

# **J. POSADAS**

## **THE FUNCTION OF THE TRADE UNIONS**

**IN THE WORKERS STATES AND  
IN THE  
CAPITALIST SYSTEM**

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## *Foreword*

This booklet contains two texts dated May and October 1980. The May text is the transcription of a speech that J. Posadas gave to Greek Trade Union leaders, where he calls for a Single Trade Union Centre in Greece. He shows the reasons why, in this stage of the total crisis of capitalism, the political role of the Trade Unions is bound to increase, both in capitalism and in the Workers States.

In a perceptive summary of the difference between the role of the Trade Unions in capitalism and in the Workers States, the author says: "Trade Union action in capitalism leads to the overthrow of the economic system, whilst in the Workers State it leads to the improvement of the economic system".

In the *Questions and Answers* section at the end of this text, the author deals with wider topics such as the need to oppose the intervention of the State in the Greek Trade Unions, the predatory use that capitalism makes of nuclear energy and the deployment of NATO's missiles in Europe.

In the second text: *On the Conditions of Work in Capitalism*, (October 1980) J. Posadas exposes the merciless and unsustainable capitalist attacks on the working populations. Today, in 2010, events like the garment workers strike in Bangladesh demonstrate that this text is not outdated. The author shows, as opposed to this, the superiority of the Workers States and the role of the Trade Unions in helping to build them.

The Workers State, J. Posadas says, is the material basis that allows humanity to start eliminating, at last, its division into classes; and hence to regain – and even surpass – the intellectual ability of the Ancient Greeks.

In Britain as in Greece, the Social Democratic reformism of *Labour* and of *PASOK* is being swept aside, whilst a conscious and socialist political leadership is called for. As Trotsky analysed, the greatest problem facing the workers is their lack of conscious leadership. As we write, it is the Trade Unions that play the most important political role of opposition to the barbarism of capitalism.

In Britain, the Labour leadership contest has led neither to a clear repudiation of *New Labour* nor to a reappraisal of capitalism. The present Labour structure is being bypassed by the final crisis of the world capitalist system. In Britain, it is therefore crucial that a discussion is initiated on the necessary steps to advance workers democracy in the Trade Unions and at the base of Labour.

Since this text was written, many Workers States have disappeared and the Soviet Union has collapsed. The total and final crisis of capitalism analysed in this text has not led to capitalism's disappearance. Since the matter of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is now 31 years old, the reader may think that this document is out of date.

Nothing could be further from the truth however. With the end of capitalism, there comes the end of the entire era of private property in human history. This entails the death agony of capitalism on a one hand, and the construction of Workers States on the other. It is natural that such a process should spread over decades: This is precisely why this text is invaluable.

The Workers State *as a form* where the madness and egoism of the market has been defeated, and the collective interest prevails, has not disappeared. In this the USSR has represented a certain form, but the end of the form has not eliminated the substance. Proof is that the Cuban Workers State continues to exist, buoyed now by many Revolutionary States in Latin America and the world.

As in 1980 when this text was made, capitalism is still being disintegrated by the world revolution; and it is still preparing for war to try and save itself. The leaderships of the Workers Parties – and of many Trade Unions – are still hoping these things will not happen. And the proletariat and its Trade Unions continue to increase their own, anti-capitalist role. Now the task is for them to do this consciously.

*The Editorial, September 2010*

# **THE FUNCTION OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE WORKERS STATES AND IN THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM**

**J. POSADAS**

26.05.80

A public conference with the participation of Greek Trade Union leaders

The role and function of the Trade Unions is determined by the development of the class struggle. Historically, the Trade Union representation of the working class was seen as confined to union and industrial struggles. This view prevailed in the capitalist countries and it continued afterwards, in the Workers States.

In reality, the Trade Unions have always been deeply involved in the defence of their members' lives and working conditions. This was so during the period of the class struggle when capitalism was in development, and it is so now that the capitalist crisis is total and global. Today, the role of the Trade Unions is enhanced because it must deal with demands beyond the normal industrial ones.

The role of the Unions has become social and political. It cannot replace the Party <sup>(1)</sup>, but it gives a lead in social and anti-capitalist struggles that seek to overthrow the capitalist system. When Trade Unions do not do this, they die. The role of the Trade Unions is determined by the evolution of the crisis of the capitalist system.

An essential factor in the crisis of capitalism lies in the existence and economic presence of the Workers States. Although there are disputes and differences between North America, Britain, France, Germany and Japan because they all compete for markets, their competition remains within the regime of private property. It does not damage private property or capitalist power.

But in the relations between the capitalist system and the Workers States, there is more than competition. There is antagonism too. For capitalism, the competition of Russia, China, Cuba and other Workers States in the field of technology, enterprise installation and commodity production is antagonistic. That is to say, the Workers States must not only seek to compete commercially with capitalism, but bring the capitalist system down as well.

This is why the opposition of the Workers States to the United States, for instance, is a social antagonism. This social antagonism grows, and in the Workers States, it causes the role and function of the Trade Unions to alter and vary.

A form of class struggle goes on  
in the Workers States

The role of the Trade Unions in developing Workers States, or in Workers States just born and developing, is not the same as in the capitalist system. Mind you, it is not entirely different either because the Unions must defend the working class in the context of a social structure that is still *a State*.

In the Workers State, the Trade Unions defend workers' interests just as they do in capitalism. But they do not wish to overthrow the *State*. In capitalism the Trade Unions struggle for better wages and conditions, whereas in the Workers States, they struggle for the implementation of the plans of the State. In the Workers States, the Trade Unions insist on being those who implement the plans. They do not want this to be done by an apparatus that decides everywhere in society - in the economy, in wealth distribution, or in the economic and social structures that serve the population.

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Not long ago <sup>(1980)</sup>, hundreds of Trade Union and Party leaders <sup>(2)</sup> were sacked in Poland, [East] Germany and Bulgaria. This had happened previously in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Some were thrown out of the Party for being bureaucrats. Others were accused of producing goods in their own bureaucratic interests and not for the population. In the USSR, 70 leading technicians, administrators and fish exporters were expelled from the Communist Party. They had been registering the export of tons of ordinary fish, instead of caviar, the State getting about one tenth of the revenue. The Party expelled them.

But such swindles could not happen if the Trade Unions were controlling production and trade. The Unions need to control the State's plans and the quality of the goods! In this Soviet example, you see that the class struggle continues in the Workers State, although it is no longer antagonistic as in capitalism.

The class struggle continues in the Workers State. The regime no longer needs overthrowing but the bureaucracy needs rooting out. The aim of this struggle is to impose workers' control over the leading State structures that have capitalist origins or whose tasks still entail a relationship with capitalism. In any Workers State, the organs of planning, leadership and distribution have capitalist origins. This makes the State vulnerable to capitalist influence, and this is why there must be workers control and Party control.

Take the Soviet leaders who were passing caviar off as sardines. Workers' control would have made this impossible. It is the task of workers control to oversee the quality of the products and the distribution of the income. In the Workers State, workers control stimulates and improves production and its quality. Whilst in capitalism, workers control over production, quality, wages and prices, can only be truly gained and retained by eliminating the capitalist system.

The development of the class struggle has led to the formation of Trade Unions - this showing once again how the Trade Unions depend on this development. But now, the class struggle has reached the point where capitalism is exhausted: 'Exhausted' means that it cannot improve wages & working conditions *and* produce healthy food. The bosses may concede a wage rise, but they take it back by adulterating the food and lowering the quality of the commodities, making them harmful or poisonous.

Capitalism is at war with nutrition and with life. The deterioration of the capitalist system is unavoidable and irreversible. It downgrades, contaminates and poisons everything that people eat or use. Adulteration is rampant in capitalist agriculture, the world over. The Trade Unions cannot face any of this without broadening their demands. The struggle for the protection of the quality of the food must be included in the demands to protect the working and living conditions of the masses.

Food adulteration is inherent to capitalism and its nature, particularly in this final stage of its existence. But no such thing needs to happen in the Workers States! Capitalism's behaviour is the unalterable result of its existence, and no capitalist measure can alter it. 'The shortest production time' and 'the law of supply and demand' are the supreme laws of capitalist competition. They overrule all the other capitalist laws! This leads to war of course: World war, the war that is going to bury the capitalist system.

The increasing tendency of capitalism to destroy life does not come from passing crises, phases or recessions. It is capitalism's way of being. Its survival as a system depends on the cheapening of everything. In the hands of the capitalists, no vegetal or animal product remains genuine. Competition forces them to speed up every production and transformation, food processing included.

The sole concern of a capitalist enterprise is production costs, as this decides who stays in business and who does not. What is public health compared to this? As a result,



the whole environment, the workplace and the food itself are contaminated by chemicals. Stimulants are added to the soil, and the animals are fed substances that end up poisoning people.

The workers have no option but to compete for jobs, and jobs become ever more distant from where people live. Even when there is transport, the daily exertion to go to work and come back is tremendous. 40% of the world's workers spend 4 hours a day commuting. Lives are blighted by this immense and unpaid effort. For each person, it is 4 hours every day of strain and time wasted. This can only lead to nutritional and sleeping disorders, on top of the weariness and the costs. Is this not an onslaught on human health?

The capitalist system is in every kind of crisis. The North American, French, German, British and Japanese capitalists, who think themselves 'masters of the earth', must all produce cars because their economies cannot cope without a car industry. But it is the workers who pay with their health for the resulting increase in automation and 'speed-ups'. The bosses sack workers, and those who stay employed are faced with increased speeds, more pollutants, more toxic sprays, deafening noises, excesses in heat and cold, etc.

The extra production derived from constant upgrades in automation is literally wrenched out of the lives of the workers. And all this for what? For another capitalist recession and crisis!

In the capitalist system, recession and crisis are worldwide and constant. The car industry illustrates the point. The big car companies like Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, FIAT, Volkswagen, Opel etc. stumble from crisis to crisis. To sell more, each automates more, to produce cheaper. The reduction of the necessary production time leads to more job losses, more machines, more pollution, more poisoning. Is there really an improvement for the population in all this?

## The antagonism between capitalism and the Workers States

Within the capitalist framework, the crisis in the car industry <sup>(1980)</sup> can only find solutions by sacking workers. Right now, the bosses need to reduce the workforce by 20%. What they need is machines, not workers! Machines allow them to lower the prices, and sell more. But where are the markets? The capitalist markets no longer expand. They are saturated. Since the old colonial solutions will not return, capitalism is forced to look for markets in the Workers States. But the latter have their own markets.

The capitalists observe how their field of action is being reduced by the growth and development of the Socialist countries (Workers States). This leads to crises in capitalist industrial centres such as the car and textile industries. But the crises in those industries do not trouble capitalism anywhere near as much as the growth of the Workers States itself. Capitalism is petrified by this growing social antagonism.

The masses know there is no unemployment in the socialist countries - Yugoslavia and China being the only two exceptions. In Yugoslavia, it is due to 'self-management' and the abandonment of State planning; and in China, 22 millions are unemployed due to the policies of the '*Four Thieves*' - and their friends <sup>(10)</sup>.

The capitalists react to the competition of the Workers States, as we said, with more automation and sackings. Their profits increase, but so do their war preparations. The capitalists fear the antagonism of the Workers States even more than their competition, but either way, they have to spend more and cut down on wages. If they grant wage increases, they raise the prices, lower the quality of the commodities, pollute everything and prepare for war. This is what they do, and this is what the Trade Unions must deal with.

Capitalism has more than the Workers States to contend with. It also faces Asia, Africa and Latin America – and in conditions where it is weaker than it was before the Russian Revolution. Capitalism's social authority and dominion over world production have declined, leading it to many wars. Its war industry is its only growth industry.

Britain, the United States and the other capitalist countries are at each others' throat over contracts, markets and investments. In a previous epoch, there would have already been another war between them. But now they feel that the Workers States would benefit from such a war. Hence they dare not launch it. They want a war, but they keep backing away from it.

This contradiction has a corrosive effect in the big capitalist countries, whilst none of their policies can repair the damage. They see the development of the revolution in places like Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe] as major economic and military reverses to which they respond in the usual way: job cuts, automation, speed-ups, etc.

Recently, some industrial representatives announced in a financial report that they need to cut their workforce by 40% over the next 20 years. This was in Germany, but this applies to the US too, or any capitalist country.

The competition between France, Britain and Germany forces them to sack workers and lower their costs, but their antagonism with the Workers States sends all their costs back up again. As capitalism faces the competition of the Workers States, it increases the speed of production. It sacks 20 workers out of 40, and the 20 remaining ones must work faster. New machines are introduced but the working conditions are worse.

As revolutions and Socialist countries spread in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the capitalists need to lower their costs. Faced with the rising costs of the raw materials, they invent substitutes and pass them off as genuine.

Ever since the end of the Second World War - except for the first six or seven years - capitalism has experienced nothing but crises. Nowadays (1980), Africa, Asia and Latin America intervene in the world markets as capitalist competitors - or as Workers States like Cuba, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Ethiopia, etc. Capitalism concentrates its weaker power in fewer hands and in higher spheres, distorting what it likes to call its 'democracy'.

Such are the inexorable and irreversible consequences of the competition between capitalism and the Workers States - consequences that the capitalists cannot stop or limit; obliged as they are to compete socially with the Workers States, they find themselves constantly more harried. This weighs on the capitalist countries, on the United States particularly.

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Yankee imperialism lost the war in Vietnam because of the heroism of the Vietnamese masses. But in the final analysis, Vietnam won because of the support which it received from the world. The Workers States supported it directly, but the US masses supported it indirectly too, by rejecting the idea of pro-war demonstrations. Vietnam is a small country with no riches, but it is backed by the Workers States and world masses. In many countries, the workers forced their Trade Unions and workers parties to support Vietnam, obliging the Unions to take a clear position against Yankee imperialism.

Imperialism dominated the world markets in the past, but it never had a real social dominion over them. Capitalism rules economically in Britain, France, Germany and the US - but not socially. Proof is the big struggles of the masses in these countries that constantly disrupt the capitalists' plans. The masses of France, Britain, Italy, Africa, Asia and Latin America increase their mutual links, as they all fight for jobs, better conditions and better standards of nutrition. People want to decide what is being produced.

In Rhodesia [Zimbabwe], the revolutionary movement has won its first battle. Arms in hand, it has imposed the holding of elections; and still arms in hands it has imposed the electoral triumph of Mugabe (3). Mugabe's victory is not due to him alone, but to the world. British imperialism - the landowner in that country - wanted the whole process crushed directly. But it had to back down. When it saw that it could not stop the elections, it tried to win them. Attempts were made to stop people going to vote. But the Black masses streamed confidently to the polling stations where they voted 1000% against imperialism. Here you have a good snapshot of what imperialism has become and what the masses can do.

Imperialism and capitalism are no longer expanding in Africa, Asia or Latin America; the only thing that awaits them now is the wrath of the peoples of the world. Observe how the Black people imposed elections in Rhodesia, and won these elections, without any Trade Union or mass Party! They were not even allowed electoral offices or public meetings!

The elections in Rhodesia measure the influence of the world balance of forces. As we said, the Black people had no Trade Unions. These exist, but they are small or 'for Whites only'. Trade Unions for elites ... And who won? The Black people! The Black people won, and with a burning desire to put order in their country. In these elections, they sent a bright white light shining into all the dark corners of Rhodesia and the world.

The Trade Unions of Rhodesia must discuss this. In their present situation, bread and butter issues bring up the entire question of society, what sort of society? Rhodesia illustrates this question. The role of the Trade Unions in Rhodesia is not the same as in France, certainly. But the difference is only formal because in either country, the Trade Unions must fight against capitalism to make any progress. In both cases, any true improvement in wages and conditions is a challenge to the whole system.

Improving wages and working conditions  
calls for the economy to be planned

In the Workers States, the role of the Trade Unions is not the same as in capitalism because they do not have to struggle against the State. The Unions want better wages, working conditions and income distribution, but above all, they want more control over them. There is no doubt that they intervene to defend their wages and the quality of what they consume. But in capitalism, the same actions lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system. This is the reason why there are large Communist parties in France and Italy. Trade Union action in capitalism leads to the *overthrow* of the economic system, whilst in the Workers State it leads to the *improvement* of the economic system.

The capitalists can no longer raise both the wages and the purchasing power of the workers. They grant wage increases only to the extent that they can reduce the quality of the products, ignore more health and safety measures and lower the living standards. So much so that any wage increase has become a sham. Purchasing power keeps declining and money buys less and less.

The capitalists are locked in furious conflicts between themselves, certainly, but they want the Trade Unions to believe that this is the reason why the wages cannot rise. The Trade Union leaders swallow this, and then they turn to the workers and tell them: 'Don't rock the boat! The firm may go bust and goodbye the jobs'. You hear this from the Trade Union leaders in Italy, France and every capitalist country. Absolute rubbish of course! Why on earth should the workers suffer for companies that cannot pay them, cannot provide wholesome food for them to eat and cannot use productivity rationally? Why should it be the workers who suffer?

Such companies must be expropriated so that the country's production can be planned. Any element of planned production saps the power of private property.

The Workers States are living proof of this fact. China used to be more backward even than Rhodesia, but it has just carried out a nuclear test. Some say that the range of its launchers can reach the Soviet Union, but by the same token, it can reach the United States.

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The role of the Trade Unions and the role of the Party <sup>(1)</sup> are necessarily different, both in the capitalist countries and in the Workers States. In capitalism, wages and working conditions cannot stand their ground against rising prices and constantly deteriorating goods. In the capitalist countries, the Trade Unions can no longer obtain improvements in the workers' wages and conditions outside the struggle for expropriations and planning.

The Trade Union leaders in Italy, France and Spain tell the workers that they must take pay cuts 'because the bosses cannot pay'. But if the bosses cannot pay, let them move over! The Trade Union leaders must organise to have enterprises expropriated and production planned. They must stop deferring to the bosses' right to private property and supposed organisational skills. Organizational skills that serve private property and not the needs of the population!

The Unions must organise  
workplace meetings

It is the needs of the population that should concern the Trade Union leaders, not those of the bosses! Take Italy. We are told that it is 'in crisis'; but Italy has raw materials, a skilled workforce and means of production. So what is the problem? The problem is that the capitalists are incapable. They even stop people getting proper food, and this is happening on the watch of the Trade Union leaders!

Why should the Italian Trade Unions wait until a Communist and Socialist Alliance decides whether it wants to make some move towards power? The workers must not be made to wait. The Unions must organise for the workers to meet directly in the workplaces where the question of wages and working conditions is linked to the fact that the only food the workers can afford is harmful to health. It is up to the Unions to speak about this. The population realises that the capitalists cannot meet their needs, this is why the workers turn to their Unions. The Trade Unions must then respond adequately by proposing expropriations and workers' plans of production.

There is a lack of public services in Greece. Transport is insufficient. There is little irrigation and not enough running water. The number of hospitals needs to quadruple and some of the existing ones need re-building. The transport system is antiquated, roads and highways need maintenance. There is no shortage of jobs to be created in Greece! The Trade Unions must raise this.

The Trade Unions should  
play a role of leadership in society

The Trade Unions must discuss the planning of production, and draw up plans to cater for the needs of people. The Trade Union movement is affected in every possible way by the economic, social and political crisis. It is true that Trade Unions cannot be workers parties, but there is no antagonism between the two either.

The existing workers parties should propose production plans. They should call meetings in the factories and in the workers areas. As for the Trade Unions, they must not wait for this to happen. There is nothing to stop them addressing the population directly with explanations and leadership. The Trade Unions need to show that they, as Unions, have a leading role to play in society and in the economy. And that they cannot be kept out of any economic solution.



Today, no Trade Union can win for its members genuine wage increases along with better working conditions and more purchasing power. Because this can no longer happen, the Trade Unions can no longer keep the struggle of the workers at the level of wages and working conditions.

This reality is bringing the Trade Unions and the workers parties closer together. In the face of the crisis of capitalism, they must necessarily move in an anti-capitalist direction. Between the Trade Unions and the workers parties, the tasks differ, but not the aims.

The Trade Unions must discuss these aspects.

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The Trade Unions must discuss politically. They must discuss the intervention of the USSR in Afghanistan for instance. Why not? There is nothing to show that the question of Afghanistan does not concern the Trade Unions!

It is not true that debates on Afghanistan will destabilise and split the Unions. Just the reverse, instability and ruptures in the Trade Unions come from the political parties not contributing enough politically to them; and from the Trade Unions themselves having an insufficient political life. In such conditions, bureaucratic factions develop in the Unions with the intention of controlling them.

Everything concerns the Trade Unions. The war against Vietnam came, but the Trade Unions in Italy remained silent. They only took a position when the workers themselves started collecting overtime-money for Vietnam. It is only after this that the Unions decided to hold discussions and conferences. As a matter of fact, the collections started in the Workers States. The workers in Italy took up the initiative that came from the Workers States, and then other countries joined in.

## Workers' and Trade Unions' control over the banks

In discussions on how to organise work and production, the Trade Unions must propose workers' plans that are attractive to the population. They need to show that they intend to give a serious lead in getting what people need actually produced. And in the workplaces, they must condemn the capitalists and their actions.

In every country, the Trade Unions must publish lists of what the population needs, and therefore what should be produced. They must explain in public that the capitalists have no interest in producing these things; and that therefore, such and such companies have to be expropriated. Expropriation is not sufficient, but it is necessary to produce what people need.

It is the role of the Unions to declare that any enterprise taken over by the State - the capitalist State included - must operate under the control of employees and Trade Unions. The Unions must specify the public service role to be played by any new State enterprise - or what should be produced there for the common good.

If the State has just taken over a bank, the Trade Unions must put forward an investment-plan for that bank aimed at stimulating production in the public sector. No more lending to the capitalists! No more gambling with the money in the bank! Because capitalism is in the throes of its final crisis, the Trade Unions have a particularly vital role to play in these matters.

All over the capitalist world, the masses' standard of living is falling and wage rises have become meaningless. There is nothing to stop the Trade Unions providing anti-capitalist programmes, starting with the demand for the 'sliding scale of wages' (4).

The boss cannot ...  
but the Union can

There is unemployment all over the capitalist world. Capitalism automates industry in every sphere. It is not true that the workers oppose the machines. What they oppose is machines being used against them. In the printing industry <sup>(1980)</sup>, the bosses are replacing thousands of workers by photo-imaging technology.

The Trade Unions and the Workers parties must declare that high-tech production is only acceptable if the workers are not sacked. But since the workers are sacked, and the benefits of technology go only to the capitalists, the new machines are being used against progress. The capitalists say that they must do this because otherwise they cannot compete. Well then, let the capitalists who cannot compete be expropriated!

This is the way the Trade Unions should reason in recognition of the historic changes taking place. There must be Trade Union *programmes for Working Women* for instance. In the Soviet Union and East Germany, a woman is entitled to 1 year maternity leave. In some cases, the husband is given 3 months to take part in the birth and help with the new baby. These are very important conquests. The Greek bosses say that they cannot afford it. Well then, the workers say, let's produce without the bosses! Let's nationalise and plan! Production in Greece cannot compete with Britain or Germany? Oh but it could, if it were planned! And if it were planned ... it would produce what the population needs.

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Workers' demands limited to improved wages and conditions have become meaningless. It is true that the capitalists in Greece have only a small competitive edge against the other European capitalists. But who pays for that small competitive edge? The Greek masses! It is at

their expense that the Greek capitalists compete at all. This concerns the Greek Trade Unions. They must propose production plans and expropriations, that is to say, the forcible entry of the Trade Unions on the economic stage. No longer a matter of jobs and wages this! It takes the Trade Unions onwards and upwards.

Car, steel and oil consortia bosses meet discreetly to discuss which of their competitors they are going to bankrupt next. Following one of their recent <sup>(1980)</sup> summits, they reported that 'car production must be reduced because car sales are on the decline'. Lies! What they discussed was where to liquidate the jobs and where to increase automation.

Since any wage rise results in higher prices and worse goods, this means that all the other costs that the capitalists incur are equally pushed onto the population. Be sure that all the costs of war and armaments are included in this.

The pillar that sustains the capitalist structure depends on constantly rising production levels - cars, coal, oil, steel, machinery, plants, installations etc. But this mechanism itself leads to the diversion of capital towards weapons. Each year, capitalism spends 40% of its [global] income on war. The result is all around us: Against the Gwangju popular uprising in South Korea recently <sup>(5)</sup>, the US moved in with a fleet of military helicopters and opened fire. This particular massacre cost \$500 million, the same as a Greek budget. This needs discussing in the Trade Unions.

Some European workers parties (Socialist, Communist and others) would have us believe that this massacre in South Korea is a 'political party matter' and should not concern the Trade Unions - although it is far from clear whether these parties themselves troubled to discuss it. But the problems of the entire world concern the Trade Unions! They concern the Trade Unions *and* the workers Parties.

The workers Parties must create *Workers Commissions* and *Factory committees* where they help the workers to link matters of world political importance with the more specific questions of jobs, wages and working conditions.

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The workers are not just about work. They are human beings who think, read and discuss. They have needs. Of course they see that the purchasing power of their wages is part of the struggle against the capitalist system, and that this determines the condition of their lives! They know that the Yankees shoot people in South-East Asia in the name of capitalism. It is the Communist and the Socialist parties, or rather their leaders, who do not wish to engage the workers and the Trade Unions in political discussion. Many such Party leaders say that 'politics are outside what should concern the Trade Unions'. Outside? The capitalist goes off to kill, the worker is made to pay – like a blow in the face, take that!

The deepening crisis of the capitalist system widens the field for Trade Union intervention. The development of the Workers States and the progress of the revolution in Africa, Asia and Latin America enlarge the role and functions of the Unions. Unemployment is no longer a Trade Union matter: It is an anti-capitalist and political matter in which the parties and the Unions must act.

In some ways, the Trade Unions are better placed than the Party to fight political battles - their access to enterprises and workers' areas being more direct. The Unions can make *Factory Committees* if they wish, and even *Popular Committees*. They can create a political life that links factory life to social progress. This is precisely the role which the Trade Unions must take on.

It is true that the conditions were different in the past, but now we must deal with today. The Communist-led CGT in France <sup>(6)</sup> provides examples. In 1968, the

Communists opposed strenuously the revolutionary general strike known as '*The French May*'. Of course this caused the strike to fail.

In a subsequent book called '*The French May*', the CGT General Secretary George Seguy said: 'We opposed this tumultuous and barbarous movement. If it happens again, we will oppose it again'. Comrade Seguy wrote this in 1970; but now, in 1980, he says that the CGT 'must intervene in movements'...

The *French May* was an explosion against the capitalist system. When it raged through the Trade Unions, it was not just for wages. It failed because no adequate industrial or political leadership had been prepared beforehand. People rose spontaneously, but there was no leadership. On the crest of the wave, famous Opera singers marched in the streets alongside the most important playwrights and any number of factory workers. France stood up as a single body, shaking the world. May '68 in France was some kind of [political] Party. The unguided masses acted as a Party, but without programme, policy or leadership. This experience has never been properly assessed in the world's Trade Unions.

#### The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan

Today a new '*May*' is developing worldwide, in a more conscious form this time. The USSR's intervention in Afghanistan is part of it. It is in Afghanistan that the Soviet Union decided to tackle capitalism, not in France or Italy. In Afghanistan, it holds capitalism by the horns, on a world level. Does this not concern the Trade Unions? In Europe, many Trade Union and Communists leaders have been 'political' enough to denounce the Soviets in Afghanistan. They have spoken of 'invasion' and deplored that 'democratic rights are being crushed in Afghanistan'. Wrong, wrong! Are you 'invaded' every time someone enters your house?

What turns someone's visit into an invasion is the intention of the visitor. In recent times, workers from all over the world went to Vietnam to fight on the Vietnamese side, and this happened in Spain in 1936-39 too. Vietnam did not win only through its own heroism, which is real, but through world support. It could not have won without it. Was Vietnam invaded by its supporters? No, they went to Vietnam to defend a historic necessity on behalf of the progress of humanity. Proof is that Vietnam started to develop after that, Cambodia and Laos following behind.

Not long ago, feudal groups were being trained by imperialism in Afghanistan for attacks against the USSR and Iran. The USSR entered Afghanistan and the Communist and Socialist comrades of Spain and Italy cried: 'The Afghan people must be left to decide!' But the 'Afghan people' cannot be 'left to decide'. When did they have the democratic right to decide? The 'Afghan people' were never allowed to decide, speak or think. They were never allowed political parties, Trade Unions or schools.

The Communist and Socialist comrades tell us that 'in Afghanistan, 'the people rise' [against the Soviets] and 'the Universities rebel'. But who are 'the people'? Who are those who 'rise'? The landowners' sons - that is who they are! It is not the 'Universities' who rebel, but the sons of the landowners who are at the University.

The Afghans who appear on TV and in the press in military gear, machine-gun in hand and shouting: 'The Afghan people reject the Soviet invasion' are not 'the Afghan people'. They are not 'the poor peasants who till the land'. Pack of lies! The Afghan peasant has no military gear and cap, he does not speak English and he could never have studied at Oxford!

Should this be silenced in the Trade Unions? Capitalism is not slow in spreading its side of the story all over the world, to harass the Soviets, the Communists, the Socialists and others. But if Afghanistan is discussed all

over the world, there is no reason to keep the Trade Unions out of it! At least the Trade Unions can check the facts and set up their own investigations.

Culture has no limits but it has one essential axis: It carries the knowledge through which the struggle for truth and progress can be understood and organised. As instruments of culture, the Trade Unions are carriers of this knowledge, and we maintain that political knowledge is part of it. No Trade Union will fall apart and divide because of political knowledge. Such a thing may happen in some workplace or other, perhaps. But with more persistent debates, and all the workers intervening, this passes. It is precisely the absence of discussion in the Trade Unions that maintains the division between the 'industrial' and the 'political'.

There must be political discussions in the Unions. We propose certain topics like Trade Unions/Workers Party united fronts around *Plans of Production* that link bread and butter issues with the matters of housing, transport, drainage, sewers, running water, electricity, etc. What stops this? The fear of divisions? We declare that this discussion will not divide the Unions. No debate to solve the workers' problems divides the Unions! There will be differences of opinion, but there will be agreement on common aims. This discussion will enable the workers to realise that wages and conditions are only aspects of their need to lead.

In the workers parties and the Trade Unions, it is the leaderships that stop the workers discussing politically. Let the workers discuss that capitalism is exhausted and cannot advance society. In the name of capitalism, US imperialism advances nothing but war. A month ago, it sailed against Iran and tried to invade it at Tabas <sup>(7)</sup>. Today it threatens South Korea. The Trade Unions must discuss that imperialism is war, and compare this with what the Soviets do. To discuss this matter is as important as a Workers' Plan of production for Greece.



There is no need for a 'political' and 'industrial' division in the Trade Unions. The world unifies and integrates in the face of the capitalist crisis, bringing all industrial, political, cultural and scientific matters closer together. Today, no wage increase can be gained and truly retained without the struggle against capitalism. No such thing happens in the Workers States! In the Soviet Union, China, Poland or East Germany, nobody faces this situation.

In the Workers State, there is no antagonism, or even opposition, between the State and the public interest. On the contrary, the masses are united in the defence of the State. They want more control over production, quality, prices, distribution and the organisation of production, but they are not without means of control. They have factory committees, Workers Councils, Committees in the countryside, Party cells, etc. In the Workers States, people have a say in production and distribution. This is why in the USSR, [East] Germany or Poland, the masses do not seek to bring down the State.

#### No equivalence between capitalism and the Workers State

The role of the Trade Unions in the Workers States is not the same as in capitalism. There are similarities, but the historic functions are distinct. In capitalism, the fight for better wages and conditions obliges the Trade Unions to oppose the system. In the Workers States, the Trade Unions want more controls over costs and prices - as well as over the standards of production and distribution - but there is no strict market economy, and the Trade Unions do not oppose the State.

Economists and some Communists say that there is a market economy in the Workers States. False! In the market economy, competition decides what is bought and sold, and how. But there is no competition between the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, etc. The Workers States plan production. This eliminates competition and in so doing,

the State ensures that commodities are produced for the needs of the population. The Workers States produce for need, and where they retain market elements, they do not allow these to control buying and selling.

In the Workers States, the Trade Unions keep bureaucratic functioning down. They put order in the State's plans and guide them. The Trade Unions do something similar in capitalism too, but here, the Unions must fight capitalism and its wars – something that the Unions do not have to do in countries like the USSR. In the USSR, the Trade Unions support their government. They support the intervention of their government in Afghanistan.

Unionised Labour  
is a fount of knowledge

In Italy, the Trade Unions make a lot of noise against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Those who do this are the Unions' leaders, not the workers. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May this year <sup>(1980)</sup> only 6,000 workers attended the rally of the three Italian Trade Union Centres - CGIL-CISIL-UIL - whilst between 80,000 and 100,000 workers came last year <sup>(8)</sup>. This shows that there are huge reservations towards the Union leaders on the part of the workers.

This sort of thing does not need to happen in the Workers States. It is in Italy that the workers' base must express its disapproval in this way. This does not happen in the Workers States because there, the workers can express what they mean and be heard. In the Workers States, the workers determine the priorities of the State in spite of the bureaucracy. This right enjoyed by the workers in the Workers States is denied to them in capitalism.

Note that we are not saying that the workers are reluctant to struggle in Italy, for the reverse is the case. They struggle often and win most strikes. They criticise their leaders but they maintain their strikes until they are won.

Capitalism is not capable of taking advantage of the differences between Socialists, Communists, Social-Democrats and others. In Greece, as in most places, the workers keep their unity. What they need now is plans of production. Where factories are threatened with closure, let the Trade Unions demand State control, workers control and planning, so that what is *needed* can actually be *produced*.

The capitalists say that the workers are not clever enough to plan production. But the workers are capable in most things. There are technicians and scientists among them, and what one worker does not know another does. The Trade Unions themselves are pools of technical and scientific knowledge, a knowledge that is only waiting for the Trade Unions to reach their full potential.

#### War and the Trade Unions

The struggle against the war that capitalism prepares cannot be ignored by the Trade Unions. In Italy, most Trade Union leaders claim to be 'non political'; but regarding Afghanistan, they have drawn the three major Unions into many meetings as well as media-and-poster campaigns to oppose the USSR. Fine non-political leaders! Such is the mentality of the petty bureaucracy. The working class, the Communist membership and most of the Socialists have only contempt for this.

\* \* \*

#### The workers emerge stronger from political discussions

The Trade Unions cannot limit the workers to a struggle for wages and working conditions. The latter will only deserve their names when the economy is planned. This is why the Trade Unions must not keep these basic demands separate from political plans and struggles.

We are often told in the Trade Unions that nobody must bring politics along; that politics create conflicts and divisions helpful to the boss. False! When workers of different currents discuss together, they eventually agree on essential points. This is so, and will always be so. Discussion raises the capacity to think and reason. The workers emerge stronger from any discussion. They soon realise that no-one has better ideas than them concerning the world or anything. This does not cancel the need for political parties in any way. Far from it, it enriches their role as Communist, Socialist or Leftwing parties. Every workers Party has something to gain when the masses think, reason, and understand the unity that binds all the problems together.

In intervening in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union defends not only itself but the Workers State as a social conquest. Yankee imperialism vilifies and attacks furiously in an attempt to lessen the world authority of the USSR. It does the same against Iran.

It is true that the flag above the struggle in Iran is Islamist, but the struggle itself is against imperialism. This is why Yankee imperialism wants to destroy Iran. But the reason why the masses of Iran march not behind *Trade Unions* but behind Mohammed and Allah is because there is no Party. Hence the masses behave like a kind of political Party themselves. Behind the banners of Mohammed and Allah, they progress a great deal against Yankee imperialism.

\* \* \*

#### Plans of production

In any country, the Trade Unions must link the crisis of the capitalist system with the need to plan production. Who says that the capitalist crisis cannot be discussed in the Trade Unions? It has to be! Courses must be set up, ending in discussions. It is imperative that the Communist, Socialist and smaller Leftwing parties

animate a political life in the Trade Unions. Occasional resolutions and brief conclusions are not enough. On Afghanistan or any other issue, there must be proper debates and documents. This is basic to any cultural and political life. The Trade Unions are better placed than most to set up Committees in the workers areas, in the factories and even in the Universities.

The workers parties must open their newspapers to the workers on subjects like Afghanistan, the USSR and the world. On the question of the USSR and Afghanistan, the Trade Unions and the political parties must involve everyone. Some Union leaders condemn the Soviet intervention 'because the Afghan people must be left to decide for themselves'. But the people of Afghanistan do not decide for themselves. They cannot intervene. Those who intervene and decide are the ruling feudal cliques.

The Communist and Socialist parties brandish the historic truism that 'the Afghan people must be left to decide'. Wrong! The 'Afghan people' will only 'decide' when they eliminate the landowning class. The nomadic and rural people of Afghanistan are 3½ million but it is a few landowners and their sons who decide.

In any country, this is the way to discuss in the Trade Unions. The preoccupation for Afghanistan takes nothing away from the preoccupation to fight for wages and conditions, because all these aspects form a whole.

In Greece, agitation and plans of production must come from the workplaces because everything the masses need has to come from there. There is a crying need for household goods, utensils and furniture, as well as hospitals, health equipment, transport, roads, sewers, running water, etc. All this must be discussed in the Trade Unions. *Factory Committees* and *Worker Area Committees* must be created to discuss this. *Trade Unions and Workers Committees* must work together for this purpose. They must extend their Committee forms of organisation to the Universities and incorporate the lecturers.

Since such Committees do not exist at the moment, they must be made - and around plans of production. The government will say that it is broke, that it cannot borrow any more, etc. But there is money, and a great deal, when it comes to other things! Whatever funds there are must be put at the service of the workers' programmes.

The Trade Unions must debate these questions and invite the population to take part. People must see that Trade Unions are not just about strikes, but that they have proposals and projects. The Unions will not find it difficult to prove to the population that capitalism cannot develop Greece and that it is left to the Trade Unions to do so.

The Trade Unions in Greece express a kind of poverty, or rather, a sort of weakness. We are quite convinced that this weakness is not due to any lack of combative spirit in the Greek people! One essential task is to create *Single Unions* or *Single Trade Union Centres* in each industry, around common programmes, for the development of Greece. The Communist and Socialist parties must discuss this with the population and with the Trade Unions. Greece being a less developed country makes it all the more urgent that its production should be planned.

The Trade Unions must organise public campaigns of demands where they welcome and encourage the political intervention of the Communists and Socialists. Let there be political debates! Let the population attend conferences and public meetings as part of an uninterrupted political, cultural and Trade Union life open to everyone. The leaders will say that this is not possible. But why not? One of the key conditions for the progress of Greece is that all its population participates.

In Greece, the students have been, are, and will continue to be an essential factor in the class struggle. But the student movement cannot be the representative of the necessary economic, political or social programme of the country. Those who can do this are the Trade Unions. Together with the students, the Unions must adopt a

programme for the progress of Greece. They must specify what needs to be produced to have enough hospitals, transport, houses, schools, running water, etc. A plan of production. The Trade Unions are best placed to propose this, but they cannot do it without a political life. They need to open up to a greater political intervention of the Socialists and Communists. The idea of a single Trade Union in each industry is central, because the present dispersion leaves each Union exposed to repression.

Bind together all  
the rural Trade Unions

The agricultural workers' Unions and the Unions of the small proprietors can become allies. The small proprietors create Unions because they are being crushed. Each Union can then retain its own identity in a United Front that makes it stronger against the capitalist regime.

Modern agrarian production uses machines and fertilisers. In Greece, the small peasants who cannot buy these are crushed. Capitalist agrarian production has taken over, and the use of chemicals is systematic. Should this continue, in Greece and in the world, people will eat pure poison. Down with this! Capitalism says that it cannot compete otherwise. Well then: Down with capitalism!

In Greece, there must be coordinated campaigns between the different rural Unions. New Unions could be created in the countryside to defend new projects. Capitalist agriculture has become part of monopoly power. For example, the entire production of tomatoes is bought up by one multinational. All the fruit and vegetables are bought up by an English, French, German or Yankee consortium that controls the prices and resells on the European market. Consortia dominate world production nowadays. They control the speed of production. They retard it or accelerate it, depending. In general, they speed it up. Vegetable and meat production is in their hands.

This is why it is important to create links between those who struggle against aspects of capitalist production in the countryside and those who oppose the system of production, like the *Greens* (Ecologists). The latter have sprung up everywhere in the capitalist world as a result of the need to combat food adulteration and the tampering that goes on in the countryside.

#### Factory Committees and Popular Committees

Capitalism cannot live without increasing the speed of production. This 'productivity' is imposed on each capitalist by the relentless march of competition. The result is more sackings, more technology and more mechanisation, whilst the general conditions continue to attack human health and the quality of commodities. Capitalism cannot behave in any other way, and no bourgeois government can act differently. This is capitalism's way of life, its only way.

No bourgeois government can alter the capitalist mode of production. No such government can, or wishes to. Bourgeois governments defend the bourgeoisie; they can eliminate rivals in their own camp, but never their system of production.

Today, the struggle against aspects of capitalist production leads to the struggle against the capitalist system itself. This is a fact that the Trade Unions cannot avoid discussing. Such is the new terrain on which the class struggle is being fought.

The Trade Unions must condemn those who contaminate our food and commodities. *United Fronts* are essential – of Trade Unions, Communists, Socialists, Left Groups, Social Democrats, Trotskyists and others – based on programmes of production. They must link the struggle for wages with the struggle for the social transformation of society.



Greece may not seem ripe for this, but it is only the outward appearance. The rest of the world is ripe, and what goes on in Greece is ultimately determined by the world balance of forces. We Posadists propose a production plan for Greece. It is urgently needed, and we appeal for it to be discussed.

Let an opposition be built against the contamination and poisoning of the production of fruit and vegetables in Greece. We propose United Fronts between the agrarian workers' Unions, the Unions that organise small peasants and those of the middle-size proprietors. A United Front in which each Union retains its independence. In this way, each Union can pursue its own demands whilst coming together with others to defend their common interests.

#### One Single Trade Union Centre in Greece

We call for one Single Trade Union for each industry, for transport, public employees, office workers, railway workers etc. These Unions must form a United Centre (TUC) based on the interests of the Greek masses. It is vital that the Socialists and the Communists defend this idea. With this perspective, new Union organisations and structures can be built, starting from basic demands such as the *sliding scale of wages and of working hours*. This is Trotsky's proposal, and it is as valid today as when he was alive.

In Greece, a programme of production is essential together with the proposal for a Single Trade Union Centre. The government will be opposed, but the Socialist and Communist parties will have to remain steadfast, organising discussions in the Trade Unions and the general population. Factory Councils, District and Regional Committees should be set up to discuss jobs, wages, working conditions and the production of healthy food. Once the population is involved, it will want the economy and production to serve its own needs.

Trade Unions and Workers Parties  
draw closer together

The Trade Unions must adapt to this stage of the historic disintegration of capitalism. Capitalism is not so much disintegrating as *being* disintegrated. The progress of the world revolution is disintegrating it, and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is an essential part of it. The Greek Trade Unions need to discuss this. It is as important for them as a plan of production for Greece.

It is not correct to say that political discussion divides the workers. We proclaim that when the workers can discuss, their cultural and political perception sharpens. As they learn to debate, develop ideas and reason, they realise that the Party is the necessary instrument for historic progress, hence no-one's private property. And that their Unions are the private property of no particular Party.

The Party is a necessary instrument in its own right, as is the Trade Union. In their distinct roles they are less and less differentiated, although the Union can never quite replace the Party and the Party can never quite replace the Union. Their roles overlap in common endeavours.

The working class won improvements in the past, but if capitalism is not overthrown, these will be retaken. In Greece as in the rest of the world, this is the essential reality that draws Party and Union together. Trade Unions and Parties differ only in their roles and functions. When the Trade Unions eventually start discussing politically, the workers will want to know about everything, as they already do in relation to Afghanistan and South Korea <sup>(5)</sup>.

Those Trade Union leaders who were so anxious to criticise the Soviets in Afghanistan - thus objectively supporting imperialism - have nothing to say about the Yankee's massacre of the people in South Korea who rose of their own accord. The USSR was uninvolved. There will be other such massacres and such events need discussing.

## J. POSADAS' REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

*Q - Given that the Trade Unions must take a position regarding the use of atomic energy, how must they do this?*

JP - The use of atomic energy can be convenient or necessary. But in the capitalist system, it is a by-product of war preparations and the way capitalism uses it contaminates and poisons everything. This poses a very grave threat to the populations, and to life.

When the 'Greens' denounce the use of atomic energy, this is what they mean. But they take their opposition too far: In the USSR, for instance, nuclear energy is well used because care is taken to avoid contamination. This shows that it can be done.

Apart from this, there is a huge energy potential in the sun, the sea and the wind. These could be used effectively and conveniently. Hydro-electric power is an example. Since only Socialism cares for human life, atomic energy should only be used in Socialism. This said, we do not think Socialism will opt for atomic energy; it is more likely to turn to the energy of the sun, wind, rivers and seas. The Ancient Greeks used all these.

From Ancient Greece until now, little research has been done on solar or sea energy. Capitalism has not been interested. When humanity overcomes capitalism, it will answer these questions very rapidly. Today, what we gain from atomic energy is hardly more than what could already be harvested - pollution free - from tides, winds and rivers. But don't expect this from capitalism!

The inexhaustible force of the wind is used very little, but it could be. The same goes for the seas and the sun. We should already be able to store energy much better than we do.

Atomic energy is not the only thing. It is through producing nuclear weapons that the capitalists chanced upon nuclear energy. This is why, for them, nuclear energy is cheaper than sea, wind or sun power. A change of course at this point requires new investments and a belief in tomorrow. But capitalism strongly suspects that it will not be around tomorrow.... These are the reasons why it is not going to change. Behind the use capitalism makes of nuclear energy, it hides its preparations for nuclear war. The Trade Unions must discuss this! This said the *Greens* are quite right to oppose atomic energy.

*Q - Who is responsible for the lack of a single Trade Union Centre in Greece?*

JP - The absence of a single TUC in Greece is primarily the responsibility of the Communist and Socialist parties. The first duty of any Workers Party is to stimulate the formation of a single TUC and to draw support from it. This improves the workers' capacity to think, reason, plan and make things happen. The Communists and the Socialists are responsible for this deficit because they did not concern themselves enough with the political education of the workers. Nor did they energize the political and cultural life of the masses sufficiently.

The other factor is the economic backwardness of Greece, as it reduces the weight of the proletariat. But the lack of single Unions and of a single TUC is not simply due to economic backwardness. It is rather that the Communist parties did not intervene to educate the necessary cadres. The absence of a single TUC does not come from fate but from a lack of leadership. Behind the absence of single Trade Unions per industry, there lies the simple reality that the country's development needs new economic

structures. But capitalism is not interested. For it, imports are cheaper than manufacture. The solution is to *appropriate the money in the banks* and put it to good use. The workers parties should say this. Why don't they?

There is no failure or weakness in the workers movement. The failure comes from the leaders who do not lead. The Communists and the Socialists must address this question. Meanwhile, one has to get on with campaigns, discussions, publications, meetings and conferences to build single Trade Unions and a Single TUC.

*Q - Confronted with the deployment of NATO missiles in Europe, what should the position of the Greek Communist and Socialist Trade Unions be - given the fact that they generally support 'peace' movements?*

JP - The Trade Unions must oppose the deployment of the missiles. They must oppose NATO, and fight to bring capitalism down. Occasional actions 'for peace' can be important for propaganda purposes, but the only way to 'peace' is through the overthrow of the capitalist system. The slogan for 'peace' is effective to the extent that it is linked to an actual *struggle* for peace, hence a struggle against capitalism. See how US imperialism looks for military bases all over the world. See how it exploits the weakness of other capitalists, bullying them until they agree to accept US bases, or bribing them with offers of rents and loans. Movements must be built to oppose these US bases, and the war that imperialism prepares inexorably. Be sure that imperialism is taking us to war! There is nothing else it can do.

The Soviet Union does not behave in this way. It has no need for war because it has no capitalist interests. Hence the Soviet Union and capitalism cannot be equated!

When the Soviets intervened in Czechoslovakia, the word 'invasion' could be heard from all sides. But invaders enter places to sack and plunder, and the Soviets did not sack or plunder. Hence they did not invade!

And now consider: What was Czechoslovakia in 1968 and what is it now in 1980? Czechoslovakia has made progress throughout those 12 years. What was Vietnam, and what is it now? Conversely what was South Korea before and what is it now under Yankee domination? <sup>(5)</sup> And what has happened to Puerto Rico under the Yankees these last 48 years?

These are examples to be raised in the Trade Unions.

The behaviour of the Soviet Union is entirely different to that of capitalism. The workers leaders have every reason to say 'capitalism out!' but in the case of the Soviets, it is not 'out' that they must say, but 'come over and help us build Socialism!' This is the way for them to deal with this question. And why be afraid of saying: 'Let us have the Soviets here'?

To say that the present Soviet Union <sup>(1980)</sup> is the same as the Soviet Union under Stalin is a complete lie. Complete! The epoch of Stalin was when the leadership of the Bolshevik Party was assassinated - all of it, and not just Trotsky - and Stalin allowed the defeat of the Spanish Revolution. But today, the Soviet Workers State supports the revolution in all parts of the world. It must do that as an essential condition, for its own sake.

When the Soviets intervene anywhere, the thing to ask them is that they bring along *Soviet democracy, political life* in the Trade Unions and the development of *revolutionary culture*. On seeing this, the populations will agree and join. Then they will realise that this is the actual fight against war, and the actual means for them to prepare and be ready to confront imperialism.

The fight against war goes hand in hand with the fight against the capitalist system. If a struggle for peace does not oppose capitalism, it is not a struggle against war. War is the natural condition of capitalism; it breathes war. War is in the historic nature of capitalism: Crisis and war. But none of this exists in the Workers States.

*Q - What must be the reaction of the Trade Unions in Greece to State intervention in their functioning?*

JP - The capitalist State is the representation of the interests of the bourgeoisie. In Greece, the workers parties must prepare the political ground for the creation of single Unions per industry *independent* of the capitalist State. The political parties must interest the masses in this, and call for their participation.

The workers parties in Greece must include in their programmes the slogan for 'Single Unions per industry independent of the State'. Together with the Trade Unions, they must fight for independent Unions, and help them merge into one Single and *Independent* TUC.

Where the workers parties tolerate the intervention of the State in the Trade Unions, they crush the workers and this allows the State to intervene even more. In Greece, the State intervenes in the Unions to stop the formation of a Single Trade Union Centre. Here you see clearly how the capitalist State serves the global interests of the capitalist system. However, this is not a sign of strength.

This must be discussed in the universities too. Such a debate must link the proposal for a Single TUC with the question of democracy. A single TUC is at the heart of democracy. Those who know best in society, and therefore should decide, are the workers. But it is the task of the Communist and Socialist parties to give content and political meaning to the idea of a single TUC.

As things stand in Greece, the State relies on the indirect support of the Socialists and the Communists to impede the formation of a single TUC. Call this inertia, or a lack of resolve - we do not think it is complicity. At least the Communist leaders are not complicit; but this inertia allows the State to stop the Unions becoming centralised and forming a single Trade Union Centre.

*Q - What should be the role and tasks of the Trade Unions in the case of Greece where the State takes over parts of the economy?*

JP - When an enterprise passes into the hands of the State - even if it is the capitalist state - the opportunity arises to identify the objective purpose of this property and its use. It becomes very relevant to demand that this property is run under Trade Union and workers' control. If it is a bank, it must stop lending to the capitalists. It must be made to invest in the State sector of the economy. When a bank is 'statified', the opportunity presents itself to demand an end to the capitalists' financial games. The employees and the Trade Unions must demand that productive commercial investments are made, and under their control. Not just the control of the employees but that of the Unions as well.

Of course it is not enough to demand that the economy should benefit the population. The task is to make this happen, and the Trade Unions have a part to play in this. The State may 'statify' a bank, but if workers control is absent, the State cannot fight off the corrupt intervention of private property. *Italcasse* is a State bank in Italy, but it is a gambling den where the bankers behave like the robbers that they are.

State ownership of a property, of an institution or a bank is not enough because it will not work in the interests of the population unless it is controlled by its employees and Trade Unions. What is more, the latter must enter the situation forearmed with investment plans.

*Q - What must the Trade Unions do about the bourgeois campaign against the Turks?*

JP - It is fundamental to reach out to the Trade Unions and Socialist movement of Turkey. One must not exclude the Ecevit (9) movement either. It is necessary to form an alliance or a front against capitalism, for the economic and social development of Turkey and of Greece.



The Trade Unions of Greece and Turkey need to meet and declare that only the capitalists have an interest in military confrontation. People know this, but they can also be swayed by patriotic feelings or fears. Because the Unions have no vested interests, they can speak for the economic and social development of both countries. And the economic and social development of Greece and Turkey requires workers' and Trade Unions' control.

In Turkey, there is backwardness in that only men can attend meetings, the women not being allowed to stay where men gather.

This social backwardness is a continuation of ancient prejudices. It goes on regardless of whether the government is Demirel's or Ecevit's.

Today's events unfold in this backward context. But the Turkish workers want change. Proof is their behaviour in Germany where the Turkish workers show that they want Communism; communism in Turkey. A number of Turkish workers have been assassinated in Germany and many of them were Communists.

**J. POSADAS**

26.10.80

*Translated from Spanish. This text is the transcription of speeches and has been edited. The highlights are from the Editorial Board.*

## Notes:

Events in South Korea: This refers to huge popular uprisings in Gwangju and Pusan in the Cholla region of South Korea in 1979-80. In Seoul and other cities, people demanded the end of the military rule of President Park Chung Hee. Some 500,000 armed workers and peasants created collectives and communes. The CIA, the World Bank, US Republican Jimmy Carter and his advisers Holbrooke and Brzezinski, perceiving Park as weak, feared another Iran. In September 1979, Gen. Chun Doo Hwan took power in a military coup against Park who was soon assassinated. With carpet bombing, napalm and advanced US military helicopters, Chun's 40,000 troops and their general Kim Jaegyu started a savage repression that continued for years, and shocked the region. In the hope of creating a base against the USSR and China, Carter promised to back Chun with nuclear weapons and enormous loans. Under US command, the South Korean troops committed atrocities that the US never admitted to, and still denies today.

\* To 'statise' is used here to translate the verb 'estatizar'. It seeks to express a more advanced stage of expropriation than nationalisation.

(1) J. Posadas uses the phrase 'the Party' a great deal. This mostly refers to the main Workers Party of a given country. It generally means the Communist, the Socialist or/and the Labour Party. It can be smaller Workers parties of the Left or/and the Posadists. The author sometimes refers to 'the Party' in a wider sense, to mean the necessary Party of humanity, the Party of Bolshevism, the Communist Party required for the taking of power.

(2) In this case, the word 'Party' stand for the Communist Party.

(3) Mugabe: Born 1924. Joined ZANU in 1963. Spent more than 10 years in prisons. Overwhelmingly elected President of Rhodesia in 1980.

(4) The sliding scale of wages and working hours forms part of Trotsky's transitional programme. It is an integrally valid demand today, in 2010, in all the capitalist countries.

(5) Event in South Korea: On 24.5.1980, US troops gunned down insurgents from military helicopters in Kwangju. This event is part of many similar ones perpetrated by US imperialism in East Asia where it never learnt the lessons of Vietnam.

(6) CGT : Confédération Générale du Travail. The main Trade Union in France.

(7) Tabas : On 24 April 1980, *Operation Eagle* started a US-led invasion of Iran. The US lost several soldiers and much equipment – due to a sandstorm.

(8) CGIL: General Confed. of Italian Workers (linked to Communists), CSIL: Confed. of Workers Trade Unions (linked to Christian Democrats), UIL: Italian Labour Union (once a Socialist split from the CGIL).

(9) Ecevit and Demirel : Two Prime Ministers of Turkey. Mustafa Bülent Ecevit was removed from power in 1980 by the military coup of Evren. As for Sami S G Demirel, he was Prime Minister 7 times. When J. Posadas is writing, Demirel was, or had just been, in a coalition government that lasted one year.

(10) Read J. Posadas on China. Orders from p.posadista@yahoo.com

## ON THE WORKING CONDITIONS IN CAPITALISM

J. POSADAS

22.10.80

Production rhythms and pollutants are major causes of work-induced illnesses. When they combine, the working conditions become dreadful. Besides the physical effects they endure, the workers develop the sensation of being pillaged and robbed, even of thought. In the human being so subjected, the nervous system is attacked and weakened; the defences of the organism are lowered and the person finds it hard to function. Some workers resist better than others, but all the workers are affected.

Work related illnesses come mainly from bad working environments where the stress of speed and motion makes the workers feel ransacked. When Marx evoked the alienation of the worker, he was not referring just to the separation of the worker from the product, but to the *work itself*: The feeling of estrangement not just from the product but from one's own self.

It is not surprising that the workers hate work. This sort of work that robs them of life. You do not often hear such things talked about. Maybe people are resilient. Maybe nature and life are resilient. But still, the conditions of work in capitalism are abnormal and aberrant. They smash body and mind.

Tiredness in these conditions is exhaustion: The kind of exhaustion the human organism experiences when demands in movement and energy increase, and there is less and less time to absorb oxygen. This smashes body and mind. The cost is physical and mental.

The mind has detectors that influence the perception of conditions and environments. In the individual, the feeling of being so invalidated and negated leads to an attitude of rejection.

The workers react by creating Trade Unions and workers parties. This is the way they retain their confidence that things can be changed. If they really thought that change was impossible, they would not want to get up in the morning. But the workers look beyond this. Together, they find the strength not only to resist but to act. They keep up their strength in the thought that capitalism will be brought down. Otherwise the workers would finish up as clinical and social invalids.

The Trade Unions must discuss this subject.

Capitalism cannot help but increase the super-exploitation of the workers. If it did not do this, it would not exist. It is in its nature to act in this way. The capitalists do not particularly relish competition and unemployment; it is more trouble and costs in the end for them, but they cannot help it. They must compete and prepare for war. Right now, they need another inter-capitalist world war. What stops them launching it is the presence of the Workers States and the fear that these will take over.

Scared of another inter-capitalist war just now, the capitalists concentrate on war with the Workers States. But they are hampered in this by their own internal differences. Sectors within the capitalists realise that such a war would bring their collective downfall. This is why they move with great indecision and insecurity. They all hate the Workers States, but they cannot stop individual capitalist countries making agreements with Workers States to advance their own national interests.

Capitalist Germany ranks second in world importance; but in any major war, it will depend on the support of the other capitalists. Keen to keep these other capitalists at arms length, Germany makes [economic] agreements with Workers States like the Soviet Union. There is not much the other capitalists can do about it except to raise their own ability to compete. The result is more inter-capitalist competition and more exploitation for the workers.

This cannot be ignored in the Trade Unions. The Union leaders must use simple and didactic ways to explain how capitalism works. They must see to it that the workers are discussing this at work and in the Trade Unions.

Production levels are constantly rising through technology. For the capitalists, this saves money and boosts profits. They see no need to do things differently. They reduce costs by the use of cheap substances in commodities and foods. Some substitutes are directly poisonous; others attack the defences, the metabolism, the nervous system, the brain or the heart. This not only weakens people, it makes them feel at the mercy of production and of nature. Capitalism cannot help but increase exploitation in this way, and as it does, it kills people continuously.

This necessity does not exist in the Workers States. Just the reverse! No Workers State could survive one moment if it could not show that it improves human life. And what the Workers States improve most of all is *human relations*. The Workers States have an authority in the world because they are seen as superior in social relations. They are recognised as the builders of the natural bond between humanity, intelligence and culture.

Now that Workers States have been created, they are here to stay. See how the banner of human liberation floats above them!

The Ancient Greeks raised human culture extremely high, but humanity did not follow in their footsteps. Indeed, humanity retreated after the Greeks. It retreated from the peaks of human development that the Ancient Greeks had conquered.

This retreat lasted as long as the historic conditions to follow the Greeks remained absent. The Ancient Greeks themselves could not continue what they had started. Now however these historic conditions have been won, and they have brought us *the Workers State*.

Socialism is a level of culture that surpasses anything reached by capitalism. For the Ancient Greeks, private property and the lack of social development created obstacles that no civilisation can overcome with culture only.

In tomorrow's socialist culture, people will look back upon private property as the stupidest stage in history. For them, 'this is mine' will be meaningless. The Ancient Greeks could not have considered this question, but they did blaze a trail that has taken us to where we are today, and able to consider it. The cultural achievements of the Ancient Greeks would have continued had they enjoyed corresponding levels of economic and social development.

These levels of economic and social development were eventually won by humanity, giving it the social force to restart its cultural climb. Today, we enjoy the historic conditions so lacking to the Greeks. And what is more, these conditions have brought us the necessary instruments: The Soviet Union and the Workers States.

The capitalists mock the USSR because of its bureaucrats. But if there are bureaucrats in the USSR, it is because Socialism had to start from the conditions that existed before the making of the USSR! The [Workers State] is going to socialism and the capitalists are going to the dogs.

Every human being is born with the love of work because the relationship of the human being with nature and with life passes through work.

Not wanting to work and absenteeism are induced by the conditions of work in capitalism.

**J. POSADAS**

22.10.80

## ***About the Author ...***

J. Posadas was born in Argentina in 1912 and died in Italy in 1981. He started his activities as a Trade Union leader in the shoe industry. He soon adopted the ideas of Trotsky and joined the IV International. He then developed as a writer, theoretician, political leader and revolutionary organiser.

In view of the process of Peronism and revolutionary nationalism, he created a movement in Argentina and in Latin America based on texts such as: '*Five-Year Plan or the Permanent Revolution*' (1947), '*Peronism*' (1963) and '*From Nationalism to the Workers State*' (1966).

Those who belonged to the leading group of the IV International in those days greeted his ideas with incomprehension. J. Posadas separated himself from them as they were abandoning the Marxist principles needed to analyse the Soviet Union, the Communist parties and various mass parties like the Labour Party. In 1962 he organised the Trotskyist-Posadist IV International.

A flurry of his fundamental texts followed, such as: '*The Construction of the Workers State and from the Workers State to Socialism*', '*Partial Regeneration, Historic Re-encounter and the Process of the Permanent Revolution in this Stage*', '*The role of the USSR in History*', '*The Living Thought of Trotsky*' and '*The Revolutionary State*'.

In the more general field of Art, Science and Culture, J. Posadas has left many other writings. They incorporate into the Marxist analysis subjects ranging from 'human relations' to 'the Communist future of humanity'. It all forms part of his *History of the Human Civilisation* which remained unfinished due to his unexpected death.

The works of J. Posadas and the example of his life champion the confidence and security of humanity. As he used to say: "*Socialism is not only a necessity of history, but of life itself*".

His following last words give food for thought: "*Life has no sense without the struggle for Socialism, whatever the consequences*".

Sept 2010

The Trade Unions  
and the Workers  
parties must  
declare that  
high-tech  
production is only  
acceptable if the  
workers are not  
sacked.

But since the  
workers are  
sacked, and the  
benefits of  
technology go  
only to the  
capitalists, the  
new machines  
are being used  
against progress.

The capitalists  
say that they  
must do this  
because  
otherwise they  
cannot compete.

Well then, let  
the capitalists  
who cannot  
compete be  
expropriated!

**J. Posadas**



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