task was to organise the broad mass of the rank and file workers and peasants in popular assemblies and to arm them.

In March the miners held huge assemblies with thousands participating in the open air. At one point Lechin was booed out of the meeting by militant miners. The miners found him and forced him to take off his trademark Italian hat and wear a ordinary miner's helmet! These assemblies were the raw material out of which soviets could have been built. It was necessary to organise other sectors of workers on the same basis. The assemblies should have then elected delegates to a national action council. The POR-Lora led the University Federation (Students' Union) in La Paz, a city with 40,000 students in a population of less than a million. Meanwhile the POR-De Pié ran the manufacturing workers' federation and the union at the Siglo XX mine (the biggest in Bolivia). The rank and file was radicalised and these federations could have initiated the formation of an elected and accountable popular assembly in La Paz. They could have taken their message out to the country.

As a first step such bodies would have put the distribution of fuel, gas and food under their control. In the armed forces and police force there

was discontent and this was fertile ground on which to sow agitation for the barracks to form soldiers' committees and ally themselves with the movement. But not one organisation of the far left called for the formation of soviet type organisations.

After two weeks of strike action the armed forces occupied the streets and forced the federation to negotiate. The COB leaders failed to organise any resistance and sold out. The miners returned home with only a paltry pay rise to show for their struggles. Before the "March Days" Siles had decided to cut short his period of government by one year in order to bring forward the presidential elections. The right hoped to win and put in place a neo-liberal government which would lead an assault against the proletariat. The March Days delayed the poll by several weeks and the elections were not held until July 1985.

Bánzer, who had ruled the country as a dictator from 1971 to 1978, won the election, declaring that he was going to impose order and stability.

La Paz, which only three or four months earlier had supported the miners, was now transformed into a bastion of support for Bánzer. The petit bourgeois majority of the La Paz population were desperate for an end to hyperinflation and scarcity, and a return to stability and order. If the proletariat could not deliver it (thanks to the betrayal of its leadership) then at least the extreme right would do so, they thought.

Endorse

Despite winning the election, Bánzer had not received the 33% of the vote required to assume office. Parliament refused to endorse him. The "left" then voted for Victor Paz Estenssoro's MNR, and on 6 August 1985 Paz Estenssoro returned to the Presidency for the fourth time. Within a few days his finance minister, Sánchez de Lozada, launched his economic shock therapy. Prices rose overnight—fourteen fold(!)—while wages were frozen. The organised workers took action but the urban traders, shanty town dwellers and the peasants did not join the movement.

In September the COB announced an indefinite general strike against the economic shock. The government was able to break the strike in the factories and the public services. During the second week of strike action there was a workers' and popular assembly held in Oruro, with some ten thousand people taking part. Among the leaders were the comrades who founded Poder Obrero, Workers Power's Bolivian sister organisation.

That night the state decreed a state of siege. Thousands of miners across the whole country began hunger strikes in their mine shafts. But the MNR government won out in the end.

Over the next year, a series of defeats decisively closed the revolutionary period which had opened up in 1982. Time was to show just what a strategic defeat this was for the Bolivian working class.

In the years that followed the heart was ripped out of the workers' movement by the destruction of the tin mining industry. The whole movement was thrown back onto the defensive for the next decade as it tried to regroup to protect the gains of the 1952 revolution from the onslaught of neo-liberalism. ■

WORKERS POWER PUBLIC MEETING

London

Thursday 2 March 1995, 7.30pm
Room S300,
London School of Economics

10 YEARS SINCE THE BOLIVIAN GENERAL STRIKE

José Villa and other activists from Bolivia will recall the events and discuss lessons for revolutionaries today.

COB (Bolivian Workers' Centre): the Bolivian equivalent of the TUC.

DRU: alliance formed within the COB in opposition to the PC.

MIR (Left Revolutionary Movement): ex-Castroite current, moved from verbal espousal of guerrillism in the Seventies to neo-liberalism and government in the nineties.

MIR-Masas (Left Revolutionary Movement-Masas): left split from MIR

MNR (National Revolutionary Movement): a bourgeois nationalist party that emerged triumphant out of the 1952 revolution. The MNR nationalised the mines and most workers voted for it. But despite anti-imperialist rhetoric and a "left" wing prepared to ally with the workers, it

eventually did the job of defeating the working class and maintaining order for the bosses. Now the party of government in Bolivia

MNRI (National Revolutionary Movement Left): a short-lived left split from the MNR in the Fifties.

PC: the (Stalinist) Bolivian Communist Party.

POR-Lora (Revolutionary Workers' Party-Lora): The POR, led by Guillermo Lora.

POR-De Pié (Revolutionary Workers' Party-De Pié): a syndicalist split from the POR. A very small group that occasionally found itself in a position of influence.

UDP (Democratic and Popular Union): a popular front involving the PC, the MIR and MNRI, which won the elections in 1980.

Fighting the union bureaucracy in Bolivia

Sam Lowry outlines the situation facing Bolivian revolutionaries in the unions. Below we reprint the analysis of our Bolivian comrades, from the July edition of their paper.

The major Bolivian trade union confederation, the COB

(Central of Bolivian Workers), held its ninth congress in May this year. Delegates assembled in Sucre, Bolivia on May Day itself after an opening to the year which witnessed renewed trade union militancy in the face of government austerity measures.

Delegates dispersed two weeks later with a political document calling for "subversive resistance" to the government in their pockets but with a new general secretary pledged to supporting that government's neoliberal policies.

In January over 500 miners started off the year with a round of violent protests on the streets of the capital, La Paz, against the MIRADON government's privatisation plans for the state mining corporation, COMIBOL.

The government intends to slash the 7,000 strong workforce by 25% and hand it over to private joint-venture projects.

After four weeks in the capital, many miles from workmates and families, and despite widespread solidarity action from other sectors of workers, the striking miners were sold out by the COB officials who accepted the principle of privatisation in return for a church-brokered deal.

Other disputes flared up, including a 24 hour oil workers stoppage over corrupt management on 12 February. Two days later a one day general strike in La Paz organised by the Civic Committee brought the city to a standstill. This potentially reactionary protest was led by the populist Mayor of La

Paz against the way the state budget was divided up to favour poorer regions.

Public education, a major gain of 1952, has been a key target for the government since 1986. Up to now the unions have succeeded in stopping the attempt to shed central state responsibility for funding of education onto the poorer municipalities.

In February, students and staff responded again militantly to proposed budget cuts and the privatisation of universities, which in Bolivia are open to everyone free of charge.

The students defied violent state repression of their demonstrations and won some budget increases from the government. The national teachers' union also called a general strike over pay and mobilised a series of militant demonstrations, finally winning a 20% pay rise and a bonus payment.

Since at least the election of the ADN-MIR government in 1989, the general pattern of class struggle has been one of defensive struggles in the face of harsh attacks, generally derided by reformist leaderships. In recent years the labour movement has been severely undermined by such attacks.

The miners are down to 8,000 from over 27,000 in 1985. The number of organised industrial workers has been whittled down from 70,000 to 30,000 in the same period. Coupled with the demise of Stalinism and the discrediting of the left, this has led to the rise of populist parties. In El Alto, the huge shanty town

above La Paz, CONDEPA rules the council, while in Oruro, once bastion of the miners and stronghold of the nationalist party of the 1952 revolution—the MNR—the UCS party of beer magnate Max Fernandez won last December's municipal elections.

Parties like CONDEPA and UCS profit from the disillusion of the masses in the fighting capacity of the unions and from the cynicism with which they now greet the nationalist rhetoric of the national parties.

The mass of unemployed and underemployed prefer the "self-help" schemes and meagre palliatives of the populists to the betrayed and bankrupt visions of nationalism.

The COB and its affiliates are now faced with a major crisis of direction. Divisions resurfaced this year over increasing the weight of the peasants' representation in the bureaucracy, the need for a new—'that is, multi-class—strategy and for a more 'Bolivian' or indigenist approach.

Since Juan Lechin, the historic leader of the COB, relinquished his thirty year hold on the reins, the COB has elected a new leader at the three last congresses.

This year, despite voting for a 'left' political document from the left reformist PRP of Edgar Ramirez, congress elected Oscar Salas as its new leader. Supported by a broad range of populist and rightist organisations, Salas' election signals a major turn away from 'traditional' class struggle politics: he is an open supporter of the government who accepts privatisation as inevitable.

There was a noticeable increase in right wing delegates and officials and outright bourgeois parties were represented too. They happily did a deal with elements of the left over the political document in order to secure their candidate's election.

The left will have to rally their forces rapidly if they wish to see any of the document's fine phrases come to life.

The COB Congress: results and prospects

(COB) is composed of those who, with official support, practically took over the leadership. The officials' role in this event was to divide the COB and the workers' movement. The political document which demanded 'Active resistance and subversion, and popular insurrection to defeat neoliberalism and build socialism' did not mention refusal to recognise the external debt, which is

In 1951. We do not want a reactionary safeguard imposed to derail decisions which upset the bosses.

Future support and prospects for the Alliance depend on whether New Labour can gain substantial trade union support. Up to now unions have not affiliated to New Labour. However, there are big rifts in the making within the Council of Trade Unions (CTU).

The bureaucracy wants to moderate opposition to the ECA and to get a deal with Labour based on the repeal of ECA. If Labour win office. About twenty unions are opposed to this strategy and met in late August to agree a different plan of action. This could lead to a new federation affiliated to New Labour, turning it into a bourgeois workers' party, and thus the Alliance into a fully fledged cross-class popular front.

The Alliance may draw in more support if National is fragmented by Peters' defection and if New Labour becomes a serious bourgeois workers' party. Such an Alliance—a Popular Front—will not solve the problems of either New Zealand capitalism or the needs of the workers.

Nonetheless, if it draws substantial support, for those desperate for a change under PR it might open up a crisis of legitimacy not just of the form of bourgeois parliamentarism rule but of the very nature of that rule and the state itself.

Whatever form the

political struggle takes, our task now is to fight to forge a working class movement that can not only recover its losses but go on to impose its own answer to the crisis.

The trade unions have taken a battering over the last couple of years, especially under the ECA. Many have been sidelined as employers have ignored them in drawing up new contracts.

Some unions have disaffiliated from the CTU, while others have ignored its advice and fought back. Still more are heading towards business unionism, seeking sweetheart deals with employers at any price. Some unions have lost 50% of their members. The Clerical Workers Union has disappeared.

Yet there are signs that workers will fight to resist the ECA and the employers' use of it. In February a strike at Carpet

Yarns in Christchurch was partly successful and won a contract which included union recognition.

In late July, over 1,200 pulp and paper workers struck against Carter Holt Harvey, one of New Zealand's major export companies, and in mid-September were still keeping picket lines up against scab labour.

Teachers and nurses have also been engaged in strike action against cuts in funding. Scaffeters, engineers and others, whose contracts are up for renewal, are also preparing for strike action.

Workers Power (NZ/A)

The wage and welfare cuts that would result from the ECA and alone called for a general strike against its introduction, a demand that was then taken up by many workers against the bureaucracy of the CTU. Now we must raise the issue of the repeal of the ECA as a vital demand for all working class actions and mobilisations.

Whilst critical support for PR can help speed up working class disillusion with bourgeois democracy and popularise the idea of a workers' government based on their own organisations of struggle and power, we must fight against any idea of waiting for the 1993 election result to bring relief from the attacks.

We must fight around demands that veid the workers into a united front of struggle against the welfare cuts, the new wage contracts and whole ECA machinery.

Workers Power will be on the picket lines and demonstrations with our propaganda. We are active in the current strike wave and will fight to democratise the struggles and the unions. We call on the strongest unions not to settle until the weaker unions have won their rights.

We will work for the formation of elected and recallable strike committees, councils of action and workers defence committees to protect them from the attentions of police and scab alike. Each and every fightback can be the point of departure for a general strike against the ECA and thus for a root and branch destruction of all the National government's plans—past, present and future.

and decentralisation of education and public health.

The government is ruthlessly implementing the agreement with the World Bank, in which it has promised this year to sack nearly half the 7,000 COMIBOL mineworkers, in order subsequently to hand it over to private management; also to the reduction of 25,000 of the current 70,000 state employed teachers and 4,000 of the 12,000 public health workers.

All of this within the framework of neoliberalism, transferring the services to the regions (i.e. decentralisation) or privatisation.

On this basis the MIR-ADN government has given fifteen days to the miners to accept the reopening of the San José mine as a joint venture. To do this COMIBOL is blackmailing the workers into accepting "voluntary" redundancy in return for an extra bonus or are faced with compulsory redundancy.

The workers are demanding that the government invest in the reopening, but this would require US\$600,000; the government prefers to spend more than US\$3 million on sacking the miners.

In the same way it signalled nearly a month ago the privatisation of the glue factories and the deforestation of Catawi and its handing over to a Brazilian multinational.

We must be watchful with the leaders of the COB and the FSTMB so that they do not commit the errors of the last mobilisation in January, when around 500 miners from Huamuli, Colquiri and other pits, put on a show of force in response to privatisation in La Paz.

The demonstration showed such potential strength of support from other sectors, that the government had had to declare a state of siege, but this never happened due to the COB's treacherous role. That leadership then had a demobilising 72 hour "truce" and signed a treaty in which the workers accepted privatisation.

With this result, the ascent of the mass movement which after so many years had grown within the oppressed faded, and the masses—demoralised but without having even fought the battle against privatisation—placed their

hope in the achievements of the Ninth Congress of the COB. The results of the Congress we already know, are an ill omen for the working class.

The leadership endorsed by the bureaucrats have shown their inefficiency over the boycott of the National Census last June. The COB did nothing to take the lead in an organised boycott.

They needed to propagandise for the boycott, go to the masses explaining the importance of the boycott, the importance of showing the bourgeoisie that they still had an organised enemy before them.

The leadership of the workers and peasants limited themselves to doing nothing. With the exception of some of them, the boycott was not carried out and its failure led to the exploited losing confidence in themselves and their leadership. Now the Ninth Congress approved the PRP's "subversive" thesis, the basic line of which is "for active and subversive resistance and popular insurrection".

But, we know that the vote for this political thesis owes more to the power of the apparatus and to the bureaucrats' vote which endorsed the support of the majority. It is true that the PRP did not win the leadership of the COB, but nevertheless it holds the leadership of the FSTMB in its hands—and "active resistance" and even more, "subversive resistance" have remained propaganda slogans.

Now the "subversive" PRP is unmasked. The rank and file are demand-

ing the carrying out of their proposal, especially in the mines.

Privatisation is advancing and the exploited are without leadership. Consciousness, on the verge of having given a green light to an officially endorsed leadership, has not defined any clear or specific tasks in anticipation for what we know is going to happen: privatisation.

The workers must not endorse the type of state ownership which was imposed after the revolution of 1952. That administration failed because the bourgeoisie boycotted enterprises like COMIBOL, and because in reality it was not an administration for the workers.

The solution to the problems of the exploited is for them to take control, not only of the enterprises and factories, but also of the state. That will obviously only occur when we have vanquished the bourgeoisie.

Meanwhile, under this type of imperialist attack, it is possible to prevent the government from privatising the enterprises and instead reopen them with state investment. This is vital if the organised working class movement is to survive.

The reactivation of the enterprises must be done under workers' supervision, so that the bourgeoisie cannot boycott production. The workers must not take over management of the enterprises because:

- the bourgeoisie controls the capital and will not give them enough money.
- In order to increase production the workers would have to exploit themselves and/or sack each other.
- We can do none of these tasks with the current leadership of either the COB or the FSTMB. We must convocate an extraordinary congress of the COB and of the FSTMB to elect a consistent and fighting leadership, which will not do any deals with the government.

The privatisation of all state enterprises must be stopped or thousands of workers will stay without work and be exploited.

Before the government's attack the workers had begun to go out onto the streets and were preparing to fight possibly the final battle against privatisation. The factory workers in La Paz mobilised fighting marches. The leadership of the COB must unify these struggles and prevent sectionalism. Sectional struggles will benefit the government and the bureaucrats.

We must not forget that the COB is in the hands of reformists and of officials who will negotiate to prevent the oppressed from radicalising their struggle.

It is necessary to organise and unify these mobilisations. It is essential to build rank and file committees to stop the traitors.

- No to privatisation!
- State investment under collective workers' control!

LAI D OFF MINER FROM "SIGLO XX" MINE

imperialism's mechanism for enforcing the super-exploitation of the "semi-colonies". Similarly, it argues for the construction of socialism in one country, a theory which has failed historically, and which was approved through official support.

At the time of the CEN election the officials supported the block led by Oscar Salas (ASD-MBL-CONDEPA-UCS-EJE COMUNERO-MIR-FIR-FRUTCA) and which during the discussions accepted the privatisation of state enterprises.

The officials operate principally through those who work for the US embassy, proclaiming themselves for "free trade unionism". The workers must fight against this "trade unionism" which aims to depoliticise them so that they accept neoliberalism.

At the Eighth Congress

(1990) the officials, playing the same game, supported the political document—again the PRP—which in draft only talked about "From active resistance to subversive resistance".

During the negotiations, which the bureaucracy felt to be foremost for the leadership, the leaders adopted the sentiment of "combative protests against neo-liberalism, towards a dialogue with the government".

The FSTMB [miners' union] is playing the same role. In no part of the document approved by the Ninth Congress was the occupation of the mines raised, thus trampling on the memory of those who founded the union.

On the other hand, the POR (the centrist group led by G Lora) counterposed the taking of power to the taking of the mines. Ultra-left politics such as these ensure that this centrist party



Spring wave of militant protest rocks Bolivia

In March teachers, tin miners and peasants mounted mass resistance to the government. Demonstrations, hunger strikes, and repression followed fast upon one another. Sam Lowy reports from Bolivia

Bolivia goes to the polls on 6 June. But before the electoral campaign began, the country was rocked by a militant wave of working class struggles. On 1 March sixteen leaders of the COB (Bolivia's trade union council) began a hunger strike in protest at government plans for yet more cuts in public spending.

Within four days, there were twenty such hunger strikes involving 154 strikers. Nine days later they had been joined by over 600 more at 43 sites. The strikers sought an end to government privatisation plans in health and education as well as the state mining company (COMIBOL). They hoped to halt further cuts in the already inadequate social security provisions.

They aimed to get uncultivated land owned by the *latifundistas* transferred to indigenous and rural communities. The COB's central demand was for a basic monthly family wage of 1,462 bolivianos (\$348) as compared to the present minimum of 300b (\$74).

The COB's campaign was by no means unproblematic. For example, it accepted the rights of the *latifundistas* to hold huge tracts of land despite the 1953 land reform which clearly gave land rights only to those who work the land. Equality, it failed to distinguish between state control of nationalised industries and workers' control and it did not warn against the dangers of planned joint venture projects in the mining industry. Nevertheless, it provided an important focus for the entire labour and peasant movement and showed the potential to mobilise the working popu-

lation against the government on a massive scale.

The hunger strike is a classic tactic of the Bolivian class struggle. In 1978, a mass hunger strike started by miners' wives, and involving more than 1,000 people, was the catalyst in bringing down the hated Banzer dictatorship.

The current hunger strike was intended to act as a national focus for the growing discontent in the country, sparked off by the government's "offer" of between 9% and 15% wage rises for teachers, health and other public sector workers.

In Santa Cruz, the Civic Committee issued a call to arms if the regional budget should be cut and workers occupied an important oil installation. There was a regional strike in the Department of La Paz.

Nevertheless, the hunger strike is essentially a defensive and passive tactic. The best and most courageous militants who join the strike become cut off from the rank and file and it is very difficult for the mass of workers to develop longer term tactics and strategies.

They become fearful for the health of their leaders and, thus, the demands of the campaign are set by the stamina of the hunger strikers. What was necessary to take the campaign forward was the direct mobilisation of the mass of workers themselves.

At the same time as the COB hunger strike, the miners' union, FSTMB, was preparing its own action against government cuts. Historically, the tin miners have been the vanguard of the Bolivian working

class. Before the collapse of the market in October 1985, there were 27,000 miners in COMIBOL, today there are just 4,350 and, with tin prices still low, the World Bank is demanding still more cuts as the basis for further loans.

The immediate plans of the government of the ex-let nationalist MIR of Paz Zamora involved seeking 836 miners, closing the least efficient pits at San José, Bolívar, Meachacamarca and Santa Fé and introducing joint venture schemes at the more economic mines such as Huancani and Colquiri.

The intention was then to await the results of the 6 June elections before announcing a further package which would cut the workforce to a mere 343 miners.

During the first week of March, miners began arriving in La Paz. They held daily demonstrations with the teachers who were mounting a nationwide campaign against the government's pay offer. Thousands took part in these marches which were violently broken up by the police and army using tear gas.

Support for the demonstrators was widespread because of the impact of government price rises of 8% for petrol and diesel and 4.5% for the bottled gas which is the normal cooking fuel in Bolivia.

Added to this, Paz Zamora signed a deal to export liquid gas to Brazil at a price widely believed to represent a financial loss.

When a landslide ruptured the main internal fuel pipeline, leading to shortages everywhere, digests turned to anger and spontaneous blockades of major roads by furious housewives

added to the government's problems.

On 8 March, after a series of delegate meetings, the COB called an indefinite general strike to be joined, in stages, by different sectors of workers. On 12 March, the oil workers came out and peasant union leaders announced plans for a nationwide road blockade on the 15th.

Although the oil workers' strike ended after two days and the road blockade was called off, the pressure resulted in a new round of talks between the government and the COB on 18 March.

Under pressure from the rank and file, no agreement was reached and the government broke off all negotiations with a final, take it or leave it, offer of 20% for the teachers.

At the same time, it ordered a national crackdown on "public disturbances". This took the form of a national ban on all demonstrations with armed soldiers patrolling the streets of the major cities. A full scale, national "state of siege" was, politically impossible because, constitutionally, such a measure has to last at least ninety days and this would have included the election period.

Nonetheless, a regional state of siege was declared in Potosí where the Civic Committee, in contrast to many around the country, had been pursuing its part in the national mobilisation with great vigour. In ensuing street fights with the army, many workers and students were injured, two disappeared, a police station was burned to the ground and one 14 year old student was killed.

Despite the repression, miners and teachers continued their struggle. In many towns, soldiers drove hunger strikers from their pickets with tear gas and around the country leading trade unionists were arrested, some being tortured for information about their comrades.

On 22 March, in defiance of COB instructions, miners and teachers led a militant march from El Alto on the outskirts of La Paz into the city itself. They confronted armed soldiers and police with siltng shots and rocks and two police stations were razed after prisoners in them were released.

In the early hours of 23 March, the COB signed a deal with the government. This accepted the 20% for teachers but only 9% for health workers.

Details were released, the privatisation of health and education was put on ice and there was a vague agreement to consult over future privatisation plans. In the mining sector, FSTMB's misguiding plans for worker management (i.e. worker liability for losses) were to be "considered" and privatisation was formally rejected.

However, this did not rule out joint ventures which would undoubtedly lead to further redundancies. Miners themselves only gained a 12% pay rise, barely keeping pace with inflation.

This settlement was clearly a sell-out and was seen as such by the militants. Many hunger strikers, despite being close to coma, opposed the deal but their isolation from the actual arena of struggle left them helpless.

The rank and file of the peasant union, CSUCTB, bitterly called a national congress in order to discipline and replace the treacherous leadership that had called off the national road blockade at the height of the struggle.

Although the teachers and miners left La Paz, the fight continued in some pits for another two weeks until troops occupied them.

A final attempt to secure further strike action in early April was detailed by the leaders of the COB and of the teachers' and miners' unions. This marked the end of the period of mobilisation in which the workers had succeeded in demanding and extending their organisations and had secured a number of partial gains on the economic front.

At the same time, it is clear that much more could have been won had the full potential of the mobilisations been realised. Once again, the lions of the Bolivian working class have been led by donkeys.

Poder Obrero (Bolivia) was energetically involved from the start. In the aftermath of the sell-out, Trotskyists

In Bolivia must be quick to draw the important lessons of the struggle. Crucial to taking the strike forward would have been the creation of local and regional councils which could have coordinated direct action, forged a national command and seized the initiative from the vacillating national leaderships.

Such councils, composed of militants from all the workers' organisations would pledge to fight uncompromisingly against all privatisations.

Using the tactics of direct mass action—occupations of the pits and factories, the blockade of all major roads, general strikes and the creation of workers' defence forces—workers would have been able to draw in the support of the peasant organisations across the country.

They could have formed the basis for a campaign that went beyond the defensive and immediately economic demands of the COB and called for workers' control of industry and the public sector, full scale land reform and the end to payments on the external debt to the imperialist banks.

In time, such councils could have established themselves as the recognised leadership of the working class. In the short term, however, it was necessary to fight to convene an extraordinary congress of the COB to demand that the existing leaders planned and coordinated the escalation of the action or, if necessary, to replace them altogether.

The end of the mobilisations and their replacement by the electoral circus of the main parties has only served to highlight the lack of a working class political party in Bolivia.

The election is a contest between reactionary bourgeois blocs. The most important candidates are Hugo Banzer and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Banzer was the ferocious anti-communist dictator between 1971 and 1978. Ironically, he is backed today by those parties that he used to persecute—MIR and the PCML.

Sánchez is the author of the neo-liberal model and head of the MNR. Other important bourgeois candidates

Africa: Popular revolt and national conflicts

José Villa examines the effects on the continent of the failure of post-colonial bourgeois regimes to break with imperialism

are Max Fernández (UCS), Carlos Palenque (Condepa) and Araníbar (MBL).
Despite all their promises of reforms, new investments, the creation of half a million new jobs, and an end to all privatisation plans, any of these candidates, once elected, would immediately begin to implement the IMF and World Bank's plans which will spell yet more misery and hardship for the workers and peasants of Bolivia.

Last year, a call was made by the congress of the Santa Cruz COB for the creation of a workers' party. This was also endorsed by the COB leader, Jesús Yavarí.

Present circumstances make clear the burning need for such a party but all the indications are that what the COB leaders have in mind is a Bolivian equivalent of the Brazilian Party of Labour, an electoral machine rather than a weapon for prosecuting the class struggle to a victorious conclusion.

Such a party, which breaks completely with the politics of the bourgeoisie and bases itself on a revolutionary transitional programme, will only be built as a mass organisation within the context of the scale of workers' mobilisations seen in March.

The future will hold many more such battles and the task of Trotskyists now is to convince the best militants of the lessons of the March events so that they can organise now the nucleus of the future revolutionary party.

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

The Spring 1993 edition of *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 4, is entitled 'Colour and Class: Origins of South African Trotskyism'. Articles include: Ian Hunter's 'Ralph Lee and pioneer Trotskyists of Johannesburg' and Banuch Hirson's 'The Trotskyist Groups in South Africa'. This issue also includes a study of the trade union policy of various Trotskyist groups.

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In no continent is the bankruptcy of capitalism demonstrated with so starkly as in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa possesses two thirds of the 30 poorest countries in the world. One third of its people receive less than the minimum number of daily calories necessary for medium term survival. Africa has the highest infant mortality rate of all the continents.

The 1980s have been particularly cruel for Africa. Production per capita fell more than 10% over the decade. Africa's share of world trade fell by half from the already meagre figure of 2.4%, smaller now than the smallest European imperialist countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands or Belgium.

This state of affairs is not due to some natural deficiency. The continent's agricultural and mineral resources are enormous. The cause of this seemingly inescapable poverty is the weakness of semi-colonial capitalism, and behind this the effects of imperialist domination. Africa suffers at one and the same time from a lack of capital and from the depredations of capitalism.

Capital came primarily in the wake of the colonial powers and after the imperialist division of the continent. Rather than destroying and replacing earlier modes of production imperialist capital preserved them and combined its own super-exploitation with them.
It led to the withering of certain sectors of production, those which met the

large families live in rural style houses without water, sewers, electricity or made-up roads.

It should not be imagined that there is no wealthy classes in Africa. In fact the continent has the most revolting contrasts between a few rich and the vast army of the poor. Where 90% of the population live in squalor there are mansions whose inhabitants consume the clothes and perfumes of Paris, who have bank accounts in London or Zurich, private jets and private armies to guard their wealth.

In the Ivory Coast the luxurious ego-maniac Houphouët-Boigny recently had the Pope consecrate a replica of Saint Peter's cathedral in Rome, larger even than the original.

Since independence the great majority of African states have been ruled for most of the time by one-man dictatorships or military juntas. Around a corrupt military elite is assembled an élite of state bureaucrats with strong mutually beneficial links to the imperialist multinationals.

A few states—Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Benin, Congo, Mozambique—often not much different as far as the character of their ruling élites were concerned, proclaimed themselves anti-imperialist, even "Marxist-Leninist". They cultivated strong links to the Soviet Union.

These regimes nationalised some foreign companies, carried through agrarian reforms, promoted a black consciousness culture, supporting other anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements. Economically, they created a highly protectionist and state capitalist structure but despite the economic plans and the Marxist-Leninist ideology these were not workers' states.

During the Cold War

Africa was a key point of conflict between the USA and the USSR. The US gave billions of dollars in military aid to anti-communist regimes or to fund anti-communist revolts against states which were regarded as pro-soviet. Each side attempted to utilise and inflame inter-ethnic contradictions within their rivals.

This Africa became wracked by nationalist wars and guerrilla uprisings.

But at the close of the 1980s the situation began to change. With the decline and fall of the Soviet bureaucracy in the Gorbachev years, 1985-1991, the source of military and economic aid dried up.

One after another of Africa's "Marxist" or "socialist" states began to move ever closer to imperialism, throwing overboard all the paraphernalia of Stalinism in favour of a newfound enthusiasm for the market.

This was the pattern in Ethiopia (even before the fall of Mengistu), in Somalia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo, Angola and Mozambique. This also applied to the "African socialist" and pan-Africanist regimes such as Nyere's Tanzania or Kaunda's Zambia, and Rawling's Ghana.

Now these states are seeking large scale investments from the multinationals and accepting IMF austerity programmes in order to qualify for assistance in the future. They have been pressured into the usually IMF recipe: massive privatisations, puffing down protective barriers, putting the economies of these states totally at the mercy of the world market.

In these conditions

imperialists really had no further use for the corrupt military dictatorships they had maintained for so long as a barrier to communism. Indeed, the corruption of these regimes was a drain on the multinationals that had to pay-off a whole stratum of generals and state bureaucrats for their contracts.

The imperialists decided that "cheap government" was "democratic" government. Suddenly, their hypocritical propaganda about "human rights" was switched from Eastern Europe to Africa.

But on its own, imperialist pressure would not have worked. The mighty revolt of the black proletariat of South Africa in the years 1984-6, as well as similar mass democracy movements from Chile to the Philippines had an impact on students and trade unionists in the African dictatorships.

Last but not least, the popular upheavals in Eastern Europe, which top-

pled seemingly impregnable dictatorships, encouraged revolt in Africa. Since 1989 in state after African state the one-party regimes or one man dictatorships collapsed or quickly reformed themselves.

This process was not simply one of reform from above or from outside pressure. Often it involved big street demonstrations, barricade fighting and general strikes.

Imperialism could afford to support or encourage this process because multiparty democracy could control the social forces emerging and their was no immediate fear of "communist" intervention, or a genuinely revolutionary socialist leadership developing in the short term. Most of the new democratic parties were pro-market and indeed pro-imperialist.

But with or without democracy the economic prospects for these states are grim indeed. All of them face enormous problems inherited from the failure of both imperialism and the semi-colonial ruling classes to solve the ethnic and national antagonisms that are pulling the state structures apart.

Black Africa

is divided into nearly fifty states yet nearly all of them are multi-ethnic in character, consisting of more than one linguistic and even national communities. The borders of these states were created not by these communities or groups of communities in the process of their own development but by the colonial powers demarcating their territory from one another. Yet since the the imperialist powers withdrew their governors and garrisons all attempts to unify the states of the continent have failed.

The dreams of the founders of Pan Africanism have proved unrealistic. This is not simply because the predatory actions of the imperialist powers were determined to maintain the balkanisation and plunder of the continent. It is no less the work of the parasitic ruling class that the colonialists left behind to exercise power for them.

The Organisation of African Unity, the club of imperialist stooges, refuses to see the colonial borders called into question and for good rea-

The struggle of the mining proletariat and the neo-liberal hurricane

Translated from *Poder Obrero* (Bolivia), February, 1993

THE POLICY OF the government is to privatise the economy of the country. Because of this it does not, and will not, accept any alternative plans that the workers put forward which fly in the face of their policy. If up to now the workers' movement has resisted and avoided privatisation it is due to the solid actions they have undertaken such as the seizure of the San José or Tasna mines and the marches to La Paz.

The FSTMB [the miners' union] and its leaders propose "alternative plans" or "delegate administrations" that are destined to fail and that only divert, disorientate, weaken and waste the time of the workers in their struggle. The alternative plan of workers' self-management consists of transferring the administration of COMIBOL [state mining company] into the hands of the FSTMB for a set period of time. This new administration would be in charge of finding capital investment to regenerate the state mining sector. The administration would modify the present worker-employer relationship: state-employed workers would become FSTMB-employed workers.

The proletarian nature of the most combative union sector would be lost, which, in turn, would mortally wound the proletarian hegemony of the COB [the united trade union confederation in Bolivia]. All "self-managing" and "co-managing" workers are doomed to defeat in a market economy in a capitalist country. In order to get out of the economic crisis the proletariat would need to take over the whole economy. That is to say, it would need to control the banks, the economics ministry, external trade, etc.

This will only be possible with the seizure of political power on the part of the workers led by their own political party. Therefore, all self-management measures, whatever their colouration, can only lead to a complete economic breakdown. In order to overcome the crisis the workers would have to super-exploit themselves and take on casual workers who they would in turn exploit. The self-managing businesses would have to compete against each other and to set production at a maximum which would mean refusing to respect stoppages and strikes organised by their unions.

The "delegate administration", which emerged in the city of Oruro under the leadership of the COD [the regional organisation of the COB] in an attempt to find an alternative to privatisation, proposed that the administration of COMIBOL mines (in this case of San José) pass into the hands of regional bodies like the Civic

Committee, the University, and the trade union of that sector. This would not lose the worker-employer relationship between COMIBOL and the workers and the state would re-invest capital in the businesses in order to regenerate them economically. This "delegate administration" conserves the present worker-employer relation. However, it extends worker self-management and other bourgeois and petit-bourgeois relationships under the umbrella of bodies such as the Civic Committees. All this would run up against the same insurmountable obstacles inside the capitalist system. The alternative plans can be put forward by the workers to its own government and not to the bourgeois government. To raise the alternative plans with the class enemy represents nothing but a betrayal of the working class. These plans can only tie the workers to bad bourgeois administrations and involve them in self-exploitation.

Both plans were rejected by the government given that its crystal clear intention was the implementation of a neo-liberal privatisation policy no matter what the cost.

The miners of San José, disorientated by their leaders with their alternative plans and negotiations about the payment of wages and food stores, resisted throughout 1992 in the face of great pressure and the government's privatisation offensive. However, this resistance suffered from a constant weakening. Around 150 out of 500 workers have abandoned the struggle.

This weakening, and one ought to repeat, is due to the deceitful and disorientating policy of their union leaders. After having fought for workers' self-management during the first half of 1992 they have gone over to fight for the delegate administration. During the whole of last year the workers heroically resisted the attack of the government despite their disorientating and feeble leaders.

Face with a negative and discouraging outcome the miners of San José now seek to settle for better social benefits than the workers had before. However, the struggle isn't lost. The only thing, at this moment, that can save the state mining companies from privatisation or closure is the seizure of the mines within the framework of national and regional mobilisations.

In the Santa Fé mine the workforce has been cut. Out of the 170 that used to be there, there are now 100. The miners of Bolívar, disorientated by their official leaders, just hope to keep their jobs whether the company is

privatised or not. If a future private company sacked the workers only then would they react against privatisation. This tactic is collaborationist and false inasmuch as the class enemy has taken into consideration this possibility and is prepared for this moment. Today the workers of Bolivar aren't producing anything and some, encouraged by a management which aims to dismantle the mine, are just passing the time doing absolutely nothing. COMIBOL cancels their wages. The same thing is happening at Ingenio Machacamara where some workers keep an eye on the plant while the great majority enjoy a kind of paid holiday. This is the general situation that all the nationalised mines find themselves in with the exception of a few such as Huanuni. But these aren't outside the privatisation plan.

Only by seizing the mines and imposing workers' control over production and marketing can workers prevent the privatisation or closure of the mines. The state must invest in its companies in order to reactivate them. And to finance it we demand the end of payments on the astronomical foreign debt. It is the bourgeoisie that has administered the state and COMIBOL. *The*

workers must not collaborate with the bourgeois state through the drawing up of alternative plans.

In the face of the closure of state-owned companies we must seize them and demand that the government invests in order to reactivate them under collective workers' control. We must also demand the opening of the books. In this way we can demonstrate that the workers are not the cause of the crisis. Rank and file assemblies can decide what we do with the corrupt officials that have embedded themselves in the ranks of the workers and in the boardrooms.

Collective workers' control is a transitory step. It would last a short time under a capitalist state. It indicates that workers will not collaborate with the bourgeoisie, prevents privatisation and, more, directs the struggle towards an entirely new system—that is to say, towards socialism.

- Long live class independence!
- Fight privatisation!
- Occupy the mines!
- Impose collective workers' control!

Bolivia; privatisation, elections and the workers

Document passed by the Fourth Conference of Poder Obrero (Bolivia)
August 1993

Since the 1985 CPSU Congress when Gorbachev announced perestroika's arrival, we have seen the collapse of the "socialist states" of Eastern Europe. After Lenin's death in 1923, the bureaucracy headed by Stalin began to strangle the socialist revolution opened up in 1917. Stalin sealed the national frontiers to prevent the spread of socialist revolution ("socialism in one country") and denied the possibility of making revolutions in backward countries without industrialisation and peaceful coexistence with the bourgeoisie. The government of workers' councils (soviets) was replaced by the dictatorship of bureaucratic terror allied with imperialism against world revolution. Thus, immediately after the Second World War Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin divided up the world in the name of "peaceful coexistence". The same bureaucracy that obstructed the construction of socialism has collapsed and delivered itself into the arms of capitalism. In the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe openly bourgeois governments are already in place (e.g. Poland and Russia) which are fostering nationalism at the same time as restoring capitalism, bringing with it unemployment, colossal price rises and privatisation. One dramatic example is Yeltsin who is trying to push Russia towards capitalism along a fast-track and taking total power as president to do it. Another tragic example is the inter-ethnic war in ex-Yugoslavia: the bloody confrontation between Bosnians, Croats and Muslims to keep existing territory or occupy new ground. The collapse of Stalinism has provoked the growth of reactionary forces—racism, fascism, inter-ethnic struggles. This does not lead us to fight for the re-establishment of Stalinist regimes. While we clearly defend unconditionally the workers' states from imperialist aggression and other reactionary forces, at the same time we call for political revolution and for workers to take power into their own hands through workers' councils, led by a revolutionary party.

Breathing space for imperialism.

Workers all over the world, but mainly in the semi-colonies, had many illusions in the degenerate workers' states. The disintegration of the USSR, the transition of other countries of Eastern Europe to the market economy, at the same time as the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the defeat of the guerrillas in El Salvador, has had a negative influence on the consciousness of the workers' movement worldwide, as well as giving imperialism renewed political strength. This is why imperialism smashed Iraq and later invaded Somalia. The aim is to install themselves with all their military

power in these regions and increase the oppression of the semi-colonies. Now, it is doing everything possible to destroy the degenerate workers' states that still exist and impose bourgeois regimes: Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea. One example is the Torricelli Law, the economic blockade of Cuba. Our struggle must include the defence of these degenerate workers' states against imperialist attack and against their repressive governments and forces, we fight for political revolution in these states. We fight for workers councils to take power and decide everything. Castro announced the opening of Cuba towards a market economy which means a further defeat for the Stalinist bureaucracy. This rupture in Stalinist policy gives imperialism more force and breathing space in the midst of its own crisis. It will not wait for a second before attacking the workers' movement of these countries and semi-colonies. However, imperialism is not able to impose its new world order, it is deepening the contradictions between the imperialist countries and the workers' movement of the world is resisting in some regions more than others.

How imperialism aims to save itself

The major industrial capitalist countries (USA, Japan, EC) have imposed neo-liberal policies since the end of the 1970s in order to reverse their excessive budget and balance of payments deficits (USA is losing more than \$150 million a year in the world market). First Thatcher then Reagan started implementing neoliberal policies in their respective countries, public spending was reduced and major state companies were privatised (e.g. transport in England). They are fiercely attacking workers' gains in their own countries.

The USA is facing grave problems due to its economic decline when compared with Europe and Japan. The North American fiscal deficit has reached more than \$400,000 million and for this an adjustment programme is needed to correct the deficit. The implementation of neoliberal policies, in an attempt to solve the crisis, has stagnated the economy, inflation has risen from 2.9% in 1992 to 4.3% today. The economies of backward countries, that are subject to imperialism, are increasingly more unstable, as the USA offloads all its problems on to them.

In this context the capitalist "new world order" has not been established because of the inter-imperialist contradictions (USA v. EC and Japan) and because there are still degenerated workers' states (China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea). Every day the economic power of the USA is being relegated unlike their military power. Clearly it is still the guard-dog of the capitalist

world. The European Community and Japan are taking shape as the next hegemonic imperialist powers. So as not to be left behind Bush has launched the *The Initiative for the Americas*, which is, in Clinton's words, the American Common Market. It will aim to build a single market. This is part of neo-liberal policy: the freeing up of the supply and demand in the semi-colonies (such as Bolivia) in order to invade our markets with their own products. It is the law of the market. Backward countries have become bit by bit merely the source of raw materials and cheap labour. New policies are imposed, changing the judicial and economic structures of these countries, putting "their states" at their disposal. According to Bush, this plan includes the creation of a multinational armed force under imperialist hegemony that would allow the imposition of neo-liberalism and the militarisation of Latin America. Today they have not changed their intention in spite of the "pacifism" of Clinton.

Obstacles to the imposition of neo-liberalism

The smooth application of neo-liberal policies is not viable in backward capitalist countries because the social cost is too high. Venezuela, a much richer country than Bolivia, has already retreated from its application. In the majority of backward capitalist countries where they are trying to take neo-liberalism forward its application has provoked all kinds of responses; state coups in Haiti, Venezuela, and Guatemala; mass mobilisations; a referendum in Uruguay (in which the proposed privatisation was repudiated); brutal repression by the national bourgeoisie. It is because of having to impose this policy that it is necessary to defeat the organisations of the workers and the people and it is there that they met their first stumbling block. There are still regions where the struggles of the movement of workers and the exploited continue. While private property continues to exist, and above all poverty and hunger, the class struggle asserts itself daily, thus reaffirming the need and possibility of socialism.

Governments swore that neoliberal policies would reduce the external debt. It grew by more than \$443,000 million in 1993, at the same time that \$200,000 million left Latin America. The incipient national bourgeoisies were hardly able to recoup 20% of the amount that left these countries. This means that capital is leaving the countries of the south for the imperialist countries.

The renewed strength of the workers' movement in Latin America

The workers' movement in general in Latin America fought back. In the majority of countries the bourgeoisie tried to smash it. The main obstacle for the implementation of neoliberal policies is the reaction and resistance that it provoked in the popular and workers' movements. Being on the sharp end of unemployment, poverty and low wages, the exploited and oppressed masses have risen up against those who implemented the model. Thanks to the enormous mobilisation of the masses in Brazil first Collor was sacked and now Perez in Venezuela. However, there is not enough force nor a revolutionary leadership to guide these events along the path of revolution. The reaction of the popular and workers' movements is wasted because of the absence of a political leadership. This is what is happening in

general in Latin America. Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay and Bolivia are the clearest examples of resistance to the implementation of the neoliberal model. For this reason they are seeking to eliminate the vanguard of the workers' movement. Faced with these obstacles, together with corruption, coups are their only solution, e.g. Venezuela and Guatemala and Peru where the coup has been consolidated. In these countries, in order to impose neoliberal policies, especially in Peru, the force of the military was needed. In Chile, neoliberal measures were imposed through the bloody regime of Pinochet. Today, as in other countries, poverty and unemployment has increased in Chile.

The years of neo-liberalism.

After more than a decade of neoliberal policies they have not been the success that the World Bank, the IDB and the IMF wanted. Imperialism failed to recover from the crisis, although the partial implementation of neoliberal policies in Latin America is bearing certain fruits for imperialism. The president of the IDB, Enrique Iglesias, showed his discontent when he said "the increase in the number of poor in Latin America—183 million in 1989—would lead to the collapse of neo-liberalism". Also ECLA announced in their analysis that "only 5% of the population increased their income while 75% had theirs reduced". In general, poverty has increased in Latin America by 37 to 53% in the 80's. Throughout this period a tiny group of the richest bourgeoisie (particularly in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela) has exported investment out of Latin America to the tune of \$7,461 million, between 1988 and 1990. While the governing classes make themselves rich through business (Collor in Brazil and Perez in Venezuela) they are fought by the legalist sectors of the bourgeoisie backed by the popular and workers' movements.

Another problem they are facing in Latin America is rising inflation. Last year Brazil had inflation of more than 40%. In Colombia—the miracle economy of the 1980's—had an inflation rate of 1.9% in March this year. This is an alarming annual rate of 30%. This economic scenario frightens world imperialism's economic agencies and shatters their hopes in the neoliberal miracle. The demands to privatise face these obstacles in the countries of the southern hemisphere.

We can conclude that Latin America is seeing the resurgence of the forces of the workers' movement compared to the end of the 1980's and that the economy is not showing the growth so anxiously hoped for by the neo-liberals. Furthermore, the external debt is growing, unemployment has risen alarmingly, poverty is a reality in all the cities and villages of Latin America, inflation is rising dangerously and imperialism is unable to achieve its objectives.

The Crisis of Statism in Bolivia

In the 1952 revolution the masses imposed bourgeois democratic gains on the MNR government such as the nationalisation of the mines, agrarian reform, free education, universal vote etc. As a result of the revolution the bourgeoisie, supported by imperialism, found itself obliged to adopt the statist economic model to stop the revolutionary advance of the masses and the wrath of imperialism. It was a way to stop the socialist revolu-

tions of the world. This statist method was strengthened by the EDER plan, imposed by Siles Zuazo in 1956 by bloodletting and fire.

Until the 1970's this was the model. It was impossible to take the gains away from the masses that had cost them so much in 1952. Unemployment was low and the state still regulated the economy. Yet despite the economic boom of the 1970's the bourgeoisie was incapable of renewing plant and equipment. With these disadvantages the Bolivian economy entered into crisis in 1978. The crisis was accompanied by the revolutionary upsurge of the masses and a generalised level of discontent at the corruption in business of the Banzer government. These features caused a shift in the policy of imperialism towards support for democratic processes in Latin America. The Banzer dictatorship crumbled and consequently the statist model entered into full crisis opening up a revolutionary period after the 1980-82 García Meza-ist dictatorship.

During the following UDP government there was an upsurge in the masses that was not transformed into a socialist revolution because of the lack of a revolutionary leadership. After this there was demoralisation which was expressed in the 1985 elections and the crises of the left parties. The UDP government was dogged by hyperinflation and a haemorrhaging of foreign exchange; the statist model had entered its death agony. After the revolutionary period of 1982-86 that ended with the "March for Life" the bourgeoisie stabilised the government but still faced the same obstacle as in the 1920's—the organised popular and workers' movements.

The resistance of the popular and workers' movements

After only a month of the new MNR-ADN government ministers launched the New Economic Policy (Decree DS21060). The response was a general strike that lasted more than a month, together with a massive hunger strike in September 1985. The government was forced to impose a state of siege and embarked upon a period of repression. The bourgeoisie placed its hopes in the neo-liberal recipes of the IMF and supported all the measures of force against the popular and workers' movements. In 1986 they relaunched their NEP offensive, in response to a general wave of discontent originating in Oruro and Potosí. The mining proletariat focussed this anger in the "March for Life". Once again the response was a state of siege and massive sackings of workers, particularly in the mines (more than 23,000) and the factories under the name of "relocation".

The government's justification for these measures was, firstly, to stop the crisis brought about by the UDP and to deal with the collapse in the price of tin. In truth there was a worldwide collapse of commodity prices which plunged the statist model of development into a crisis, deprived of traditional revenues. Traditionally, our economy was based on the export of minerals, particularly tin. In the 1950's the country depended for 96% of its export earnings on the sale of tin by the state mining company (COMIBOL). In 1984 gas and mineral exports were still 95% of the total. In 1992 exports were the following: minerals, 49.5%, non-traditional products, 26.2%, hydrocarbons, 16.5% and reexports, 7.8%.

We cannot ignore that today's economy is also based on the economy of coca-cocaine. Taking into account that

the foreign exchange does not circulate in the productive sector but in the goods and services sector (chalets, luxury cars etc.) it is yet to be proved that this money supports industry.

The bourgeoisie sells out

In this context the bourgeoisie managed to impose the first part of their neoliberal plan—the drastic reduction of hyperinflation at a very high social cost: alarmingly high unemployment, growth of the informal sector in the economy to embrace more than half of the economically active population (not covered by social security), wage cuts, cuts in all public expenditure and especially the budget for education and health, the growth of poverty. The economy of the country went into recession which the bourgeoisie labelled "economic stabilisation". The productive sector of the country is still stagnant and agriculture has not recovered from the crisis of the 1980's due to drought and the lack of machinery.

Another important development is the reform of the tax system. Thanks to this reform they have managed to defraud the people on a massive scale. Even worse is the increase in VAT from 10% to 13%. However, the governments that tried to impose neo-liberalism (MNR-ADN and MIR-ADN) have encountered resistance and struggle against these tax hikes, double taxation, VAT, from large layers of the people such as the trade unions. The governments have been forced to be more flexible, for example, with land taxes in the countryside.

The result of eight years of neo-liberalism is that our country is among the five poorest in Latin America and the 44th poorest in the world, with a rate of infant mortality of 110 deaths for every 1000 births and with a per capita income of \$650 (Switzerland has \$32,689 and Brazil more than \$7000).

These attacks were all savage blows to the popular and workers' movements. The vanguard of the proletariat, the miners, are reduced in numbers. The same goes for the factory workers which unconditionally supported all the miners' struggles of the past 60 years.

Privatisation. The vital step for the consolidation of neoliberalism

In order to "reactivate" the country's economy the bourgeoisie must follow up with the second part of their neoliberal plan: privatisation of the state owned companies, with the aim of attracting new capital to try and jump start the productive sector. However, there are serious obstacles in the path. The bourgeoisie still has not defeated the popular and workers' movements. Bolivia is still considered to be a politically unstable country. This means that capitalists are frightened to invest in the country not just for economic reasons.

Imperialism is forcing the bourgeoisie to use the law against those who oppose their plans. New legislation is being passed by parliament to change the legal framework of the country, overhauling the 1967 Constitution which embodies the old bourgeois nationalisation ideals. The clearest example of this is the restructuring of the present administration of COMIBOL through the introduction of independent management of companies. The first step is the transformation of Huanuni, Sante Fe, Viloco into "co-operatives". These steps prepare the terrain ahead for the most important goal: the privatisation of COMIBOL.

The objectives of imperialism, via the government are:

1. Depoliticise the proletariat, above all the miners (because it is still the vanguard and its responses are politically advanced). If possible, defeat it through sackings, non-recognition of trade unions, cuts in wages and social security, ending of the right to strike. This means using cheap labour that is politically unorganised.
2. Finish the stage of reactivation, by means of the injection of foreign capital protected by the laws against nationalisation. For this the government needs new laws. This they will achieve gradually through the bourgeois parliament (electoral reform and privatisation). The extraction of raw materials will be done without any economic risk to imperialism. The case of the Ito and Catavi quarries is a clear example of the enormous riches that have been plundered by capitalist companies. In Bolivia the investment of \$13 million in COMSUR gave in one year \$15 million. In 4 years more than \$40 million.
3. Privatisate the main state companies, YPF, COMBOL, LAB (airline), ENDE (electricity), ENFE (rail), ENTREL (phones) y AASANA (customs).

Until now privatisation has not been imposed because of the resistance of the workers' movement. Capitalists are frightened to invest in Bolivia. It is also for this reason that the contract signed for the exploitation of the vast wealth of the Bolivar Mine is in the hands of the imperialist Sanchez Lozada and his company COMSUR. Of the 23 companies that have signed joint-ventures with COMBOL, only 2 went on to function. However, these are also susceptible to disruption because of legal action taken by the miners' union (FSTMB).

The ebb of the workers' movement ceases to ebb

By January last year the end of the ebb of the workers' movement was evident: 500 miners in La Paz forced the government to sign an agreement after the government used repression and their old ally the trade union bureaucracy. The agreement accepted the privatisation of state companies.

In March this year our country was put to the test by a wave of strikes and mobilisations of the masses that forced the government to militarise the country so as not to declare a state of siege. This mobilisation is characterised by the radical response of the urban and rural teachers and miners, which once again came to play the role of the vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat. The hunger strikes which broke out at the same time had negative effects because, as a result of the grave state of health of many hunger strikers—they were taking only water—it was not possible to plan a long-term struggle. The conflict began when the COB put demands on the government, insisting on a wage rise based on a minimum family expenditure of Bs.1462 (about \$300). In the struggle that followed the betrayal by the leaders of the CSUTCB (peasants' union) was a serious blow which left the peasants demobilised. The regional mobilisations were subdued except in Potosi where the people and the workers' went over the heads of the Civic Committee and was almost insurrectionary.

The mobilisations meant that the government agreed not to privatise COMEOL, although it would continue with the contracts of Shared Risk which, for the government, is not privatisation. A miserable wage increase was won as well as some other demands that for

the leadership of COB were important advances. The truth is they got very little compared with the level of mobilisation. March of this year was marked by an advance in the class consciousness of the workers' movement. What was needed was a Revolutionary Party to lead these grassroots mobilisations. It is our task to push these struggles forward at the grassroots with alternative politics that are capable of bringing the majority of the working class and their allies together. This means going over the heads of the current leadership of these sectors, which rather than unify the struggle seeks the support of the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to build a party with class independence.

What do bourgeois elections mean?

The elections are characterised by the absence of candidates from the working class and the exploited, which reaffirms the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Candidates of the workers and the exploited sectors would make the consciousness of the class grow.

None of the popular parties have distanced themselves from neo-liberal positions. The ASD (Euro-Stalinists), MBL (bourgeois leftists), EJE (Castroites) and IU (United Left), which are supposedly with the people, are praised by private businessmen for having abandoned Marxist orthodoxy. These parties preach the virtues of a mixed economy; public companies should operate alongside private ones in order to promote economic growth.

The winners are, without doubt, the neoliberals and even though the Banzer lost the elections, the bourgeoisie has again opted for the neo-liberal model. President Goni (MNER) and his government allies will try again to privatise. All parties employed the same arguments about protecting jobs. Faced with so much pre-election demagoguery the World Bank reminded them that if YPF (the state petrol company) was not privatised the Bolivian economy would be ruined.

After the elections everything will stay the same; poverty, wages, unemployment. The exploited do not have many illusions in bourgeois democracy. We must struggle and with our own hands seize power from the bourgeoisie through armed insurrection. If we have to use the electoral arena it is only to raise the consciousness of the class or when a revolutionary party can present its own candidates in order to make propaganda and agitate around the programme.

The results show that the majority of the exploited who do vote (in some places like Huanuni the majority obtained) have not resisted the UDP allure. The right has won again in some mining centres and in the countryside.

The new government of MNR-MRTKL-UCS-MBL

The new government is protected by the UCS (Party of beer magnate Max Fernandez) and the MBL. Their intention is to impose privatisation. They need allies within the workers' movement (the MBL have 17 members in the Executive of the COB; the peasants' movement and other sectors (MRTKL—indigenists) brings support from the peasants of La Paz, the MBL from the peasants of the South and the UCS from popular sectors such as trade unions). This will be a strong government. However, Goni himself knows that he cannot fulfill his electoral promises. Already the economist Jeremy

Sachs (now advisor to Yeltsin), the architect of the 1985 decree 21060, "advised" against Goni's promise to reduce VAT from 13% to 10%, even advising that it be raised to 15%. It is more likely that he will increase the general rate of tax on rural land and on trade unions. He will be unable to carry out the "Plan de Todos" (Plan for All) unless he takes strong measures against the workers' movement and popular organisations; unless he controls the COB, for example. For this reason he is protected by the MBL-UCS alliance. He will be unable to fulfill the following promises:

1. Invest Bs 8,900 million in 4 years by raising new capital. This would mean the privatisation of major companies in the next two years (according to his own declarations). However, investments flee the country and the most they have achieved since 1948 is Bs 500 million.
2. 11% economic growth over four years to 1997. The potential growth rate in Bolivia is 6% according to ECLA (during the best years 1975-76 growth was 5.3%). Growth from 1989 to 1992 was 3.5% in total.
3. The creation of 500,000 jobs, 287,000 new ones. Triple the projected investment in YPF alone is needed to create 10,000 new jobs. It must be taken into account that in 1992 5,013 workers in total were relocated.

For all these reasons a greater response from the workers' movement than over the past two years is expected. At the same time a deepening of the economic crisis, part of the general crisis of capitalism, is expected over the next four years. The recession will deepen and unemployment and poverty will increase, factors which show that this year and the next will produce fierce struggles between the workers and popular movements, and the government.

The new upsurge is near

The conflicts of January last year and March this year were important steps towards raising consciousness. The government had managed to sow the idea in certain sectors that privatisation was the best measure and beneficial to the workers. Now the same workers are rejecting privatisation. It seemed that after March this year we had entered a dangerous stage of passivity, a slumber induced by the electoral process. However, July was a month of conflict: health workers, petrol workers and railworkers went into struggle, the peasants tried to destroy the traitorous and conciliatory leadership, the majority of the FUL (student unions) branches in the country are ignoring the CUB (Student National Confederation) where the MBL and MNR are established. The Patriotic Accord government has shattered. This shows the weakness of the bourgeoisie.

The previous analysis has shown the inability of the bourgeoisie government to resolve the most fundamental problems faced by the population. This situation has

led to a resurgence of the class which if it found a revolutionary leadership would significantly accelerate this upturn.

The tasks of the workers' and popular movements

The working class and its allies have begun the offensive: the signs are that on the day of the handing over of presidential power the "relocated" (those made unemployed under the decree) crucified themselves in protest and the health workers began a new struggle. However, the absence of a revolutionary leadership is a clear danger and the development of class consciousness could easily degenerate. For this reason, the struggle must be generalised and united. What remains is to prepare the battle against the new and well protected bourgeoisie needs a divided trade union movement. They have already begun with the peasants, through their agents in the MBL and the MRTKL. They need a trade unionism that is not revolutionary. For this reason our task is to strengthen the unity of the exploited through the COB, while expelling the agents of the government. We need to strengthen the co-existing peasants movement.

Faced with joint ventures or any other form of privatisation the exploited must never present alternative plans to the bosses for reactivating the companies (self-management or cooperatives). This would be a conciliation to the bourgeoisie and class collaboration. If today we accept privatisation tomorrow we will have to accept massive redundancies. We must struggle against privatisation to the bitter end.

The struggle against joint ventures is vital for the preservation of sources of employment for workers. Against the attempts at privatisation workers' control collectives must take over the mines and demand the opening of the books. Our response to the joint ventures should be the occupation of the mines. Already changes in the consciousness of the miners can be seen in the results of the Miners' Congress. Now that the Congress decided to take over the mines and, in the last instance, agreed to armed defence we must generalise this slogan and make it a reality.

- Death to privatisation!
- Impose workers' control collectives!
- Prepare for the occupation of the mines!
- Organise defence committees of the nationalised mines!
- Build the international revolutionary leadership!
- Long live the international proletariat!
- Long live the new revolutionary communist international!
- Long live workers' power!
- Workers of the world unite!

The April strike wave in Bolivia

PODER OBRERO (Bolivia), Special edition, 14 April 1994

The majority of the COB¹ have decided to launch an indefinite general strike from Friday, 15 April. Every student and worker should fully support this measure and make sure that the leadership actively carries it out. The hunger strike movement, alongside mobilisations by students and teachers, is beginning to grow. The university sector is now in the forefront of this conflict. However, the movement is beginning to extend to other sectors. The hunger strikes, which started two weeks ago, have continued to spread, until by 11 April they involved more than one hundred people in almost all the departmental capitals. Thirty five miners on hunger strike, demanding the right to return to their workplaces, organised a special protest picket in the form of a "crucifixion" on top of the UMSA² building; amongst them is a mother with her baby. On the afternoon of 11 April rural teachers called for mobilisations throughout the country. In La Paz more than 8,000 of them arrived for the march from the 19 provinces of the department. In Oruro more than 3,000 rural and urban teachers and students marched together to the central square on 10 February. At the end of the rally the students burnt the pink flags of the MNR³ which were flying from the prefecture building.

The rural teachers' confederation was the first to declare an indefinite strike last week. The majority of the rank and file are joining the strike. On Wednesday 13 April the teachers of the city of La Paz went on strike. Two days later an indefinite general strike started in the health sector. On Tuesday 12 April, 1,500 to 2,000 students, together with the teaching and administrative staff of the University of Cochabamba⁴, began a mass hunger strike. The aim is that in the following days 4,000 people from La Paz alone will join the hunger strike. In Santa Cruz, Potosi, Cochabamba and La Paz sharp clashes have occurred between students and the forces of repression. The marches on Monday (11 April) proved bigger and more radical than the marches called by the COB for either the 30 March national stoppage or that of 7 April in La Paz.

There are other sectors on hunger strike besides education. These involve leaders of the COB and all the departmental and regional union congresses, the miners, the factory workers, Lloyd Aero Boliviano workers, and others. The CSUTCB⁵ has called a national peasant blockade of the highways for 28 April. But this date is more than two weeks away. It would be far better to bring it forward so that it can link up and add to the pressure of the developing mass movement. On Tuesday, 12 April, in Potosi, the miners of the private firm Goni-Patifo took part in a radical mass demonstration to the central square. The university students not only went on to block the streets but occupied various public buildings and private offices in order to prevent staff from entering. These events highlight two tendencies that it is

important to draw attention to: one is the involvement of private sector workers and the other is the tactic of mass occupations. In every city students, teachers and the other strikers should occupy, en masse, both private firms and public institutions in order to stop staff working and to bring workers together in the struggle.

In Potosi the police have begun to arrest university students and on Wednesday morning the forces of repression surrounded the university. The students tried to break the encirclement. The police were forced to release twenty detainees for fear of a popular explosion. In the old colonial city the fear was that students and other residents might burn down the police station for a third time, just as they did in 1987 and 1993. The national stoppage of the COB on 30 March was weak. During that day's march in Oruro, municipal workers, health workers, students and some peasants participated. However, the miners, the factory workers, rail workers, or the other powerful and combative workers of ENAF were not present.

Immediate Tasks.

It is essential that the present protests escalate. In order to create a powerful, indefinite general strike the industrial proletariat (the miners, the factory workers, the oil workers, the metal workers, the agro-industrial workers and the railworkers) must be drawn into full scale action. These key sectors produce the nation's wealth and they also form the historic vanguard of the oppressed. But they have been badly hit by neo-liberalism. Today the majority of industrial workers work in the private sector and it is more difficult for them to strike due to the laws imposed by the neo-liberalists that undermine their job security. But neither the workers in education and health nor the students can paralyse the national economy. Their strength consists in the fact that they can mobilise tens of thousands onto the streets and thereby influence the rest of the country's workers. In every Bolivian village there are teachers and students. The teachers must realise how crucial it is for them to march every day and pull out alongside them students and their parents. It is essential to unite the whole educational community against the plan to municipalise education which would mean the end of free state education. The universities are the cultural centres of the main cities and their members number more than 100,000 people. Their potential for calling action is enormous. The schools and universities can mobilise tens of thousands of students, teachers, parents and ordinary people. They can be backed by peasant communities and civil and neighbourhood organisations. If we organise large-scale mobilisations and blockades on a daily basis we will be certain to have an enormous impact on the majority and embolden the workers, peasants and all

trade unionists.

We must stop the destruction of free state education in the schools, colleges and public universities now. With the new laws the government will decentralise education and health-care and then they will privatise them. This will mean that only those with money will be able to study and have the right to medical treatment. The government has only offered a pay rise of 7.5% and will only guarantee security of employment in public sector companies. This increase is totally inadequate and will not even cover a quarter of the cost of living for a family. On the other hand, the majority of today's workers are employed by private outfits. There are tens of thousands of casual workers and workers that can be easily sacked. We have to demand job security for all these sectors and a minimum living wage that covers the family's basic monthly outgoings (Bs. 18607 and see that is adjusted in accordance with the rise in a cost of living. To give incentives to industry the buying power of workers must be raised.

The betrayal by the leadership.

Like a fire brigade the COB acts to put out the struggles. The trade union bureaucracy hardly tried to convince the government to even give it a few crumbs. Jerjes Justiniano, the MP of the Salas party, refused to defend the teachers who were thrown out by the police when they wanted to enter the Congress to carry out their hunger strike. Thousands could see how this deputy insulted the strikers in front of the television cameras. On Thursday, 7 April, the national majority of the COB had called for an indefinite general stoppage. But only a few hours before it was due to begin the bureaucracy, without consultation, withdrew the call. The bureaucracy did nothing to make it happen. The leadership of the FSTMB* seemed to be centred in the COMBOL mines which today employ less than 2,000 miners, less than the number of miners in COMSUR, the Goni-Pañito company). Before the 7th the bureaucracy did not go to the rank and file (mainly from the private mines which involves more than three times the workforce of the public sector) to explain the reasons for the strike and to prepare it. The bureaucracy of the COB and the CSUTCB is packed full of people who are officials in the MBL, MERTKL and even the MNR and UCS or if not from "left" parties who were until recently on the coat tails of today's Finance Minister, Arambar.

This so-called left is in reality more and more right-wing. Now it agrees with privatisation and advocates following IMF guidelines. It merely pleads for less cruelty in the application of the neo-liberal measures. This reformist "left" only joins the mobilisations in order to negotiate themselves soft jobs and prepare their way into a ministerial post or secretaryship in a future government (as is shown by the example of the renegades Cardenas, Motete Zamora, Arambar and the various leaders of PS-1 that today trails behind the MNR or the MIR). Their future path is one already taken by the movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) over the last twenty years or so, when it went from an adventurist guerrilla focus-ism and an ultra-left attitude to revolution, to an unscrupulous search for money. It ended up transforming itself into an anti-working class, pro-repression and pro-drug-traffickers' party.

Lova's POR has the merit of having campaigned for and inspired many hunger strikes and teachers' marches

in the city of La Paz. But this selfless militancy remains a prisoner of the party's adventurist logic. For the Lorisists we are on the verge of taking power and the conditions are maturing to the point where they call for an insurrectional general strike. They fail to appreciate the long term defeat which the working class has suffered since 1986 and that the period since then has been one of a democratic-liberal reactionary offensive. They believe that the mobilisation of the masses can be substituted for by a few heroic individuals. The hunger strike is a good tactic for politicians, for sacked workers seeking reinstatement or to open a breach in a dictatorship. But hunger strikes can also have a demobilising effect if happens in the context of a mobilisation where state repression is not strong. It is better if thousands march through the streets, blocking the main routes, the squares and streets. It is preferable that they march to different town-halls, to markets and the mines and factory gates to organise meetings there and encourage the people to form support committees and to mobilise alongside those already on strike. The bureaucracy actually prefers hunger strikes, with only a few people on the streets. The Lorisist centrists call for all-out, "hard" hunger strikes. We, in contrast, put the main emphasis on encouraging combative marches and blockades. The latter in particular radicalises the masses the most, gains the maximum support and intimidates the government best.

The leadership of the COB is sabotaging the strike before it has even begun. The majority of the universities are finalising negotiations with the government on their own. What the bureaucracy wants is to look consistent before the opening of the badly organised COB congress which takes place in two weeks time. Their radicalism is a pose struck for the new COB leadership elections. On the other hand, it shouldn't surprise anyone that many rank and file members demand an indefinite strike. In the universities a good tactic would be to force the rector and the University and Faculty Councils to put themselves at the head of the demonstrations and daily blockades or join a long hunger strike.

Win the other sectors!

At this very moment the XIII Congress of the Federation of Co-operative Mines (FEN-COMIN) is taking place. While the number of COMBOL miners has been reduced from 30,000 to less than 2,000 the number of co-operative miners has been doubled from 28,000, a short time ago, to 56,000. This sector is super-exploited and their minimum income is less than 400 to 500 Bolivianos! They work more than eight hours a day, with no social security, without technology and with a much higher chance of contracting disease and being injured. It is essential to convince this sector to participate in the struggle. We must demand social security for the co-operative miners, that they are put on COMBOL contracts and that they enjoy full social security benefits. We demand a 6 hour day, early retirement and the re-activation of these mines with modern high technology from the State under the control the miners. An alliance between waged and co-operative miners must be built in the mines to encourage mobilisations, marches and blockades. The private mines and metalworks are expanding. Inti Raymi and COMSUR are models that are attracting a lot of multinational investment. There are many mines, particularly those that are not on the altiplano (high plateau), whose workers are not unionised. To unite the

movement we must also urge them to organise or strengthen their own unions

In the private companies and the many public companies (e.g. ENAF, YPFB) the unions are weak and afraid to join in the struggle. Many workers are frightened of losing their jobs or special preferential concessions granted by their bosses if they join in some form of low-level, cautious struggle that in the end will be sold out by the COB bureaucracy. The recent voluntary redundancy of half the COMBOL workforce in exchange for \$1,000 compensation shows the lack of confidence which the rank and file has in the leadership and which leads to demoralisation. To motivate these sectors to join the struggle a campaign within the rank and file is needed, encouraging them with a more daring means of struggle. Recallable delegates chosen by mass meetings of the rank and file must lead the strike movement, the blockades and the mass demonstrations.

The national meeting of the COB must elect a united mobilising committee whose members can be replaced by a mass assembly. This rank and file committee must take charge of the struggle and be superior in authority to the COB's bureaucratic leaders. The demands of every sector must be drawn together into a single joint claim so that the demands of the peasants, the smallholders, the private manufacturing workers and the ministries, the oppressed nationalities and the poor neighbourhoods can be unified. The abolition of VAT, and all the indirect taxation which penalises the poor, must be a key goal of the struggle. These taxes must be replaced by taxes on the multinationals and the rich. The state must guarantee social security, the minimum wage and the provision of cheap supplies for the smallholders and co-operatives. We demand the direct commercialisation of rural produce sold in the cities. Committees of poor peasants and urban workers can then exchange the goods they make themselves without middle men and obtain better prices.

The water and electricity supplies, sewerage, roads, villages, as well as schools and colleges for the hamlets and the poor must be greatly improved by increasing the resources from the State. Money for all this can be raised through a tax on the property of the rich and by not paying the foreign debt. All public investment must be controlled by committees elected and recallable by rank and file assemblies. All anti-imperialist political prisoners must be freed. In the unified claim the demands of the rank and file soldiers must also be represented: better wages, the right to organise trade-unions, the election of officers, the right to veto reactionary orders. The aim is to win them, as in April 1982, to the side of the revolution. We must oppose the laws of capitalisation and "popular participation". They plan to privatise the public companies and go on to break up the free state education system. With the law of "popular participation" they are trying to by-pass the unions and make the communities and villages beg for investment from private companies and themselves act as the bosses who sack and force down the wages of the public sector

workers and teachers.

This Friday, 14 April, we must try to transform the stoppage called by the COB into an active strike full of demonstrations and blockades. Instead of putting the accent on increasing the numbers of those on hunger strike the emphasis must be put on the producing daily papers and organising combative marches and blockades. We must make the miners come into the cities and make them tremble and encourage the peasants to block the main highways. We need to mobilise the students, teachers, parents and other workers to occupy the public offices and companies and paralyse the inter-city and inter-departmental traffic.

The government has said it is a "democratic" one and that under no circumstances will it declare a state of siege. We must not forget that the MNR, when it came to power more than half a century ago, massacred peasants, students and teachers, that its hands are stained with the blood of the people, that it decreed several states of siege to impose its neo-liberal model in 1985 and 1986 and unleashed the army on us during the March for Life. In the last few days the police have repressed many hunger strike pickets in Potosi, Cochabamba and Oruro. When faced by any repression the masses must flood into the streets to free those arrested. To prepare for the possibility of a state of emergency organised resistance must be put in train now. The government will try to pour scorn on the general strike comparing it to more radical strikes that brought down the government of Tejada (1986), that struck blows to Ovando (1970) and Natush (1979) and that made Bolivia tremble between 1982 and 1985.

We must remain conscious of the fact that the workers and popular movements have suffered a serious defeat since 1986. We are in a period of defensive struggles. Our objective must be to stop the neo-liberal offensive, to blow holes in the government's plans and prepare the conditions for a workers' and people's counter-offensive. Our struggle must be political. Not only must we fight whatever measures this government imposes, against this government itself, but we must struggle against the whole neo-liberal model which is sponsored by all the parliamentary parties and indeed against capitalism itself. Our strategy must be to turn the working class into a class capable of taking and holding power, create the conditions for a socialist revolution and the impose a workers' and peasants' government. Such a government will give bread, land, work, education and health to the masses, will expropriate the bourgeoisie and organise a collectivised, planned economy under the control of the workers.

Fight for wage rises that cover the family cost of living! For an adequate university budget!

For a national mobilising committee made up of delegates elected and revocable by rank and file assemblies!

For an indefinite fighting General Strike with blockades and mass mobilisations!

7 For these sectors onto underfunded municipal governments.

8 About \$400 at the current exchange rate.

9 Oscar Siles was elected head of the COB executive in 1989.

10 The Congress was later postponed until June.

11 The COB Congress was postponed one month until early June.

12 Around \$100 a month.

Notes

1 Bolivian Workers Central (COB) is the trade union federation.

2 UNESA is the main university building in the centre of La Paz.

3 MNR is the main party in the government coalition.

4 Led by the University Council and the leadership of the degree courses and centres

5 The national strike

6 CSUTCB is the peasants' federation in Bolivia.

A Revolution Betrayed

The POR and the Fourth International in the

Bolivian Revolution

José Villa

José Villa was on two consecutive occasions elected to the Executive Committee of La Paz University Federation. He was one of the most prominent activists during the events of March 1985 when the miners controlled the city for two weeks. Hundreds of workers came to the main lecture hall every day to listen and to discuss the following day's activities. He was one of the main activists during the general strike of August-September 1985, the main speaker at the mass assembly in Oruro, and one of the most outstanding agitators during the hunger strike of thousands of miners in the mines of San José. He participated actively in the march of August 1986, when more than 10 000 miners marched for 150 miles at an altitude of 4000 metres. The march might have brought about the fall of the neo-liberal government as well as brought the Trotskyists to the leadership of the miners' and students' unions.

A week after being congratulated by the POR congress in March 1985 for his exemplary work with the miners, he was expelled for having dared to question Lora. Many members, including whole districts, left the POR in response to that action. Instead of trying to build a variant of the POR, he formed a tendency which tried to make a profound examination of what the POR had represented. He came to the conclusion that the POR had never been Trotskyist, and that a Trotskyist party had to be built. This struggle produced the movement for a Trotskyist Workers Faction, the weeklies *Guía* and *Guía Obrera*, and the Poder Obrera groups of Bolivia and Peru, which were founding sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, of which Workers Power is the section in Britain.

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When the February 1917 Revolution occurred, the Bolshevik Party had been in existence for 15 years. When the revolution of April 1952 occurred, the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR) had been in existence for 17 years. Both parties operated in countries with a peasant and petit-bourgeois majority, but with a modern, geographically concentrated proletariat. Both parties had the benefit of working with those who had introduced Marxism into their respective countries

(Plekhanov and Marof), and their cadres had helped to form the first working class organisations. Bolshevism had been formed through a confrontation with other Marxist currents (economists, Mensheviks, etc), petit-bourgeois Socialists (Socialist Revolutionaries), and bourgeois democrats (Cadets), and the POR had had to fight against the 'Marxists' of Marof and Stalinism, the different wings of the MNR, and 'Socialism' of both bourgeois and military varieties.

Bolshevism was tempered during the working class upsurge which culminated in the 1905 Revolution, in the reactionary phase which followed it, in the new wave of strikes, and in the struggle against the First World War. The POR was born in the fight against the Chaco War, and was forged during two great mass insurgencies, which brought down the governments in 1936 and 1946, in great strikes and massacres, in constant changes of government, coups and a short civil war. While the 'dress rehearsal' of 1905 was smashed, both of the two rehearsals of revolutionary crises experienced by the POR ended with the governments falling. The programme of Bolivian 'Trotskyism' was endorsed by the university students and the miners, and the POR could pride itself on having had within its ranks important central leaders of the miners' union (FSTMB) and the National Workers Centre (CON), the forerunner of the Bolivian Workers Centre (Central Obrera Boliviana, COB), which was to play a major rôle in the events of 1952.¹

James Dunkerley maintains that 'much of the preparatory work [of founding the COB] was undertaken by the POR representatives, Edwin Moller, Miguel Alandía and José Zegada', and that 'the POR allegedly controlled at least half the COB's 13 man central committee'.² The COB was born brandishing the *Theses of Pulacayo*, and adhered to a POR programme and orientation.

The rôle of the POR in the April 1952 Revolution was such that even one of the founders of the Stalinist party recognised that of the five main leaders of the insurrection, one was of the MNR right, another was of the pro-POR wing of the MNR, and three were of the POR.³ In *Lucha Obrera* the POR boasted that:

'When top MNR leaders thought about flight, it was our comrades who led the people and proletariat of Oruro to victory... Our militants were the real leaders in the defence of Villa Pavon and Miraflores, which in practice saved the difficult situation for the revolutionaries when the enemy already appeared to be triumphant within the city.'⁴

The POR was the most important and influential party within the COB, which was itself the dominant power in the country. Robert Alexander says that:

'The POR... had in large part been able to determine the ideological

orientation and dynamism of the Workers Centre... For the first six months the COB was practically in the hands of the Trotskyists.⁵

It took the Russian Bolsheviks from February to October to win a majority in the Soviets, and having done so they moved to insurrection. The POR, however, played a central rôle in the COB from the start. Whereas the Bolsheviks were a minority within the Russian working class for these eight months, the POR led the COB for the first crucial six months after the insurrection which dispersed the bourgeois army. The POR provided the COB with its programme and leadership, and ran its press. Juan Lechin, the main leader of the COB, functioned by reading speeches written by the POR.⁶

However, there was a huge difference between the POR and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks demanded that the Soviets should not support the bourgeois-democratic, reformist coalition government, and insisted that they should break from the bourgeoisie, and take power. The POR, in contrast, gave 'critical support' to the bourgeois government, and asked for ministerial posts. Whereas the Bolsheviks attacked the Mensheviks and the SRs without pity, seeking to remove them from leadership positions, the POR identified itself with the labour bureaucracy (for whom it drafted speeches and ministerial plans), and sought to transform the MNR and its government. The Bolshevik strategy was to make a new revolution, that of the POR was to reform the MNR and its government. In short, whereas Bolshevism was Leninist, the POR was Lechinist.

April 1952: The Menshevism of the POR

Just before the April events, the POR had published 'an open letter to the government, demanding that power be handed over to the Nationalist MNR without a new election.'⁷ The strategy of the POR was limited to pressuring the government in order to attempt to change the leadership of the bourgeois state, with the aim of allowing the MNR to take over the presidency by constitutional means. In that way, a legitimate government could be restored, which, through pressure from below, would be forced to adopt radical measures, and would also have to appoint 'worker ministers'.

During the April events Lora had been in France, after having attended the Third World Congress of the Fourth International. He gave statements to *La Verité*, which the US Socialist Workers Party then reproduced in *The Militant*. In his history of the POR, Lora says:

'Up to now not enough importance has been given to the call for the Trotskyist programme made by Lora in Paris a few days after the arrival of the MNR in power.'⁸

Let us look at this 'Trotskyist programme':

'The central slogans put forward by our party were:

- '1. Restore the constitution of the country through the formation of an MNR government which obtained a majority in the 1951 election.
- '2. The struggle for the improvement of wages and working conditions.
- '3. Struggle for democratic rights.
- '4. Mobilisation of the masses against imperialism, for the nationalisation of the mines, and for the abrogation of the UN agreement.'⁹

Only the last of these demands was really radical, and even that did not go beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy, or what the anti-Communist President Victor Paz Estenssoro was going to do a few months later. The first demand sought a constitutional bourgeois state with a populist government. Instead of seeking to differentiate itself from the latter by raising anti-capitalist and class based slogans, the POR platform was no different from that of the bourgeois MNR. Lora did not put forward any proletarian slogans, such as the expropriation without compensation of the bourgeoisie, workers' control, the disarming of the bourgeois armed forces and their replacement by workers' and peasants' militias, the occupation of mines, factories, land, etc. Instead of calling for the transformation of the COB into a soviet, breaking from the bourgeoisie and taking power, Lora called for the MNR government to change direction, and limited himself to asking for reforms which did not go beyond the framework of the capitalist state. It was not as if the POR was taken unawares by developments:

'The subversive movement of 9 April was no surprise for our party, and it occurred as we had foreseen in our theoretical analysis.'¹⁰

If a party was aware that this event was approaching, it should surely have kept its most prominent leader in the country, or, at least, not far away. However, Lora stayed in Paris for over six months after the end of the congress. By boasting that his party had predicted what was going to happen, and staying abroad himself, Lora was either blustering, or worse, he did not place much importance on his own endeavours to overthrow the MNR, but instead agreed with trying to put pressure on it.

If the POR was in the forefront of the struggle, it should have put itself forward as an alternative leadership, calling on the COB to overthrow Paz. However, Lora called for support of the bourgeois government and its 'left wing' ministers. For the POR, the enemy was not the bourgeois government, but only the ministers who stood to the right of Paz. In fact, 'the government was to be defended to the utmost':

In this connection, the essential mission of the POR is to assume the rôle of the vigilant guide to prevent the aspirations of the workers from being diluted by vague promises or by manoeuvres of right wing elements.¹¹

Lora attempted to uphold this reformist position by characterising the regime as 'petit-bourgeois', and insisting that this government, if forced to accept additional labour ministers, had the possibility of being transformed and changed into a phase of the workers' and peasants' government.¹² This was utopian, as the petit-bourgeoisie cannot form a government or wield state power, and reactionary, as the MNR may have been comprised of and supported by the petit-bourgeoisie, but its leadership came from the oligarchic families, and acted fully in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The POR Supports The Bourgeois Government

Nine days after the uprising of 9 April, the mouthpiece of the POR declared that 'to the extent that it carries out the promised programme', the POR 'supports the Government'.¹³ Under no circumstances can the proletariat support the government of a section of its exploiters. On the contrary, the aim of a Marxist party should be to undermine it, and to struggle for its revolutionary overthrow. Otherwise, it would stand compromised for helping to maintain the capitalist state.¹⁴

In May *Lucha Obrera* adopted a nationalist tone when it called for a change in the direction of the Paz government, demanding 'a Bolivian government which will obey the will of the Bolivians and not of the Yanks'.¹⁵ A government 'of the Bolivians' can only be that of the Bolivian ruling class. The POR, instead of struggling to overthrow the bourgeois government, suggested that the MNR should develop a sovereign national bourgeoisie, and stop conciliating the USA.

In June 1957 *Lucha Obrera* maintained that the MNR should thank the POR for helping it win power and for its support, declaring that 'if the MNR has to give thanks to anyone, and greatly for our help, it is without doubt, to the POR'.¹⁶ And shortly after trying to ingratiate itself with the MNR, it offered a mild criticism, more in sadness than anger:

'Never before has a party like the MNR, that can count on uniform backing from an armed people and proletariat, achieved power; and never before, therefore, did anyone have the opportunity of adopting measures with a real revolutionary content. The government has closed its eyes, or has not wanted to see the magnificent opportunity, and has preferred to deceive the proletariat which supported it unconditionally.'¹⁷

Never before had the MNR had such an opportunity to make a social revolution, but it hesitated... It wasn't because the MNR was a bourgeois party, no, it just had rotten tactics. The MNR merely had to open its eyes and see the magnificent opportunities before it... The whole policy of the POR was pure Menshevism.

For Marxists, the proletariat can seize power only on the basis of the destruction of the existing state machinery, and the removal of the bourgeoisie from power. For the POR, the workers could win power by 'Bolivianising' and reforming the bourgeois MNR regime. The POR faithfully followed the teachings of Aguirre and Marof, of trying to serve nationalist governments with the aim of changing their direction.

Co-Government.

After the success of the April Revolution, a quarrel erupted between the different wings of the MNR over the allocation of the quotas of power. When Lechin withdrew, protesting at the few posts given to him for his followers, the right wing gave way. Lechin named four ministers, and co-government was born. As far as the POR was concerned, Lechin should have fought for more portfolios – and perhaps some for the POR.

Supported by all the POR votes, the COB resolved:

'To grant comrades Juan Lechin and Germán Butrón the absolute confidence of the working class, and to reaffirm its solidarity and support in the ministerial posts they presently hold.'¹⁸

The POR, after identifying itself with the Lechinist ministers, did ask them to resign in protest against the delay in nationalising the mines. But on other occasions the POR was once more to demand the capture of ministries on behalf of Lechinism. Towards the end of 1953, the POR leadership presented a report in which it admitted that:

'The new upsurge comes from the demand for Lechin to leave the cabinet, which was put forward by the mining unions, backed by the COB, and curbed by Lechin. Our union fraction then took up a neutral and vacillating position.'¹⁹

The POR, therefore, admitted that its trade unionists adapted to pressure from Lechin. The policy of demanding the resignation of the labour ministers was an opportunist manoeuvre. It did not accompany the call for the COB to take power. Some weeks later, during the key events which frustrated the rightist January coup, the POR was to demand that 'the Comrade President' Bolivianise his government and allow them to join it. For those reasons, the 'new period of upsurge'

did not end with the fulfilment of the POR theses, but in the victory of the MNR, which was to succeed in absorbing most of the membership and periphery of the POR.

The POR Seeks To Enter The Bourgeois Government.

During the 1952 Revolution it was vitally important for any Marxist party to assert its total independence from, and opposition to, the MNR bourgeois government. The POR not only supported this new regime, and identified itself fully with its 'leftist' ministers, but even tried to enter it. At its Third World Congress in 1951, the Fourth International unanimously adopted a line favouring the POR joining a future MNR government. The POR's paper declared:

'The Executive Power invited the revolutionary Miguel Alandia Pan-toja to take up the post of Minister of Culture... The POR authorised its member to accept the invitation.'²⁰

Alandia, who until the end of his life was a leader of Lora's POR, became the editor of the trade union organ of the MNR bureaucracy, and joined the government in the capacity of Minister of Culture.

Rumours spread, and the Californian Trotskyist Sam Ryan wrote to the leaders of the SWP and the Fourth International, demanding that they provide information on the POR's participation in the government:

'According to these reports received from non-Trotskyist sources, the POR is accepting posts in the government machinery: Guillermo Lora, former Secretary of the party, has been appointed [to] the Stabilisation Office; Comrade Moller, present Secretary of the POR, is director of the Workers Savings Bank, which is controlled by Juan Lechin, a member of the Cabinet; Ayala Mercado, another POR leader, is a member of the Agrarian Commission.'²¹

Bolshevism emerged in the struggle against ministerialism. The followers of Lenin were opposed to Socialists entering bourgeois-democratic governments in Western Europe, and that of Kerensky in Russia in 1917. The only governments in which the Bolsheviks would have participated critically would be those based on workers' militias and councils, which could attack and disarm the capitalist class. The Fourth International was founded in the struggle against the POUM of Andrés Nin, which joined the Spanish Republican government in 1937. Joining a non-working class government only serves the enemies of the proletariat by confusing it, and helping to prepare the conditions for an offensive against it.

In 1952 the POR had a ministerialist attitude. If it did not succeed in obtaining portfolios in the government, but only won secretarial posts in ministries or departments, it is because the MNR did not consider it to have any weight independent of the Lechinist faction, and it could use its presence as a means of calming the masses. It preferred to keep the POR outside the cabinet, but subordinate it through the union bureaucracy.

The Collaborationist Programme Of The POR

After April 1952 *The Programme of the Exploited* appeared in every issue of *Lucha Obrera*. It declared:

'1. To prevent the revolution that began on 9 April being strangled within the bourgeois and democratic framework.

'2. The strengthening of the working class, and the consolidation of the COB.

'3. The mobilisation of the peasants behind the slogan of nationalisation of land and expropriation of the large estates without compensation, in order to allow the revolutionary process to end in victory.

'4. The gaining of democratic guarantees for the exploited. The development of union democracy within the unions. Freedom of propaganda for revolutionary parties. The cancelling of all privileges for the Rosca counter-revolution.

'5. Armed workers' militias to replace the regular army.

'6. Better conditions of living and work. A basic living wage and a sliding scale of wages. Collective contracts.

'7. Nationalisation of the mines and railways without compensation and under workers' control.

'8. The expulsion of imperialism. The cancelling of the international treaties which bind the country to imperialism. The rejection of the agreement on technical aid with the UN.'²²

We are not questioning those particular slogans, but rather the absence of key and essential slogans. The programme is limited, and is tailored to fit the outlook of the Lechin wing of the MNR, which would not object to any of the slogans.

The central demands which were completely ignored in the POR press during those months were those of the occupation of the mines, factories and large estates; no support for the new bourgeois government nor for the Lechin union bureaucracy; no to co-government; that 'worker ministers' should resign from the capitalist cabinet; the sovietisation of the COB; and 'All Power to the COB!'

The POR talked about 'preventing the revolution being strangled' when they themselves were strangling it with 'critical' support to the

capitalist government. They demanded the 'consolidation of the COB', but they opposed struggling for the most elementary tasks of achieving such an aim: an open struggle against the bureaucracy of Lechin, and the MNR, for the election and recall of all leaders through rank and file mass meetings, for an immediate conference of the COB in order to equip it with a soviet-type structure, and for it to take complete power. The POR did not struggle to transform the COB into a Supreme Soviet in order to seize power, but wanted to put pressure on its leadership so that it would recite its speeches and improve governmental decrees.

The POR called for the nationalisation of the land, mines and railways, but did not call upon the workers and peasants to carry it out themselves, merely requesting and pressuring the government to do it. This not only created dangerous illusions amongst the masses, but helped to demobilise them and keep them in a state of dependency, instead of calling on them to do things themselves. At no time did the POR call for the bourgeoisie to be expropriated. Workers' control was only demanded for state enterprises. The factories (Said, Soligno, etc), shopping chains (Casa Grace, etc) and other private companies continued operating as before. There was no demand for their nationalisation – not even with compensation – for workers' control, or for the payment of higher taxes.

The POR wanted freedom of propaganda for revolutionary parties. By this the POR acknowledged that, apart from itself, other 'revolutionaries' existed, among them the MNR and the Stalinists. The POR should have called for the broadest democratic liberties, and for the expropriation of the mass media and its handing over to organisations of workers and ordinary people. 'The cancellation of all privileges of the Rosca counter-revolution' was demanded. But what does the cancellation of privileges mean? What was needed was the demand for its total expropriation, along with the creation of peoples' courts to try the executioners and butchers of the oligarchic regime.

The slogan about expelling imperialism was very vague. It was not tied to demands to expropriate all imperialist-owned enterprises, or to repudiate the foreign debt. Anyway, the POR itself said repeatedly that, if it assumed power, it would try to force the USA to recognise it and establish diplomatic relations.

The POR did not raise the main slogan for thoroughgoing bourgeois democracy: the sovereign Constituent Assembly, where all those over the age of 18 (or 16) would have the right to vote and to be elected. New elections on the most democratic and broad basis as possible, and the creation of a new Constituent Assembly where the main national problems could be debated, would have helped the revolutionary party to expose the nature of the MNR and of parliamentarianism. The POR envisaged something else which threw dust in the workers' eyes: to

restore the reactionary constitution which put Paz into the Presidential Palace.

This programme lacked the slightest internationalist slogans. It did not call for solidarity with the other workers of the world and with anti-imperialist struggles, the defence of the workers' states against imperialism, support for revolutions against the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracies, the internationalisation of the revolution, and for the building of the United Socialist States of Latin America and of the world, not to mention the struggle for the workers' and peasants' government or for the Socialist republic.

The POR action programme was that of a party which had repudiated the strategy of the Permanent Revolution, and which only desired a bourgeois-democratic transformation within the segregated framework of one, isolated, landlocked and backward country.

'For an MNR-POR Government'

At its 1951 congress, the Fourth International, with no dissenting votes, adopted the slogan of an MNR-POR government. After April 1952 the POR tried to apply this recipe with a small difference. It demanded the removal of the MNR right wing:

'The workers' and peasants' government is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is a move towards it, an inevitable period in the sense that, as a political party of the working class, we do not yet constitute a majority of it... The workers' and peasants' government will surely emerge before the dictatorship of the proletariat in Bolivia, fundamentally based upon two important political forces: the POR and the MNR left wing, to which we should try to give the essential organisational consciousness, security and firmness, so that the way to political power is opened to us, which the militant working masses will offer us in the future.'²³

This concept of a workers' and peasants' government owes more to Stalinism than to Leninist Trotskyism. The centrist Fourth International and the POR proposed a joint government in which the so-called workers' party was led by a party of another class. But the MNR did not represent the peasantry (and even less its poor or landless sectors), nor did it bother to organise this class or to place in its top leadership some leader from the national majority. The MNR was an unmistakably bourgeois party.

The proletariat must not dilute its programme and accept the democratic programme of the bourgeoisie, whether petit, medium or big. Under this programme it is impossible to break from imperialism and backwardness. The only manner of resolving the outstanding

bourgeois democratic tasks is through a Socialist revolution, which completes the unfinished democratic tasks within a framework of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and a socialised and planned economy established by popular and workers' councils, and by the internationalisation of the revolution.

In its five decades of existence the POR has never put forward the strategy of the international Socialist revolution. It emerged demanding an anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution in order to establish a multi-class and capitalist government, which could be achieved by a military coup or through the metamorphosis of a bourgeois government. Later, in the *Theses of Putacayo*, it put forward the idea of a bourgeois democratic revolution led by the proletariat. Through the strategy of opposing a Socialist revolution in order to limit itself to a bourgeois-democratic and national one, the POR subordinated itself in strategic blocs with Lechín, and ultimately with the entire MNR and Stalinism.

The MNR was a party representing an emerging bourgeoisie. Far from wishing to disarm and expropriate itself, that is to say, to commit suicide as a class, the MNR bourgeoisie aspired to strengthen the state through reforms which would extend the internal market. A government of the POR and whatever wing of the MNR would have been a government for the defence of the bourgeois state — a bourgeois government with a decoration of 'Trotskyist' ministers.

'All Power To The MNR Left Wing!'

At its ninth national conference, the POR ratified the line of identifying with the national reformist wing of Lechín and Nuño Chávez.

The national political report outlined the position of the POR in relation to the government as follows:

- '1. Support for the government in face of the attacks by imperialism and the Rosca.
- '2. Support for all the progressive measures it enacts, always indicating their scope and limitations...
- '3. In the struggle between the MNR's wings, the POR supports the left... The POR will support the MNR left in its struggle against the right wing of the party, in all its activity that tends to destroy the structures on which the feudal bourgeoisie and imperialist exploitation rest, and in every attempt to deepen the revolution and to carry out the workers' programme, such as the complete control of the government, so replacing the right wing.'²⁴

In the same issue we can read:

'The working class must actively intervene in the formation of the new cabinet. It is the workers who must run the state with a revolutionary programme that will start to destroy the capitalist structures. The COB, representing the working class and peasant forces, must form a majority in the new cabinet...'²⁵

The MNR was clearly a bourgeois party. Within every populist bourgeois party which attempts to discipline the unions, there is always a labourist wing that tries to mediate between the pressures of the workers and the needs of following a bourgeois policy. The 'left' wing of the MNR was neither proletarian nor revolutionary. Its support for a bourgeois programme, and its incorporation into capitalist structures demonstrated its counter-revolutionary nature. It is always possible that youth and working class sections in the nationalist movement will shift leftwards towards centrism, and, if so, everything possibly must be done to win them to Trotskyist politics. However, known bureaucrats with a long career of betrayals, supporting an open anti-Communist party, cannot evolve in a revolutionary direction.

Lechín's and Chávez's 'left' wing defended capitalism, and merely desired to reform it. The MNR needed them in order to control the masses. With the right hand it initiated the reorganisation of the armed forces, set up the paramilitary commandos and the secret police (the Comando Político), stirred up anti-Communist hysteria to mobilise the petit-bourgeoisie against the proletarian 'excesses', and pressed for approaches to imperialism. With its left hand it tried to flirt with working class radicalism, whilst simultaneously aiming to tame it. MNR trade unionists, while they uttered the most incendiary speeches, did everything possible to use their authority to hold back the COB's mobilisation and demands, tried to defuse the movement towards dual power, and turn it into a force that would be subordinated to, and would collaborate with, the bourgeois regime.

However, the POR did more than serve Lechinism. Its members edited its union paper, wrote its speeches, and gave it complete support. Paz wanted to line up behind imperialism, Lechín lined up behind Paz, and the POR behind Lechín.

From the first weeks of the 1952 Revolution until at least the end of 1953, the POR considered that the left wing elements of the governing party would 'proceed to their logical conclusion, that is to say, evolve towards forming a workers' and peasants' government':

'The evolution of the government towards the left, and its consequent transformation will be determined by the exploited. Owing to the pressure of political circumstances, the petit-bourgeois government may possibly be superseded and be turned into a stage of a workers' and peasants' government. It is the most probable tendency of that

unstable moment... This requires the political defeat of the right, and the active participation in the state of the proletariat and the peasants.²⁶

One month after the creation of the GOB, the POR considered it possible that the exploited would put sufficient pressure on the MNR government to shift it leftwards and transform it into a workers' and peasants' government. But Paz and the MNR were not 'neutral forces or wild-cards' flitting between the various classes. The MNR was an unwaveringly bourgeois force, incapable of changing its class content. However, much a monkey wants to learn to fly it is impossible. Paz's MNR had absolutely no possibility of evolving into a workers' and peasants' government. The only ones who could evolve were the PORists - towards a greater conciliation with the bourgeois MNR. Revolutionaries do not call upon the workers to have a more 'active participation' within the state, but to overturn it.

The POR still persisted in the second half of 1953. On 23 June 1953 the Political Bureau of the POR proposed that 'the whole of this struggle must revolve around the slogan: Total Control of the State by the Left Wing of the MNR.'²⁷ Liborio Justo correctly observed:

The POR would support the left in its struggle against the right, it would guide its ideological orientation towards the most radical positions, and simultaneously it would mobilise the MNR rank and file so that it would call on the leftist leadership to adopt the programme of proletarian revolution. That is to say, the revolution should be carried out by the MNR left wing, which the POR had "instructed" to cease being petit-bourgeois and an agent of the reaction, and this would help its rank and file push it to adopt the programme of the proletarian revolution.²⁸

In August, after a ministerial crisis had occurred, *Lucha Obrera* opined:

The only political outcome of the present situation is the displacement of the MNR right wing from power by the left wing. "All power to the left" is a suitable slogan in the case of a cabinet crisis. Such a new kind of MNR government would carry out the new tasks of the revolution. Total control of the state by the left... The POR will help the left in this task, it will guide it politically and support it critically.²⁹

Instead of fighting to expose and politically destroy the 'left' wing, the POR offered itself as a prop and adviser to the left of the official bourgeois party. Instead of struggling for a workers' and peasants' government, it asked for a 'new kind of MNR government'. Instead of wanting to overthrow a social class, the POR was limited to asking for

a new cabinet to which it would offer its services. Instead of calling for the overthrow of the bourgeois state, the POR called for its regeneration under the control of the 'left' wing of bourgeois officialdom. Even if the 'left' wing of the MNR had the majority, or even every ministry, the state that they would have controlled and defended would be bourgeois.

It is fruitless and dangerous to pursue 'left' wings of bourgeois nationalist parties. Within the 'left' there will always be another 'left', and within this yet another. At the end of this pursuit, the route to the proletarian revolution is lost, and we end up as vulgar followers of the bourgeois nationalists. Not one leader of the MNR 'left' wing ever evolved towards forming a reformist workers' party or centrist organisation, let alone Marxism.

The least that a party which called itself revolutionary should have done was to have constantly denounced the counter-revolutionary and turncoat Lechín. But the POR went on tail-ending the corrupt old bureaucrat, hoping that he and his fellow bureaucrats would turn towards it:

There can be no doubt that with the creation of a left wing political organisation, independent of the right that controls the MNR and government, the imminent split will ensure the vanquishing of all vacillating and centrist positions, ensuring that, faced with this situation, all the leftists in the MNR will turn to the Party, initially with no other aim than to win positions from the right, and so deepen the revolutionary process.³⁰

Waldo Alvarez's memoirs give a vivid description of the relationship which developed between the POR's leaders and Lechín, which 'was so close that they believed that they could control the labour movement through him, whereas he used them for his own aims':

The POR could not hide its servile attitude to the Executive Secretary [Lechín] on every question which arose in the COB...

Many cases could be cited, but the most serious, which was almost a betrayal of the proletariat, was to submit to the requests of the top leaders over the launching of a manifesto to nationalise the mines. The workers demanded workers' control... But when the Executive Secretary intervened asking for the amendment to be withdrawn in accordance with government policy, only one POR member stood firm and supported the workers. The rest softened their position, supported the government directive, and in order to hide things, asked for the amendment to be sent to the government in a separate note.

So on a number of occasions, the POR's slavish attitude to the main COB leader led it to make concessions prejudicial to the real revolutionary mood of the working class.³¹

According to Catoira, when Lechín was put in charge of the COB by the government, and also became Minister of Mining and Petroleum, 'he shed the Trotskyist clothing in which the POR had clad him, and promoted himself simply as a loyal MNR supporter'.³² Lora, however, claims that:

'Lechín... returned to Trotskyist posturing immediately after 9 April... and he accommodated himself to the radicalisation of the masses. He surrounded himself with POR members and, where he could, recited speeches written by the latter.'³³

Some people thought Lechín had evolved from the MNR to the POR in 1952, whereas others thought the opposite. What is certain is that nobody knew for whom that crafty individual was working. Lechín made use of everyone. The MNR let him have a certain independence and verbal radicalism so that he could consolidate his position in the labour movement, and thus tame it. The POR thought that by writing his theses, speeches and programmes it was using him to reach out to the working class. But it was the clever bureaucrat who used the POR to gain authority over the most militant workers, and thus negotiate for a share of power within his party and his government. In exchange for mouthing the POR's incendiary slogans, Lechín received its support, and at worst its mild criticism.

During the revolutionary euphoria of the 1950s Lechín lived in the Hotel Crillon, the most luxurious hotel in La Paz. By contrast, the workers who had made him their irreplaceable leader lived in the most degraded conditions of squalor.³⁴ Not that the POR mentioned this...

The POR went so far as to claim the line of the Lechinist newspaper *Vanguardia* as its own:

'Its orientation is defined and determined by the route that the proletariat boldly opened up during the April events... Take care! The people are not the servants of the government. The government are the servants of the people. A revolutionary fluency can be seen incarnated in its editors, interpreters of the majority views of the rank and file of its party formed by proletarians, peasants and office workers... If *Vanguardia* maintains its line, the path on which it is set will bring these bold lads the object of their desires, when the working masses judge that feudal exploitation in the countryside must be liquidated.'³⁵

The POR identified itself with the Lechinist slogan of making the government the servant of the people. It is impossible to imagine that any capitalist government can defend the interests of the proletariat. The POR wagered on the MNR 'left' being able to enlighten the popular and working class majority in the MNR so as to reorient it and

enable it to put the MNR government 'at the service of the people'.³⁶

Paz: The Anti-Capitalist

The illusions of the POR in the MNR went to the extreme of believing that Paz himself could initiate a turn to revolution. It said that it was 'possible' for the President to 'have made some good proposals for achieving a real economic transformation of the country', but he was blocked by the reactionaries in the cabinet and right wing technicians:

'Meanwhile, the present President of the Republic has his hands tied in front of his party comrades, and, faced with creating a government of the people or staying President, seems to have chosen the latter.'³⁷

Every time the President gave a speech to ingratiate himself with the radicalised masses, a Marxist should have denounced it as a demagogic trick. Yet the POR always ended up saluting every radical-sounding outburst by Paz, even after the first year of the revolution:

'The President, revising the whole of his past political attitude, points to anti-capitalist and not merely anti-imperialist and anti-feudal aims for the revolution. This speech can very easily be regarded as Trotskyist... With these words Víctor Paz has gone further than all his leftist collaborators, who are so determined to hold back and obstruct the liquidation of the latifundia...'³⁸

The POR's adaptation to Paz was such that it believed that he was capable of breaking with and expropriating his own social class! It was a serious crime for a supposedly working class party to promote even the faintest idea that such a reactionary could possibly ever have installed an anti-capitalist government.

The Desire To Transform The MNR

At bottom the POR considered that the MNR could actually be transformed into an anti-capitalist revolutionary party.

'Solid working class cadres in the MNR, the elimination of counter-revolutionary tendencies, a political programme which represents the interests of the exploited classes, in brief the absolute pre-eminence of the working class within the MNR ranks is the only means by which the MNR can carry out an important rôle in the revolutionary course towards the workers' and peasants' government.'³⁹

Regardless of the number of workers it recruits, a bourgeois party

cannot change its class character. The exploited masses will never be able to control a party created by the bourgeoisie, and which acts in its specific interests.⁴⁰ Whereas the POR struggled to get more workers into the MNR, Trotskyists should have struggled for them to leave it. But for the POR, all the problems of Bolivia could have been tackled if the MNR had recruited more workers, as this would have strengthened its left wing. Furthermore, if the right wing elements had been purged and the left wing around Chávez and Lechín had taken charge, the POR would have been ready to fuse with the MNR:

If the left wing succeeds in taking charge and adopts a working class orientation, the POR is ready to work with it and even to fuse with it. The form of this new party ought to be reflected in the form of government, which can only be a workers' and peasants' government.⁴¹

The left wing of the MNR may not have come to lead the party, but this did not prevent many PORists from drawing the logical conclusions of their party's adaptation to the MNR. In 1954 the whole of the POR's old guard (Warqui, Ernesto Ayala, etc), all of the POR leaders of the COB, (Edwin Moller, José Zegada), and the great majority of Lora's Leninist Workers Faction dissolved themselves and entered the MNR.

All Power To The COBI!

James Malloy says that although the COB 'proposed that the MNR assume the power and responsibility of government and of governing the state officially', it was 'in a certain sense, more powerful than the government itself', and had 'set itself up as a centre without rival, capable of initiative and veto in relation to the central power':

In reality, the COB was the real government of the Bolivian workers and, hence, of the national economy. In fact, it possessed the symbolic and functional characteristics of a sovereign entity, including executive, deliberative and judicial organs, a defined area of authority, electors and, what is more important, armed forces.⁴²

The situation in Bolivia after 9 April 1952 was similar to that in Russia after the February Revolution of 1917. Two powers existed in the country, but the strongest, the one with mass character, was that of the peoples' and workers' organisations, which, owing to their conciliatory leaderships, handed over power to a weak bourgeois government. The governments of both Kerensky and Paz had to flirt with the upsurge and demands of the masses at the same time as they tried to spin out time to exhaust them, and then, by rebuilding the armed forces and their authority, to open the way to a situation of bourgeois stabilisation.

To deal with this, the Bolsheviks demanded that the Soviets break from the 'leftist' bourgeois provisional government, and take all power themselves. In Bolivia the demand should have been to struggle for all power to the COB. The COB, just like the Russian Soviets, had the arms and the power, but, because of its conciliatory leadership, gave away the latter to the bourgeoisie. The seizure of power by the Soviets and the COB could have been carried out peacefully. The old military apparatus had already collapsed through a violent revolution. The road was open for the working class, armed and with popular support, to seize power. The only obstacle to the COB and the Russian Soviets carrying out that task was that their leaderships were so insistent on rescuing the bourgeoisie.

In spite of the COB being the real power in the country, and the POR giving it direction, the latter – a section of the Fourth International – opposed the slogan of 'All Power to the COBI!'. On the contrary, it called on the COB to join the bourgeois government, thus weakening its alternative power, and so becoming a body increasingly subordinate to the bourgeois government. The slogan of the POR was that of shifting the Paz administration leftwards via ministerial changes. With that treacherous line it helped Paz and Lechín to dilute the power of the COB, and to reconstitute the bourgeois state and the army.

In his 'self-criticism' Lora recognised that:

The POR leaders used these events to launch the slogan of "total control of the cabinet by the left" ... The slogan, however, contained the signs of an enormous ideological error: to believe that the workers could win power via Lechín – behind the slogan of "All Power to the COBI!".

"The watch-word of "All Power to the COBI!" could have led to the victory of the workers on two exceptionally favourable occasions. The first was when the agitation around the immediate nationalisation of the mines without compensation and under workers' control reached its high point during the first half of 1952. The second arose with the defeat of the coup d'état on 6 January 1953. Not taking due advantage of these opportunities, and adapting to marching behind and mouthing the slogans of the MNR left, were the greatest errors of the POR."⁴³

As we have seen, on the first occasion the POR did not call for the seizure of the enterprises, but for support for the MNR government. On the second occasion, the POR gave its support to Paz, whilst attempting to change his policies, a treacherous course.

The right wing of the MNR staged an unsuccessful coup on 6 January 1953. The COB called the workers' and peasants' militias to a mass national mobilisation, and a massive demonstration took place next day. The demonstrators demanded immediate and unrestricted

agrarian reform, wage increases, vouchers, protection against dismissal, rent control, price control, subsidies to food stores, a series of social security measures, and the reinstatement of sacked workers. Yet, addressing the massive demonstration on behalf of the COB, Edwin Moller, then Secretary of the POR, instead of calling on the workers to have no confidence in the bourgeois government of Paz and for the COB to seize power, concluded: 'We want, Comrade Paz Estenssoro, a government of Bolivians for the Bolivians.'⁴⁴ In the crucial moments of the revolution, the POR showed that its strategy was limited to changing the policies of the bourgeois government, and not for its revolutionary overthrow.

In spite of those extraordinary conditions, the POR delayed almost a year before launching the slogan for a COB government. However, it must be said that there are different ways and methods of launching such a slogan. The POR's call for 'All Power to the COB!' was merely a variant of its idea of 'all power to the left of the MNR'. For the POR, that slogan was not in order to expose the Lechín leadership, but was more concerned with governing jointly with it. Instead of trying to counterpose the COB to the MNR government, the POR wanted the COB gradually to replace existing ministers in the Paz cabinet until finally there would be a government of the COB bureaucracy of the MNR. The slogan of 'All Power to the COB!' should have gone hand in hand with the raising of anti-capitalist slogans with a powerful denunciation of the MNR 'left'.

Lechín has often said that his great mistake was in not taking power in April 1952.⁴⁵ But a cabinet based upon the COB with Lechín as President would not have constituted a revolutionary workers' government. Lechín would have done everything possible to maintain capitalism, and to coexist with the national and world bourgeoisie. A revolutionary party would only have been able to participate critically in that government if it had broken with the bourgeois MNR, based itself directly upon the working class organisations and their militias, and attacked and disarmed the bourgeoisie -- and this was highly unlikely.

Turn The COB Into A Soviet!

For Lenin and Trotsky, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat could be based only on bodies like the Russian Soviets of 1917. In every revolution it is vital to transform the mass organisations created by the exploited into soviets. A soviet is an organ of struggle of the proletariat whose delegates are directly elected and revocable in rank and file assemblies, which include all workers, smallholders, peasants, soldiers, housewives, unemployed and other oppressed sectors of the area. Whereas unions are bodies which unite workers in an enterprise or branch of production, Soviets are territorial organisations which encom-

pass the broadest masses, both non-unionised and unionised. The COB, although it had soviet tendencies, was an organism with trade union, vertical and bureaucratic features. As Lora admitted:

'One of the gravest errors in the organisation of the COB consisted in its originating from the top leadership, which were soon to end up completely tied to the petit-bourgeois government, and it crystallised through the middle rank leadership... The correct thing would have been to proceed in the opposite way, that is to say, from the bottom up. The workers adhered to the COB through their trade union leaders... The founders of the COB orientated towards the old leaders, and not on the democratically elected rank and file delegates. This organisational defect already contained the cause of its infirmity, which increased its bureaucratisation, its isolation from the masses, and the skilful control of it by the government.'⁴⁶

The COB delegates were neither elected nor controlled, and were not subject to recall through rank and file mass meetings. The first congress of the COB took place 30 months after its foundation. The bureaucracy did everything possible to run the union along bureaucratic lines. A revolutionary party would have struggled for the immediate organisation of a congress a few days or weeks after it was founded. Only in this way could the COB have been democratised and have acquired the features of a soviet. However, the POR was in the top leadership of the COB, and did not object to a bureaucratic structure which allowed a cosy relationship with Lechín.

The COB was founded at a meeting called by the Miners Federation on 17 April 1952. The leaderships of the confederations of factory workers, railway workers and peasants, the federation of bank employees and allied branches, commercial and industrial employees, and printing, construction, bricklayers' and bakers' unions took part in that assembly.⁴⁷ The poor neighbourhoods, the unemployed and the rank and file soldiers were not organised within it. The COB aimed to be a union centre based on leaderships elected at labour congresses every so often years. The COB's founding meeting elected an Executive Committee which held office until the congress in October 1954. It was headed by Lechín (Executive Secretary), Germán Butrón (General Secretary) and Mario Torres (Secretary of Relations). As the two key figures in the COB were ministers, the job of day to day leadership at the centre fell on PORists like Edwin Moller (Organisation Secretary), José Zegada (Minuting Secretary) and Miguel Alandía Pantoja (Director of the Press).⁴⁸ Although 'this first Management Committee was declared provisional until the election of a proper committee by a national congress which would meet shortly',⁴⁹ that congress did not take place until after the COB had ceased to be an alternative dual

power, and had surrendered to the official bourgeois power. The COB developed in a manner identical to other organs of popular power that bourgeois nationalist governments invariably create, which use the rhetoric of anti-imperialism in order to build a popular basis for themselves, and to discipline the masses.

The POR did not fight to transform the COB into a soviet. To do so required a constant daily battle against the MNR and the Lechinist bureaucracy. On the contrary, the POR bore the main responsibility for the COB being a limited and bureaucratic organisation that was tied to officialdom.

The Nationalisation Of The Mines.

In his lengthy history of the Bolivian labour movement, Lora states:

'One of the POR's slogans which most gripped the workers was that of the occupation of the mines... Why was this demand not carried through by workers' action, at the time of their greatest mobilisation and radicalisation? If the mines had been occupied, and it was possible that this could have occurred, it is clear that the course of the revolution would have undergone a radical change... The occupation of the mines would have raised, sooner or later, the question of power, and created the basis for the rapid supersession of the nationalist sentiments of the working class. At the same time, the POR would have been able, quite quickly, to recover its control.'⁵⁰

If, however, the issues of *Lucha Obrera* and the POR's programme for 1952 are examined, the slogan of the immediate occupation of the mines, factories and land will not be found. The only time an enterprise was occupied was to prevent the closure of the Corocoro mine. The reason the POR did not raise that slogan was connected to its refusal to call for workers' control in the private sector, to nationalise the factories, and to formulate anti-capitalist demands. The POR was tailing Lechin, and merely attempting to put pressure upon the Paz government.

In fact, the illusions of the POR in the MNR were clearly shown in the crucial issue of the nationalisation of the mines. Whilst Paz, supported by Lechin, did everything possible to ensure that the workers did not occupy the mines and instead waited for a solution from above, the POR, far from denouncing these manoeuvres, idealised Lechin:

The Minister of Mines and Petroleum, supported by those around him, quite clearly advocated expropriation without compensation.⁵¹

A revolutionary party would have done the opposite, and drawn atten-

tion to the fact that, whilst Lechin spouted radical phrases, he was, as events showed, preparing nationalisation (with compensation) merely for enterprises in a poor state. But for the POR, the nationalisation of the mines was a great step forward:

'The nationalisation of the mines which will be announced shortly will be the starting point that will make the continuation of the capitalist system on the basis of the classical forms of exploitation impossible.'⁵²

Nationalisation is not an anti-capitalist measure in itself. It can also be a means for the bourgeoisie to aid its development. The nationalisation of large-scale mining in Bolivia was not the start of the destruction of capitalism, it strengthened it. The POR helped that process by limiting itself to a bourgeois-democratic programme, and by tailing the MNR and its 'left' wing.

The MNR formally adopted the slogan of the nationalisation of the mines without compensation and under workers' control. However, it ended by paying up so as to keep in with imperialism. As for workers' control, the directorate of the Corporación Minera de Bolivia (Comibol) was run by Carbañal (the first General Secretary of the FSTMB), and two of its seven directors were nominated by the FSTMB. The latter were not elected with a mandate, and they were not recallable by rank and file assemblies. In actual fact, this sort of workers control was aimed at getting the workers to participate in the running of the enterprise in order to stop them striking and to get them to break their backs for 'their' company. Workers' control means the workers supervising the administration of an enterprise as part of the struggle for control over society as a whole. But when exercised by bureaucrats, with no control by the rank and file, it turns into the integration of a layer of workers into the management of the enterprise. And this is what happened:

'The workers' leader Mario Torres admitted that he earned 90 000 bolivianos per month for running Comibol... when a skilled worker earned 4000 bolivianos per month.'⁵³

We have seen that the POR limited itself to demanding workers' control merely in state enterprises, and did not question the prevailing regime in the private sector. It adapted to the bureaucracy controlling Comibol. Later on it raised the reformist alternative of winning a majority on the Comibol board. Faced with this position, it should have called for the opening of the accounts of all enterprises and of the government, so that they could be controlled and inspected by the workers through rank and file meetings and by delegates supervised by them, as part of the wider struggle for workers' power.

At the international level the POR said: 'We demand a free market for tin.'⁵⁴ What was really required was a producers' cartel instead.

The Disintegration And Reorganisation Of The Armed Forces

The military leaders faced a serious problem during the April events. The troops recruited over the previous few weeks had had very little combat training and instruction, as much of their time had been spent in ceremonial drill practice for the repatriation of the remains of Eduardo Avaroa. One observer said that 'the soldiers were able to parade very well, but they did not know how to fight'.⁵⁵ Moreover, as Lora explains:

'In the first months of the revolution, only the COB possessed an armed force, the armed workers' and peasants' militias. The arming of the workers began with union militias when conditions did not exist for the formation of a similar force linked to the MNR. The meetings were impressive parades of armed workers and peasants... The COB Assembly and the rank and file organisations, unlike its Executive Committee, were serious about the task of consolidating these militias, improving their armament, disciplining them and creating a unified command. Paz Estenssoro and Lechín instructed their followers to obstruct the efforts being made to strengthen the armed workers' nuclei, as they represented the greatest threat to the government. Taking advantage of the resources available because of their monopoly of power, they began to organise militias in the zonal commands of the MNR, independent of the trade union militias, and gave them the job of overseeing the main centres; the MNR's leaders, closely helped by Stalinism, were given the means to sabotage the consolidation of the COB militias.'⁵⁶

A key problem in every revolution is the armed forces. A revolutionary party must oppose the reorganisation of the bourgeois army in any form, and put forward the demand to replace it by the armed people organised in militias. As the revolution deepens the repulse of any external or internal aggression should be based on the militias, which can serve as the basis for an internationalist and proletarian Red Army.

But this was not the policy of Lechín and his followers in the POR. Whilst the MNR did everything possible to reorganise the traditional armed forces, Lechín tricked the workers with the fable that he only wanted a peaceful, technical and construction brigade type of bourgeois army. An armed force like that does not stop being guard dogs of capital, and its benign postures help to give it popular support, and hide its rôle as the armed defenders of the capitalist class. Nevertheless,

the POR gave credence to Lechín, saying that he opposed the old regular army, and favoured 'the creation of a new technical army with industrial and farming functions'.⁵⁷

Immediately after the April insurrection, the Bolivian armed forces were disintegrating. The well-known anti-Communist general Gary Prado says that at the time:

'In the barracks the situation was tense, as the officers were split between those who supported and those who condemned the revolution. Nobody did anything except stand guard to ensure that as much military equipment as possible was kept from the revolutionary forces. A sense of defeat, however, was made worse when we learned the details of what had occurred in the three days of fighting, confirming that the army had been beaten on every hand. The flight of the High Command made the officers feel even more abandoned. A number, fearing repression, deserted their units without delay and sought asylum in foreign embassies or voluntarily went into exile. Others, forgetting their duty, went home to await developments. A few stayed in the barracks trying to regroup their units, control the soldiers, and keep an appearance of order and discipline.'⁵⁸

Whilst this was happening the COB adopted the resolution presented by the mining representatives which proposed that the National Corps of the COB's Armed Militias would be organised under the National Command and Departmental and Special Commands. The National Command was headed by the National Leader, Paz, and the Commander-in-Chief, Lechín. The commanders of the cells would be elected by the departmental militiamen, the Departmental Centres and the National Command of the COB.

Gary Prado states that the military commanders considered that the resolution was a humiliating attack on the institution of the armed forces. However, although unable to prevent the formation of militias, 'it was decided to try to maintain some degree of control over the militias in some way'.

'With that aim, by means of deceit, the Chief of the General Staff, Germán Armando Fortún, offered to supply the COB with all the advice needed to improve the organisation of the Armed Militias, such as the appointment of enough instructors to instil into the militiamen disciplined attitudes, basic military training and responsibility on the understanding that the militias will be, in the final analysis, the reserve of the Armed Forces of the Nation.

'The General Staff offer was warmly accepted by the COB... In this way it succeeded to a certain extent in dealing with the problem of the militias, at least inasmuch as it prevented them from becoming a

structure that would turn them into a parallel army. The National Command of the militias never functioned properly.⁵⁹

Instead of ensuring that the workers' militias were independent of and opposed to the bourgeois armed forces, the COB leadership of Lechín and the POR 'warmly accepted' the proposal of the high command of the defeated army, which had as its aim the castration of the militias, and their subordination to the armed forces. They also accepted as the national leader of the militias a class enemy, Paz. For his part, Lechín tried to avoid the construction of an independent force of armed workers. He wanted to transform them into the MNR's armed guards or the militia reserves of the regular bourgeois army.⁶⁰ But this did not prevent the POR from supporting him.

The Peasant Uprising

The great struggles in Bolivia between the end of the Chaco War and 1952 were centred on the cities and mines. Yet at that time at least 70 per cent of the population lived in the countryside. The peasants lived on the margins of the national economy, could not vote, and took little direct part in politics. The peasant masses spoke Amerindian languages, and the great majority were illiterate. The Indians had to pay the gamonal in labour, products or money, in other words, a form of serfdom.

Nevertheless, the peasant masses were gradually awakening. When the army of the Rosca collapsed, the Indian tenants organised themselves, and a few months after April 1952, a wave of land occupations occurred, mainly in the valleys of Cochabamba and La Paz, which had trading links with the cities. These movements were not Marxist, and the MNR immediately took them over. The left had little influence at first, but once the peasant mobilisations for land began to get under way, the POR succeeded in attaining great influence in the convulsed valley of Cochabamba. In 1953 it correctly launched the slogan of the occupation of the land and the expropriation of the latifundia. However, its agrarian programme did not go beyond the limits of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The mere distribution of land cannot solve all the peasants' problems, nor can it ensure that there will be a substantial increase in agricultural production. This requires electrification, mechanisation and the modernisation of the agricultural sector, plus the improvement of communications and the means of exchange, through the expropriation of industry, transport and the banks under the control of workers and small peasants. Similarly, plans for literacy campaigns and cultural and political education could only be carried out on the basis of substantial sums obtained by confiscation from the rich, and by a

general mobilisation of educational volunteers – something that the MNR did not want to do.⁶¹

Once again, the POR's programme was limited to a bourgeois framework, and it sought to put pressure on the 'Comrade President':

'Whilst we all waited for the government to make its position clear on the problem of the latifundia, whilst taking up the hopes of the exploited masses, President Paz Estenssoro answered our worries by the needs from the Indians, of labour and sacrifices.'⁶²

Once more the POR pinned its hopes on Paz, instead of constantly informing the masses that the MNR was not interested in carrying out an agrarian revolution. The MNR eventually introduced agrarian reforms, but they failed to pull the agricultural sector out of its backwardness.

The POR's Opportunist International Orientation

The Bolivian revolution could never have overcome its impoverished capitalist semi-colonial condition by remaining isolated in a backward and landlocked country. The internationalisation of the revolution was vital in order to ward off counter-revolution, and to establish the material basis for Socialist construction.

The MNR did everything possible to isolate the revolution within its own boundaries. It did not even dare to organise or encourage insurgent movements in other countries of the continent, however moderate their programmes were. Paz took great pains to be imperialism's trump card. Lechín and his POR scribes took great pains to promote him. No serious call for the international expansion of the revolution can be found in the POR's press and its programme of action. It did not even call for a struggle for the Socialist United States of Latin America.

The POR has never been renowned for regarding international politics as important. However, in the few articles written by the POR about other countries a line of colossal capitulation to bourgeois nationalism can be seen:

First Perón and Vargas in Argentina and Brazil, then Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia and later Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador and finally Ibañez in Chile, unifying the revolutionary and anti-imperialist aspirations of their own peoples, express in their broad electoral victories, not only the discontent of the working masses for the system of capitalist exploitation, but the fundamental defeat of imperialism's subjection of our semi-colonial countries through the traditional methods of economic slavery. Such mass movements fully identify themselves with the

revolutionary actions that are liberating China, Korea, Indonesia and Indochina, and which enable these countries to escape the influence and exploitation of imperialism.⁶³

The POR maintained that the bourgeois governments of Perón, Vargas, Paz and Ibañez had defeated imperialism, and had 'fully identified themselves' with the revolutions that were overthrowing the bourgeoisies in Asia. The nationalist Latin American governments did not question the backward capitalist semi-colonial nature of the countries that they ran. They simply sought to generate better conditions for the development of a national bourgeoisie. The aim of their social reforms was to widen the internal market and control labour organisations. All these regimes were anti-Communist, and ended up supporting imperialism and repressing the workers.⁶⁴

The Opportunism of the Fourth International

The Fourth International gave wholehearted support to the treacherous policy of the POR, and admitted to being the POR's guide. The resolution adopted by the IEC of the Fourth International at its Twelfth Plenum in November 1952 was quite uncritical of the POR.⁶⁵ Early in 1953 *Fourth International* asserted:

'The POR began by justifying granting critical support to the MNR government... it gave the government critical support against attacks of imperialism and reaction and it supported all progressive measures.'⁶⁶

In 1953 the Fourth International began to split between the International Secretariat of Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and Juan Posadas, and the International Committee of the SWP (USA), the French PCI of Bleibtreu-Favre and Pierre Lambert and the groups of Gerry Healy and Nahuel Moreno. During the split the Bolivian Revolution was not discussed. All had supported the POR line. The split was not between 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' forces, but between two wings which had already supported the centrist orientation of seeking to reform dissident Stalinists (such as Tito) or nationalists (such as the MNR). Only much later, in their search to find arguments for their factional battles, did the anti-Pabloists discover the betrayal of 1952.

Healy's International Committee published a vast collection of six books entitled *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, which contained hundreds of letters and documents which were supposed to show its struggle against revisionism. However, in none of those volumes is the 1952 Revolution mentioned. The first volume is dedicated to the split with Pabloism. More than 50 texts of that polemic are reproduced.

Nevertheless, in all these documents Bolivia is only mentioned in two brief and passing references of a purely administrative nature. All this confirms that the anti-Pabloists never questioned the Menshevik strategy which was unanimously adopted by the Fourth International.

The only discordant voice known within the Fourth International at the time was that of a small tendency in the SWP in California, headed by Vern and Ryan. This had the great merit of severely questioning Lora's Menshevik declarations and conduct.⁶⁷ The Vern-Ryan tendency received no reply to its criticism against the Menshevik line in Bolivia. From then until today, all the currents which derive from the 'anti-Pabloist' International Committee, not to mention those deriving from the International Secretariat, continue to ignore these criticisms of a policy to which they gave their endorsement.

Notes

1. The National Workers Centre (Central Obrera Nacional, CON) was a union federation formed in 1946 by the POR and FSTMB, chiefly in order to combat the influence of the Stalinist-led CSTB.
2. James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins*, Verso, London, 1984, pp45, 67. This was confirmed in October 1952 by a journalist who was critical of the POR. He admitted that within the COB 'the largest fraction is that of the POR; next comes the group of Lechún and Torres, that is the nationalist wing of the unions, while the Stalinists are in third place with scarcely five votes' (*Labor Action*, 27 October 1952).
3. Waído Alvarez, *Memorias del primer ministro obrero*, La Paz, 1986, p188.
4. *Lucha Obrera*, 12 June 1952.
5. RJ Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America*, Hoover Institution Press, California, 1973, p134.
6. Guillermo Lora claims not only that 'a large part of the fulltime staff and the whole orientation of the brand new COB was Trotskyist', but that the POR controlled Lechún, who 'did no more than operate under the powerful pressure of the masses and the POR' (G Lora, *La revolución boliviana: análisis crítico*, La Paz, 1963, p254).
7. *Labor Action*, 7 April 1952.
8. G Lora, *Contribución a la historia política de boliviana*, Volume 2, La Paz, 1978, pp237-8.
9. *The Militant*, 12 May 1952.
10. *Ibid*.
11. *The Militant*, 19 May 1952. This assertion does not square with his later comment that at the time he said that the working class 'in order to triumph had no other way than by going over the political corpse of the MNR and also over that of Lechinism' (Lora, *Contribución a la historia política de boliviana*, Volume 2, op cit, pp237-8).
12. *Lucha Obrera*, 25 May 1952.
13. *Lucha Obrera*, 18 April 1952.
14. Dunkerley maintains that although POR members 'were from an early stage highly critical of the MNR regime, they made no call for an immediate workers' government, demanding instead a radicalisation of proposed reforms, the defence of the regime against imperialism and the revolutionary education of the masses' (Dunkerley, op cit, p46).
15. *Lucha Obrera*, 25 May 1952.

16. *Lucha Obrera*, 12 June 1952.
17. *Lucha Obrera*, 29 June 1952.
18. Jorge Lazarte, *Movimiento obrero y procesos políticos en Bolivia: historia de la COB 1952-1957*, La Paz, 1989, p280.
19. *POR, Boletín Interno*, no 13, 1953, p11.
20. *Lucha Obrera*, 1 June 1952. A journalist, claiming to be Trotskyist, related how 'one of the old militants of the POR told us likewise with pride, that the MNR offered two ministries to the POR' (Alexander, op cit, p125).
21. S Ryan, letter dated 4 August 1953, *SWP, Internal Bulletin*, no 17, August 1953, New York, p40. To date, we are not aware of any confirmation or denial of such facts, just as we are unaware of any source which can ascertain their reliability or otherwise.
22. *Lucha Obrera*, 25 May 1952.
23. *POR, Boletín Interno*, no 13, 1953, p12.
24. *Lucha Obrera*, 11 November 1952.
25. *Ibid*.
26. *Lucha Obrera*, 25 May 1952.
27. I. Justo, *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada*, Cochabamba, 1967, p224.
28. *Ibid*. Justo criticised the Fourth International for having a Menshevik position in 1952, linking this with his allegations that Trotsky had capitulated to US imperialism, and with his call for a Fifth International. Justo's positions were largely centrist, standing in the tradition of Aguirre, and supporting the stagist *Theses of Pulacayo*. He raised the demand 'All Power to the COB' without explaining that the COB had first to be transformed into a soviet.
29. *Lucha Obrera*, 2 August 1953.
30. *POR, Boletín Interno*, no 13, 1953, p10.
31. Alvarez, op cit, pp283-4.
32. R Catoira Martín, *El sindicalismo boliviano*, La Paz, 1987, p43.
33. Lora, *Contribución a la historia política de Bolivia*, Volume 2, op cit, p228.
34. Catoira, op cit, p48.
35. *Lucha Obrera*, 3 May 1952.
36. *Lucha Obrera*, 25 May 1952.
37. *Lucha Obrera*, 12 June 1952.
38. *Lucha Obrera*, 5 August 1953.
39. *Lucha Obrera*, 11 November 1952.
40. In all seriousness, the POR called on the leopard to change its spots:
 'If the MNR does not organically change itself, expelling the rightists, freemasons, adventurers, businessmen and carpetbaggers from its ranks, it will become the gravedigger of the revolution.' (*Lucha Obrera*, Supplement, 3 February 1953)
41. *Lucha Obrera*, Supplement, 3 February 1953.
42. JM Malloy, *Bolivia: la revolución inconclusa*, Ceres, La Paz, 1989, pp243-4.
43. Lora, *La revolución boliviana: análisis crítico*, op cit, pp267, 270.
44. *Lucha Obrera*, 23 January 1953.
45. See the interview in *Facetas*, 5 July 1987.
46. Lora, *La revolución boliviana: análisis crítico*, op cit, pp262-3.
47. Lazarte, op cit, p6.
48. Alandía was in charge of the first three issues of the COB's journal, *Rebelión*, which 'wholly expressed the programme of the Centre at that time'. The first issue even 'contained a hearty greeting to the General Secretary of the POR (Lora, *La revolución boliviana: análisis crítico*, op cit, p254). However, rather than putting forward a revolutionary policy calling on the COB to break from Paz, and to occupy the mines, factories and the land, and to take power, *Rebelión* identified itself with the bourgeois regime, and demanded that it be propped up:
 'The defeat of the oligarchy and the birth of the MNR government is the work of

the working masses; it is our creation... In order to survive, the present government requires from the workers that the workers supporting it, being vigilant, will be able to attain great achievements.' (*Rebelión*, 1 May 1952)

49. Lazarte, op cit, p7.
50. Lora, *Contribución a la historia política de Bolivia*, Volume 2, op cit, pp231-2.
51. *Lucha Obrera*, 29 June 1952.
52. *POR, Boletín Interno*, no 13, 1953, p9.
53. Pierre Scali, *La revolución boliviana 1952-1954*, *La Verdad*, 22 April 1954.
54. *Lucha Obrera*, May 1953.
55. General Gary Prado Salnón, *Poder y fuerzas armadas 1949-1982*, Cochabamba, 1984, p33.
56. Lora, *La revolución boliviana: análisis crítico*, op cit, p271.
57. *Lucha Obrera*, 15 July 1952.
58. Prado, op cit, p40.
59. Op cit, pp52-54.
60. In his memoirs Lechín boasted that in April 1952 he handed over to the police the arms discarded by the soldiers. Cf Lupe Cajas, *Historia de una leyenda: vida y palabra de Juan Lechín Oquendo*, La Paz, 1989, p148.
61. The MNR introduced adult suffrage, and the illiterate Bolivian peasants were able to vote for the first time. The POR had not called for adult suffrage, nor did it demand a Constituent Assembly. Later it demanded that illiterates be eligible for election, and that the proletariat have a preferential vote.
62. *Lucha Obrera*, 29 June 1952.
63. *POR, Boletín Interno*, no 13, 1953, p3.
64. The POR's adaptation to nationalism was also shown by its sympathetic attitude towards the participation of the Chilean Partido Socialista Popular in a bourgeois government, and towards the Israeli Labour government in 1953, when it disagreed on a wholly reactionary basis with the US government over its treatment of the Palestinians.
65. The IEC's resolution is reproduced above, pp32-7.
66. *Fourth International*, January-February 1953, p16.
67. The letters of the Vern-Ryan tendency can be found in *Bolivia: The Revolution the 'Fourth International' Betrayed*, League for a Revolutionary Party, New York, 1987. In spite of the progressive nature of its criticism, this tendency soon dissolved itself. Its positions, although on the left wing of the deformed Fourth International, contained a series of ambiguities, not least on the question of Stalinism in Eastern Europe.

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