

The

April-May 1997

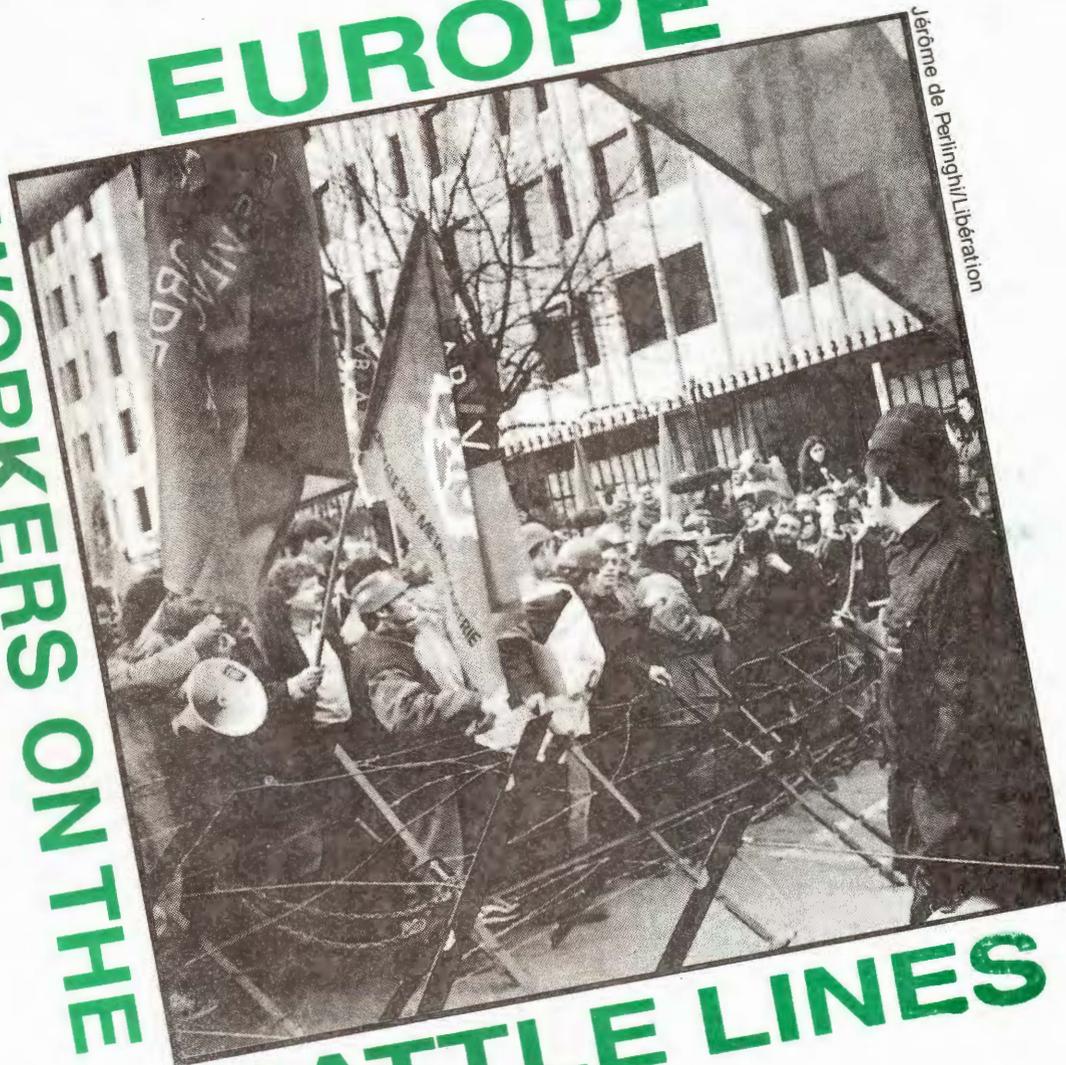
No. 2
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Internationalist



EUROPE

WORKERS ON THE



Jérôme de Perlinghi/Libération

BATTLE LINES

FRANCE

**Workers, Immigrants:
Crush the Fascist National Front! . . . 3**

No Popular Front, Build a Trotskyist Party. . . 16

Ex-Far Left in the Reformist Swamp. 21

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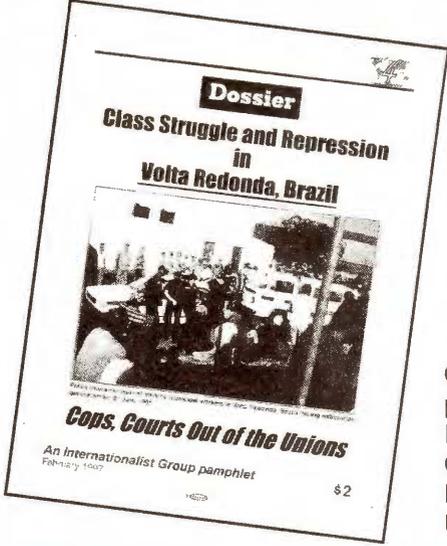
Front page photo: Belgian Renault workers demonstrate in Brussels, March 7

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925)

Port Strike Against Union-Busting in Brazil

In the early morning hours of April 15, some 500 heavily armed shock troops of Brazil's military and federal police stormed the port of Santos, near São Paulo. Their purpose was to break a work action by the waterfront unions in defense of the union hiring hall against attempts to break it by the privatized São Paulo steel company. Following the police invasion 2,500 workers occupied the port area. A leaflet on the port strike by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) together with an April 20 supplement to *The Internationalist* are available on our web site (www.internationalist.org), or write for a copy to the Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

Elections in France: As we go to press, the French government has announced parliamentary elections, to be held at the end of May. The reformist and centrist left will predictably subordinate all to the parliamentary shell game. This only makes more urgent the tasks laid out in our special report on France. See articles on pages 3, 13, 16 and 21.



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The Internationalist

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No. 2



April-May 1997



France

Workers, Immigrants:

Le Figaro Magazine



Over 100,000 poured into the streets of Paris February 22 to protest the vicious anti-immigrant Debré Law and growing threat of the fascist National Front.

Crush the Fascist National Front!

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

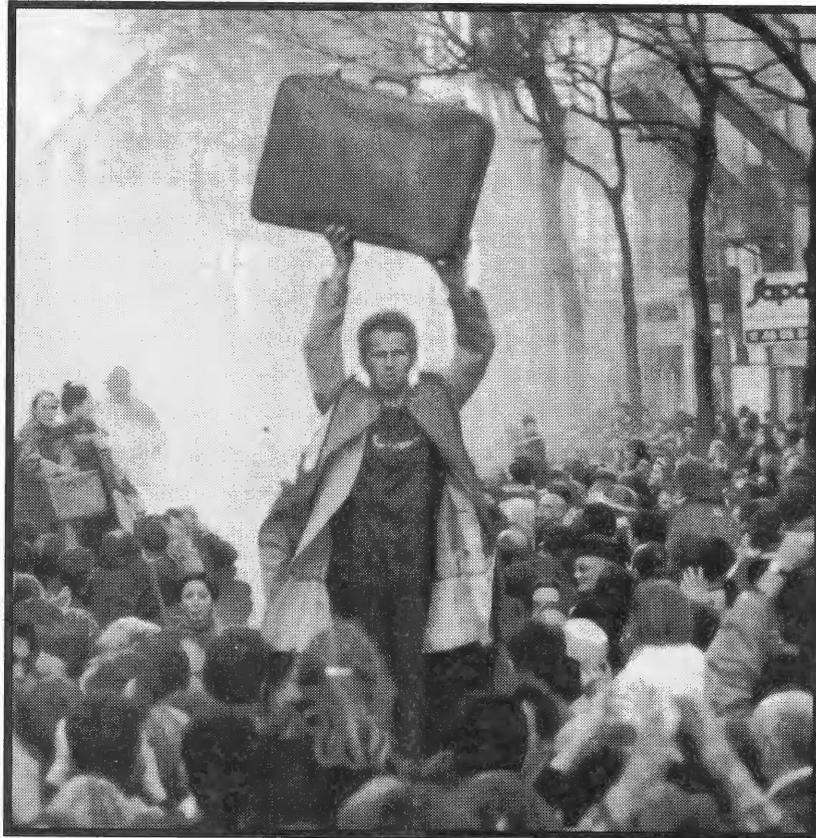
Since the counterrevolutionary wave which swept through East Europe and destroyed the Soviet Union in 1989-92, racist reaction has been rampant across the continent. While pogroms against gypsies and national minorities raged in the East, immigrant workers and their families have been the target of fascists in West Europe. And the onslaught wasn't triggered by isolated, fringe elements: those who lit the fires (often literally) of racist terror were given the green light from the arsonists at the heights of capitalist power. In Germany, Nazi/skinhead attacks on "foreign" workers served as extra-parliamentary pressure for anti-immigrant legislation—supported by

the Christian, Free and Social Democratic parties alike—that gutted the constitutional right to asylum. In Italy, the neo- (and not-so-neo) fascists of the MSI/Alleanza Nazionale grew as the most hardline exponents of a broader bourgeois drive to purge the state machinery and "discipline" the working class by slashing benefits and wages. In France, the fascist National Front (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen is the cutting edge of a broader racist backlash, as the "mainstream" right calls for "zero immigration" and the reformist left raises a clamor about "clandestine" migration.

But while the reactionary ultras feed off the social insecurity produced by double-digit unemployment, they have also provoked an outpouring of opposition. The most recent example was the March 29 European demonstration of 50,000 against the FN congress in Strasbourg. Nowhere has the *contradictory* char-

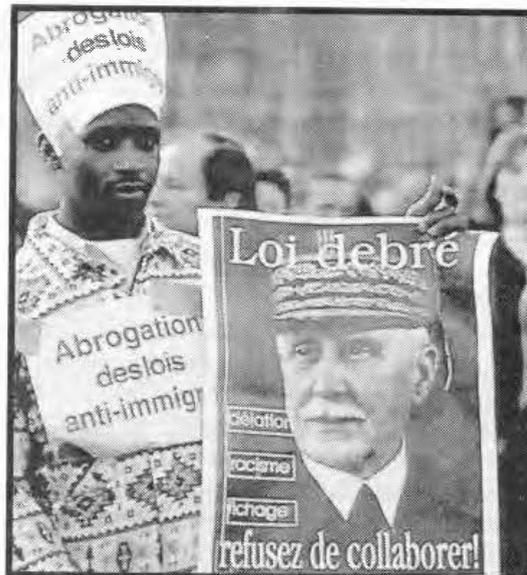
acter of this reactionary period been more pronounced than in France. At the same time as the right wing won the presidential and legislative elections—beating the Socialist (PS) and Communist (PCF) parties by promising to create jobs!—every year for the last half decade there have been outbreaks of sharp class struggle. This reached a high point in the strikes and mass workers demonstrations of November-December 1995 against plans of the conservative regime of Gaullist president Jacques Chirac and prime minister Alain Juppé to gut pensions and medical care. The mobilizations went on for weeks, before they were called off at the decisive moment by the reformist union tops. They flared up again in 1996 with struggles in defense of immigrants and the dramatic nationwide truckers strike (see “France: Workers Struggles Shake Chirac-Juppé Government,” *Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997). This year the polarization has sharply increased.

On February 9, Le Pen’s National Front won local elections in Vitrolles, a commuter suburb north of the Mediterranean port city of Marseille, with 52 percent of the vote. This was the fourth town taken over by the FN, and the first won by an absolute majority. The fascists’ campaign was directed against immigrants, under the slogan “French First.” The impact of the Vitrolles election reverberated around the country. Warning against a spreading “*lepenisation des esprits*,” that is, the adaptation to Le Pen across the political spectrum, anti-racist intellectuals began to mobilize against the *Loi Debré*, the vicious immigration bill introduced by Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré. Under its provisions, not only would foreigners staying in France have to obtain an official certificate



L'Humanité Dimanche/Gautier Editing

February 22 Paris protest against anti-immigrant Debré Law. Demonstrators brought suitcases recalling deportation of Jews under WW II Nazi collaborationist regime of Marshal Pétain (on poster below) in Vichy France.



Le Figaro Magazine

after the march, the government rammed the slightly amended Debré law through the National Assembly and Senate.

While the union federations endorsed the February 22 protest and attacked the immigration law, the reformist misleaders of labor did not mobilize the working class for this crucial fight. Yet shortly afterwards, a new uproar broke out as

of lodging, now their host would be obliged to inform authorities of the departure of foreign guests so that the police could launch a manhunt to track down “clandestine” immigrants. Fifty-one movie makers signed a statement demanding to be prosecuted, declaring they had violated this police-state law and would do so again. The defiant gesture spread like wildfire, and in little over a week 55,000 people sent in statements reporting themselves for refusing to turn in foreigners.

On February 22, more than 100,000 thronged through the streets of Paris in protest against the Debré Law. Marching from the Gare de l’Est railroad station, many carried suitcases to evoke parallels to the laws of the pro-Hitler Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain during World War II, when it was decreed that the police be informed of the presence and movement of Jews and foreigners, who were then deported. While the initiators of the protest focused on the scandalous fink law, most marchers opposed the immigration bill as a whole and expressed alarm over the growth of the National Front. Although the marchers were broadly from the left, the PS and PCF only climbed on board at the last minute. Surprised by the extent of the protest, the government backpedaled and removed the most notorious provisions. The filmmakers dissolved their committee, PS leader Lionel Jospin declared victory. But barely two weeks

the head of the formerly nationalized Renault auto company announced the pending shutdown of its plant in Belgium. The Belgian workers appealed for and received wide sympathy from French Renault workers (see "Europe: Workers on the Battle Lines" on page 13).

A new opportunity for an all-out struggle against the rightist threat presented itself with the National Front congress in Strasbourg at the end of March. Numerous appeals were issued calling for counterdemonstrations against this provocation; petitions protesting the FN congress gathered tens of thousands of signatures. Following the February 22 demonstration against the draconian immigration law, there were repeated sizeable and militant protests against FN events in cities around the country. What was called for was a powerful worker/immigrant mobilization to sweep the fascist vermin off the streets and out of their meeting hall. But a determined fight to run Le Pen and his cohorts out of town would necessarily come up against the capitalist state. In Marseille on March 12, riot cops viciously beat scores of demonstrators at a march of over 10,000 protesting the presence of the FN chief. So in order to head off a showdown in Strasbourg, Socialist Party notables and the entire parliamentary left went all out to defuse protest, turning it into harmless "civic" events to keep demonstrators well away from the National Front conclave.

To crush the racist terrorists, to defend immigrants, to stop the union-busters, what is necessary is to mobilize the masses in sharp class struggle. Fearing this above all, the reformist union and party leaders seek to demobilize and divert the struggle through class collaboration. Their goal is to form a new "popular-front" coalition tying the workers and oppressed to a treacherous alliance with "progressive" bourgeois forces, with the aim of paralyzing the masses' struggle and locking them within the confines of the capitalist state. That road will only fortify the fascists, who are ultimately the shock troops of capital. The urgent need is to forge a proletarian vanguard party on the internationalist program of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky, who swept away the racist terrorists of tsarist Russia, the Black Hundreds, through workers revolution. Such a party must seek to intervene in the struggles of the workers and oppressed to break the stranglehold of the class collaborators who chain the exploited to their exploiters.

The Fascist Plague Spreads

The victory of the National Front in municipal elections in Vitrolles brought France face to face with the reality of an increasingly aggressive fascist movement. No longer could it be dismissed as a marginal phenomenon. Even though the FN candidate, Catherine Mégret, was a stand-in for her husband Bruno (who was disqualified by an electoral tribunal for exceeding spending limits in the last election), and even though she was opposed by a single candidate (a Socialist) in the second-round run-off election, Le Pen's party got an absolute majority in a heavy voting turnout. The FN made no secret in Vitrolles of its overall reactionary program and its virulent xenophobia. Mme. Mégret declared during the campaign that inequality was necessary: "You need the rich to make the poor work and the workers must respect the bosses" (*Le Monde*, 11

February). "The role of a woman," she says, "is to raise the children and support her husband" (*Die Tageszeitung*, 10 February). In an interview after the election with the correspondent of a German newspaper, Catherine Mégret spelled out her program for running the municipality:

"We must hunt down and punish the criminals. And this isn't hard, either, it's always the same ones who make our city insecure. It's above all the immigrants. Their principle is, make a lot of babies, in order to get a lot of state aid, and then don't care for the children any more. Already the children of these immigrants are becoming criminals...."

"Our voters wanted us to make those who don't belong here afraid. So what if some of them haven't been caught in a crime so far? That only means that they haven't been found out yet. These immigrants are right to be afraid. That's why we were elected...."

—*Berliner Zeitung*, 24 February

Mme. Mégret, whose grandparents were Russian immigrants of Jewish origin, spewed out crude racial stereotypes to justify her plans of persecuting immigrants: "Any half-way intelligent person would agree that there are differences between the races. There are simply genetic differences. Jean-Marie Le Pen put it well when he said that blacks are more talented than whites in sports and dancing, and the whites just have different strengths." The interviewer from the Berlin paper couldn't help but draw the parallel to the racial theories of Hitler, who also offered "simple solutions," to which the National Front mayor responded: "Why not?... We need these simple solutions."

The new mayor's husband, Bruno Mégret, is Le Pen's No. 2 and the ideologue of the National Front. He is the author of the FN's campaign for a "national preference," calling for expelling all immigrants from France, both "clandestine" and legal, to provide 4 million jobs for Frenchmen. "If we want to send the Arabs and Africans and Asians back to where they came from, it is not because we hate them, it is because they pollute our national identity and take our jobs," says Bruno Mégret. Mégret is no petty shopkeeper but a graduate of France's elite engineering academies—the Ecole Polytechnique and Ponts et Chaussées. He also received an advanced degree in city planning from the University of California at Berkeley. He started his political career in the state Planning Commissariat as a young member of the Gaullist RPR (Rally for the Republic). But the victory of Socialist François Mitterrand in the 1981 presidential election cut short the career of this French yuppie technocrat, who was then drawn to the burgeoning New Right. Since the mid-1980s, Mégret has been a contact point between Le Pen's "populist" racists and ultra-rightist elite groups, such as the Catholic integralists and colonialists of the Club de l'Horloge and the racist intellectuals of GRECE (Group for Research and Study of European Civilization) who claim to defend Western culture against communism, Islam, Judaism and free masonry. Mégret's clientele within the Front includes the open admirers of Hitler's Germany, veterans organizations of Vichy collaborators, as well as associations of police, both "retired" and on active duty.

Meanwhile, as if to underline the continuity of the FN fascists with their forebears in the 1930s and '40s, Le Pen recently

declared that Gaullist president Chirac is "the hostage of a Jewish plot." In a recently published book, the Führer of the National Front is quoted as saying: "Chirac is 'kept'! By whom? By Jewish organizations, notably the famous B'nai B'rith. In agreement with them, in exchange for enormous sums of money; of exceptional international aid, he agreed to lose the 1988 presidential elections rather than come to an understanding with me.... And, ultimately, the pact with the Jewish organizations worked for him: there

he is, president" (*Libération*, 2 March). These undisguised anti-Semitic ravings and the openly racist remarks by Mayor Mégret led some previously complacent reformist leftists, who as always look to the capitalist state, to demand that the FN be banned as an unconstitutional organization. Such action would not stop the racist terrorists, at most it might lead them to change their name. But, as has happened in the past, it would set the stage for serious state repression *against the left*.

Le Pen's National Front is a deadly dangerous fascist organization—and not just at the level of words. On February 15, fascist arsonists in Lyon celebrated the Vitrolles election by burning down an anarchist bookstore, La Plume Noire, while plastering the area with stickers reading "FN Youth." At the end of February, in the Val-d'Oise region, a worker was held in jail and tortured for an entire day by two FN cops for being a Communist Party member and CGT unionist. The mayor of Nice, Jacques Peyrat, a former FN official, has set up an internment camp for "vagrants." Meanwhile, a trial was held in Marseille of four former skinheads and Front sympathizers who desecrating a Jewish cemetery in Carpentas in 1990, digging up a body and impaling it. (Naturally, the charges were reduced to the



Paris demonstration of fascist National Front, with poster of FN leader Le Pen. Reuters

armed forces, the backbone of the OAS secret army that plotted coups and carried out a wave of bombings in the early 1960s to protest French withdrawal from Algeria.)

Last fall this fascist militia, clearly modeled on Hitler's SA stormtroopers, deployed an armed squad, the UMI (Mobile Intervention Units), dressed in helmets and uniforms identical to the CRS riot police, to charge a counterdemonstration in the town

of Montceau-les-Mines. It is also known that the FN has a hit list of names and addresses of its opponents. *The National Front is a deadly danger to the working class, the left and all the oppressed, particularly immigrants from Africa.*

The will to fight the fascists is there. Last December, some 20,000 marched in Grenoble against Le Pen, leading to a pitched battle with the police protecting the National Front office there. Following the Vitrolles vote, on February 12, some 2,000 came out against the FN mayor in Toulon; 5,000 in Lyon on February 22, to protest the fascist firebombing of an anarchist bookstore there; 2,000 in Toulouse on February 24 against Bruno Mégret, protected by police who fired off a record 1,400 tear-gas grenades against the leftist demonstrations; hundreds in several demonstrations in



Demonstrators protesting National Front party congress in Strasbourg, March 29. Bourgeoisie and reformists organized diversion to prevent mobilization to stop the fascist provocation. Michel Gangne/AFP

Brittany on February 28, protesting a tour by the vice president of the FN; 5,000 on March 9 protesting a speech by Le Pen in Nice (where the FN leader accused CGT unionists of cutting off power, leaving the meeting hall in darkness); over 10,000 in Marseille, March 11, chanting "Le Pen, Mégret, out of Marseille" as they were met by baton-wielding cops; 5,000 on March 12 in Annecy in the Haute-Savoie, against the presence of Mégret; 10,000 on March 22 in Saint-Etienne in the Loire, again protesting Mégret. These were often the largest-ever protests against the National Front, reflecting a growing sense of urgency about the fascist threat. But the last thing the reformists want to do is mobilize mass action to stop the FN.

This was made abundantly clear from their response when Le Pen decided to hold a party congress in Strasbourg in Alsace. He clearly intended to mount a demonstration of force and stage an orgy of French chauvinism in this region where the FN received 25 percent of the vote in the last elections. (Strasbourg is also the site of the European "parliament," which had passed an empty resolution demanding that the Debré immigration law be withdrawn.) What was needed was a mobilization of the power of the working class to *stop* this fascist provocation and drive out the FN provocateurs. But in the name of "mobilizing against racism and fascism," the Socialist Party mayor Catherine Trautmann and the whole of the "respectable" left organized a host of petitions, colloquia, round tables, expositions, public meetings, soirées, film showings of *The Dictator* (Chaplin) and *Night and Fog* (Resnais)...and even a couple of demonstrations, safely away from the FN meeting site, of course. (Trautmann even temporarily removed a statue of Jeanne d'Arc to eliminate a potential rallying point for Le Pen's bullies or focus of attack by opponents of the FN.)

Sponsoring this diversion was the "Justice and Liberty" Collective, a classic popular front lash-up ranging from minor bourgeois parties (Radical Socialists and Greens) and bourgeois human rights organizations (League for the Rights of Man, LICRA), through the big reformist parties (PCF, PS) and associated anti-racist fronts (MRAP, SOS Racisme), left-led unions (CGT, FSU, SUD-PTT) and student groups (UNEF, UNEF-ID), to ex-far leftists like the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) and their anti-fascist movements (Ras l'Front). For the more conservative there was a Citizens Front, as well as groups of doctors, scientists, etc. Politically, the program of this conglomeration was "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"—the motto of the French bourgeois republic. Appeals for the March 29 demonstration against the National Front called on "citizens" (what about non-citizens?) to "demonstrate their attachment to the values of the Republic and democracy." Yet the "democratic" capitalist state protects the fascists. At times of crisis, in order to defend the "rights" and rule of property it will dispense with the empty rhetoric of human rights and turn to the fascists and bonapartists to crush the revolutionary danger, just as it did in the WWII Vichy regime.

The whole event was an elaborate "cultural *cordon sanitaire*" (*L'Evènement du Jeudi*), not against the fascists but to keep the opponents of the racist terrorists in check. It was heavily built by the liberal bourgeois media: *Libération* ran a front page in the

national colors proclaiming "Strasbourg: The Citizens Battle." The turnout of 50,000, the largest demonstration in the city since 1945, indicated a deep-seated desire to "Stop Le Pen," as thousands of stickers proclaimed. There is a massive operation going on to pervert this desire and portray it as nothing but the pious vows of a well-behaved citizenry. *Libé*, close to the Socialists, proclaimed the event "The Citizens' Wave" and declared: "This movement...marks the birth of a new militant generation which already has its history, its emblems and its slogans, the 'citizen generation'" (*Libération*, 31 March). This media creation is explicitly intended as a counterposition to revolutionary struggle, dismissing those "*gauchistes*" (ultraleftists) "brought together by May '1968, hung over by the revolutionary myth." It is particularly obscene when the target of the fascists' attack is precisely "non-citizens"—immigrants—and it is obvious that any real anti-fascist struggle must include its intended victims.

In Strasbourg, Le Pen lambasted "corrupt, AIDS-infested and cancerous humanitarians." He surrounded himself with rightist diehards from around Europe, including former Waffen-SS officer Schönhuber (former leader of the German Republikaner party) and the Mussolini veteran Pino Rauti from Italy, who refused to go along with the cosmetic remake of the MSI into the Alleanza Nazionale. One thousand of Le Pen's "DPS" thugs patrolled the area, posing as cops and even "arresting" leftist demonstrators. No well-behaved "citizens march" is going to put a dent in the fascists' armor. Some semi-anarchist German Autonomes to their credit tried to reach the Congress Hall where the National Front was meeting, but got nowhere in the face of the heavy police mobilization. We Trotskyists stress that it will take *mass worker/immigrant mobilizations, supported by all defenders of democratic rights, to sweep out the fascists and crush their terrorist commandos.*

Unholy Alliance of Right and Reformist "Left" Against Immigrants

Following the National Front election victory at Vitrolles, the February 22 protest in Paris against the Debré anti-immigration law became the initial focus of the protest against the mounting racist danger. The march was organized on barely ten days notice in response to the appeal by filmmakers and other intellectuals. This was due above all to the inaction of the left parties. At the first reading of the bill before the National Assembly in December, there were exactly three Communist legislators and a lone Socialist present. The absence was deliberate: with opinion polls showing a majority of French voters in favor of restricting immigration, the reformists desperately wanted to avoid taking on the right wing over defense of immigrants. Only after several days' hesitation did the PS, PCF and unions join in calling for the march, and on February 22 Socialist leader Jospin headed for Toulouse in the south, about as far away as he could get from Paris inside the borders of the "hexagon" (continental France). One article on the march (*L'Evènement du Jeudi*, 27 February) was expressively titled, "In Search of the Lost Left." One of the filmmakers, Bertrand Tavernier, bitterly complained that "the left discusses while the boat is burning":



Vincent Arnavy/AFP

French government charters airplanes to speed up deportations (above, to Algeria in December 1993). Pilots have refused to fly these airborne jails. Mobilize union action to stop the deportations!

“Earlier, protests were initiated by parties or unions. These were citizens. There was a great mistrust toward the parties, even in the big demonstration. I can still see [PCF leader] Robert Hue, who desperately wanted to march next to [actress] Emmanuelle Béart. Other actors told him: No, artists are demonstrating here, no politicians. That reminded me a little of the 1968 movement....”

“In addition to the Socialists, we were also disappointed by initiatives like SOS Racisme [close to the PS]. During the Saint-Bernard affair, when African immigrants occupied a church to obtain French residency papers, they simply remained silent.”

—*Die Tageszeitung*, 7 March

The march was quite different from most in Paris. It was overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois—professionals, teachers, etc.—with few chanted slogans or raised fists, and the Communist Party, LCR and anarchists well back in the line of march. But the virtual absence of the organized working class and the relative silence were mainly due to the failure of the left to initiate and organize protest. The numbers who came out to take a stand against mounting racism were impressive—over 100,000—and signs showed a wealth of imagination. Referring to the law’s requirement that citizens turn in any foreigners they have been sheltering, one read: “Look No Further—The 300,000 Rwandan Refugees Are at My Place.” Numerous signs proclaimed, “We Are All Foreigners.” Another said, “In a Racist Country, I Feel Like a Foreigner.” “Who’s Next?” asked yet another.

The immigration bill’s requirement that French hosts inform on their foreign guests raised parallels to the laws of Vichy France during World War II. A decree of the pro-Hitler regime of Marshal Pétain stipulated: “Jews or non-Jews who in any manner harbor Jews must inform the police thereof.” Armed with the resulting lists, French police rounded up Jews and loaded them on trains to a concentration camp in Drancy and then to death camps in Germany and Poland. (During the debate on the new immigration law, Interior Minister Debré con-

firmed that he indeed intends to set up a police register of all foreigners.) The film makers’ call for civil disobedience evoked the still-burning question of French collaboration with the Nazis during World War II. Many in the crowd carried pictures of Pétain with the words: “Debré: Denunciation. Racism. Police Lists. Don’t Collaborate.” One had a picture of Anne Frank, followed by a multiple-choice questionnaire: “Anne Frank is your neighbor? Save her. Turn her in. No opinion.”

Government supporters and spokesmen for the principal Jewish organizations objected to the evocative reference to Vichy, as the grounds that immigrants are not being expelled to concentration camps today. In the next breath, they called for tightened laws to control “clandestine” immigration—and that means mass deportations. Under Vichy it was by train, today it’s by plane. In a deliberate provocation, on the day the law was finally voted (minus the provision for informing the police of the departure of foreign guests, a sop to the protests), Interior Minister Debré ordered the deportation of 77 Malians on a charter airplane. When the flying jail landed in Bamako, Mali, the deportees rioted as soon as their chains were removed, ripping apart the aircraft and injuring 20 French cops who had been guarding them (*Libération*, 2 March).

Whether it is the new Debré Law, its predecessor the Pasqua Law (which threw thousands of parents of children born in France into a limbo, where they are supposedly not deportable but also ineligible for legal residency), or the 1982 immigration law passed by the Union of the Left government, which first introduced the requirement for immigrants to obtain letters from French hosts, *capitalist immigration laws are invariably racist*. (The proposal floated by some Socialist deputies to prosecute employers of “clandestine” immigrants is just a disguised way of victimizing these undocumented workers, as was shown when similar legislation was passed in the U.S. a decade ago in response to pressure from the AFL-CIO labor federation.) The reformist leaderships who brandish the banner of nationalism thereby foster French chauvinism, at best a

slightly toned down version of the National Front's xenophobia. Where at the turn of the century "the Jew" was made the scapegoat for the anxieties of petty-bourgeois layers threatened with proletarianization, today "foreigners" and "immigrants" are blamed by reactionaries for the destruction and desperation wrought by decaying capitalism.

While today the Communist and Socialist party tops act embarrassed and try to duck the issue of immigration, justifying their treachery with references to the "contradictory sentiments of the French" on immigration, the fact is that the reformists have whipped up anti-"foreigner" sentiment for years, with their "Produce French" protectionism. This was particularly the case when they were running the government in the 1980s under Socialist president François Mitterrand. In December 1980, as the Union of the Left was gearing up for the election that would put the left in office for the first time since De Gaulle proclaimed the Fifth Republic, a PCF mayor of the Paris suburb of Vitry launched a vicious commando attack on an apartment building housing several hundred black African workers from Mali. This social chauvinist cut off telephones, water, electricity and heat while a bulldozer ripped out the front staircase and piled dirt to block the doors. Today, PS parliamentary leader Laurent Fabius says that immigration is "not the issue"; back in the early 1980s when Fabius was premier, he said that the National Front had posed "good questions" with its immigrant-bashing campaigns, while another PS premier, Michel Rocard, declared that France could not "take in all the misery in the world."

The reformists' vile anti-immigrant policies have continued up to today. Not only did the Communist and Socialist tops seek to evade taking a position on the anti-immigrant Debré law, not only were they responsible for first instituting the requirement for immigrants to obtain a *carte d'hébergement* (sponsor's letter), but after PCF deputy Janine Jambu declared in the debate in the National Assembly that the government "is trying to turn the French into police informers," it was revealed that the town of Bagneux, of which she is mayor, already required hosts to inform on the whereabouts of foreign guests! While the reformists go after "foreigners" and wrap themselves in the national flag, just as they have done in supporting "their" bourgeoisie in two imperialist world wars and innumerable dirty colonial wars in this century (such as the French waged in Vietnam and Algeria), authentic communists stand on the declaration of the *Communist Manifesto* that "The working men have no fatherland." The Trotskyists defend the exploited and oppressed of all countries, not in the name of bourgeois nationalist "republican values" but of *proletarian internationalism*—the values of the *Soviet* republic under the Bolsheviks.

For a Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution

The anti-immigrant hysteria targets the most defenseless, those without legal rights, branded as "foreigners" even though many "immigrant" youth were born in France. Most of these youth neither speak the language of nor have ever seen the land their parents left decades ago to toil in the factories, mines

and low-paid service industries of the imperial metropolis. This reactionary onslaught is aimed at the heart of the working class, "native" and "immigrant" alike. No longer interested in maintaining even the semblance of a "welfare state" now that they think they have banished the "communist menace," the bosses are going after key social gains such as health insurance, pensions and job stability, in the name of "flexibilizing" the work force in the face of global competition. Immigrants have been made the scapegoats for the ravages of double-digit unemployment which is the direct result of government economic policies and the workings of the capitalist system.

Classical social democracy divided its program in two: a *minimum program* of reforms and a *maximum program* of socialism. As it degenerated into reformism, the minimum program obliterated the maximum, which was reserved for occasional Sunday speechifying. Today in the epoch of capitalist decay, as the triumphal bourgeoisie follows up counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR by going after the gains of the workers movement in West Europe, the reformists bargain over how much to give away to the capitalists. The Trotskyists, in contrast, fight for the program of the early Communist International. The Comintern launched the concept of a program of transitional demands that begins with the immediate needs of the workers and oppressed and leads to the fight for socialist revolution. As the official Communist parties under the impact of Stalinism passed over to reformism in the mid-1930s, turning the minimum-maximum program dichotomy into various formulas for "two-stage revolution," the Left Opposition led by Trotsky further developed the concept of a transitional program for socialist revolution, codifying this in the 1938 founding program of the Fourth International. Today no less than 50 years ago this is what is needed to fight the fascist menace and defend immigrants amid the generalized attack on the working people.

Trotskyists fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*—everyone who's here can stay here, with equal rights for all! This is an expression of the fundamental principle put forward by the young Soviet workers republic in 1918 granting to all foreigners residing in its territory the same political rights as Russian citizens. We demand for all residents, "legal" or "clandestine," the *right to vote in all elections*, local and national. Likewise, class-conscious workers must call on their union organizations to *oppose all requirements for legal residency papers as a condition of employment*. In order to combat linguistic discrimination, we uphold the fundamental Leninist principle of *no privileges for any language*—for the right to conduct all legal matters in the language of your choice (drivers license tests, voter registration, school enrollment, use of medical services, housing applications). These basic democratic demands are crucial in order to unite the working class across national and ethnic lines and to effectively combat the chauvinist poison whipped up by the bourgeoisie and fed by the reformists.

As Lenin insisted in his pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), the revolutionary party must be a *tribune of the people*, fighting every instance of oppression, no matter what class or social layer it affects. Defense of immigrants and crushing the fascists are inseparable tasks requiring a class mobilization of

the workers, independent of the bourgeoisie. In contrast, the social-democratic and ex-Stalinist reformists as always look to the capitalist state to come to their rescue. The desperate call of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) against Hitler in the early 1930s—*Staat, greif zu!* (State, intervene!)—revealed the SPD's own impotence and bankruptcy, and thereby emboldened the fascists. Currently the French Socialists are divided between those who trivialize the danger of the National Front (e.g., Jospin) and those, such as former PS national secretary Henri Emmanuelli and the Gauche Socialiste (Socialist Left) tendency, who call on the government to ban the FN.

The danger of such calls is revealed by the March 17 letter of Strasbourg's Socialist mayor Trautmann to Interior Minister Louis Debré inquiring about the possibility of banning the FN party congress on the grounds of a threat to public order. The idea that deporter-in-chief Debré, who emulates Pétain in putting together police lists of "non-nationals," would ban Le Pen or his activities is ridiculous. The capitalist government is not about to outlaw the shock troops it will call upon when needed as auxiliaries to the CRS riot cops to crack the heads of workers and students in revolt.

Moreover, any laws that *could* be used to ban the fascists *will* be used to ban leftists. One need only recall how in 1973, another right-wing government banned the Ligue Communiste (forerunner of the LCR) when it protested against an anti-immigrant rally of the fascist Ordre Nouveau. The current interior minister no doubt recalls this well, since the LC was then mobilizing against another Debré Law, this one by Louis's father Michel, imposing the draft. Not only governments of the right

have used such laws against the left: in the 1930s, the Popular Front government repeatedly seized the newspaper of the French Trotskyists, while sending troops to defend fascist meetings (see "Popular Front Chains the Workers" on page 16).

When the likes of LCR leader Alain Krivine and Lutte Ouvrière's Arlette Laguiller call on the government to ban the National Front, this is their suicidal "alternative" to mobilizing the working class and oppressed. They only demonstrate that they are not interested in crushing the fascists and have nothing in common with authentic Trotskyism. Whether the reactionary right or the parliamentary "left" is in office, as Marxists we understand that the capitalist state is the enemy of workers and immigrants. We seek to bring out the *working class* in independent action to defend the victims of all forms of racist prejudice, discrimination and terror. Trotskyists call for *worker/immigrant de-*

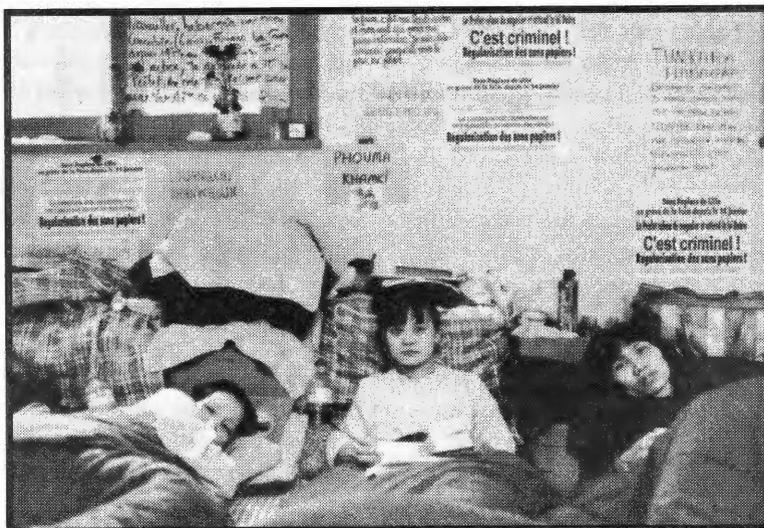
fense guards to crush the fascist terrorists. The workers movement must marshal its forces by the thousands to stop police attacks on immigrant neighborhoods. Unions must mobilize instantly to block immigration raids on factories and offices, or attempts by the police to remove protesting *sans papiers* (undocumented workers) from the churches.

The lessons of the revolutionaries' fight against fascism in the 1930s retain their validity today. As Trotsky wrote in *Whither France?* (November 1934): "The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery." In February 1934, the assorted fascist and monarchist leagues (Action Française, Jeunesses Patriotes, Solidarité Française) staged an armed demonstration against the rampant corruption of the parliamentary "republic of thieves." It was, Trotsky wrote later, "the first serious offensive of the united counterrevolution." Finally shaken out of their complacency by Hitler's seizure of power in Germany and alarmed by the rightist threat at home, the frightened French

Communists and Socialists staged a united-front mobilization of hundreds of thousands of workers against the fascists, a measure which the Trotskyists had insistently advocated. But as Trotsky emphasized: "The united front opens up numerous *possibilities* but nothing more. In itself, the united front decides nothing. Only the struggle of the masses decides."

A call for mass, militant mobilizations, led by the most conscious elements of the organized working class, including its sizeable immigrant

component, is no pipe dream. Not far from Strasbourg are the mining towns of Forbach and Freyming/Merlebach, where during the December 1995 strike movement hundreds of coal miners (many of them Moroccan immigrants) took over company headquarters, set fire to the sub-prefecture, stoned the tax collector's office and seized toll booths on the autoroute, letting vehicles pass without paying. Toulon, which now has a National Front mayor, was where maritime workers refused to load military goods during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Moreover, there is a basis for real working-class internationalism in the fight against the fascists. Even the German DGB trade-union federation endorsed the protests in Strasbourg. And although the heavy hand of the Social Democracy has long kept the unions in check, in recent weeks tens of thousands of German coal miners, many of them from the Saar region on



Herve Robillard/Libération

"Sans papiers" (undocumented immigrants) in hunger strike in Lille in February to demand legal residency papers.



Bourgeois media portrays opposition to National Front as “citizens battle” of the “true France.” What about non-“citizens”? For worker/immigrant action to crush the fascists!

the French border, laid siege to the government district in the capital of Bonn.

The issue has been posed anew, and a serious test will come on May Day, the international proletarian holiday. Since 1990, Le Pen has repeatedly challenged the workers movement by provocatively mobilizing his fascist thugs under the nationalist banner of Joan of Arc. This year, the threat is even greater as the FN has sought to set up “unions” in various sectors. Yet the last united May Day demonstration bringing together most of the competing reformist-led union federations dates back to the early 1980s! In 1995, the LCR’s anti-fascist group, Ras l’Frônt (Fed Up With the Front), unfurled a huge banner above the FN podium at the Place de l’Opéra. Yet later that day, a Moroccan immigrant, Brahim Bouaraam, was drowned in the Seine by skinheads who had participated in the FN May Day march. A couple of months earlier, an immigrant from the Comorro Islands, Ibrahim Ali, was murdered, shot in the back of the head by some FN gangsters who had been putting up Le Pen’s anti-immigrant posters in Marseille. These are fascist killers. The racist bully boys should be dealt a firm lesson in workers power, delivered in a language they can grasp, and next time they will fear to attack defenseless immigrants or firebomb leftist bookstores.

Salutary measures of public sanitation by the workers to cleanse the streets of the fascist filth are necessary, but not sufficient. Those who seriously fight to defend immigrants and crush Le Pen, to ensure that there are *no more Vichys*, must address the social conditions which breed racism. Above all, it is necessary to put forward a fighting program to eliminate mass unemployment. Contrary to the anti-immigrant hysteria whipped up by the fascist demagogues and the rightist government, with more than a little help from the reformists, the fact is that *the proportion of immigrants in the French population*

has not varied in the last two decades, remaining steady at 7.5 percent of the total since 1975 (*Le Monde*, 28 February). Likewise, the number of Algerian immigrants peaked in 1975. The “immigration crisis” is a pure invention. What has gone up, dramatically, is unemployment, today officially standing at 12.8 percent of the adult population, a postwar record. Among youth (age 18-24) it is more than double that figure. What is true in general is also true in the particular: in Vitrolles immigrants are only 5.6 percent of the population, while unemployment is officially 19 percent (*Il Manifesto*, 9 February). Throughout the Bouches-du-Rhône region, where all four National Front mayors are located, one adult in five is out of work, while among youth almost half are jobless. Toulon used to be a bastion of the left until the steel plant and shipyards there were shut down in the 1980s under Socialist governments.

Mass unemployment underlies the fascists’ growth. This much is understood even by the reformists. Accusing the Chirac-Juppé government of fostering a “growth deficit,” Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin called for a “veritable social contract for jobs,” promising 700,000 new jobs for youth and overall economic growth of at least 3 percent a year. Half the new jobs would be financed by the state, supposedly without raising taxes, while the other half would come from the private sector in “a form of moral obligation” by companies (*Le Monde*, 19 March). This is sheer fantasy. The only moral obligation the capitalists recognize or contract they would agree to is one to maximize their profits. PCF leader Hue calls Jospin’s policy “timid.” For sure. But the fact is that Jospin is proposing nothing but the program of the first years of the Union of the Left (1981-83), to raise demand and spur growth through deficit financing. This inevitably ran up against capitalist resistance and was soon replaced by Socialist-administered “rigor” (trying to make austerity sound like a diet). This

produced the double-digit unemployment that has persisted for over a decade and led to the electoral victories of the right.

The bottom line is that the reformists *cannot* do away with mass unemployment because they are beholden to capitalism, which inexorably generates joblessness in its drive to keep profits up by keeping wage costs down. Today, PCF and PS union leaders moan about “globalization” and exporting of jobs, as they yearn for the “welfare state” of social benefits and relatively higher wages that the Western bourgeoisies tolerated in order to fight the “red threat.” But the capitalists have been shutting down union-

ized industries and shifting production to low-wage countries for the last century, throughout the imperialist epoch. The problem is not the *policy* but the *system*. To achieve full employment requires replacing the anarchy of the capitalist market with a planned economy based on production for human needs, not profit. In his pamphlet on the fight against Hitler’s Nazis, *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (January 1932), Trotsky insisted on

the need for “a widespread campaign against the high cost of living, for a shorter workweek, against wage cuts,” for “drawing the unemployed into this struggle hand in hand with the employed,” as integral to a united-front struggle against the fascists.

To eliminate the fascist danger one must eliminate the social conditions and the capitalist economic system which produce this scourge. In *Whither France?* Trotsky called for a “well-elaborated *transitional program*,” that is, “a system of measures which with a workers and peasants government can assure the transition from capitalism to socialism.” In France today, with the peasantry greatly reduced in size, a workers government is needed, not a bourgeois parliamentary talk shop but a government based on workers councils drawing in all the exploited and oppressed sectors of the population, under the leadership of a genuinely communist party.

The reformists’ focus instead is on forming a new popular-front lash-up for the next elections. Currently, the PS leadership is holding a discussion on a strategy for an “effective fight” against the far right, centered on a three-point program of “derespectability,” “demystification” and “delegitimization” of the FN! This is to be combined with “citizens demonstrations,” as at Strasbourg, and the classic “republican front” in the elections: dropping a left-wing candidate in favor of a “re-

publican” right-winger against the FN. The popular front, under whatever name it presents itself, represents a *betrayal* by the reformists of the class independence of the proletariat. Communist Party leader Robert Hue, meanwhile, has called a series of local gatherings of the left, under the name “Sessions for Change,” as a kind of “Tour de France for humanism”!

While the Socialist tops are “reflecting” on the FN in colloquia, round tables and soirées, and while the no less reformist “Communist” leaders are wrapping themselves in the French blue-white-red flag at their sessions for humanism, the fascist firebombers and goons are doing their deadly work in the streets!

Le Pen and his fascist thugs will not be stopped by pop-front fêtes or the small change of parliamentary combinationism. They will only be stopped by working-class action independent of the bourgeoisie, and they will only be eliminated through proletarian revolution. The fight for internationalist socialist revolution requires above all the leadership of a



Luc Delahaye/Magnum

Protesters in February 22 Paris demonstration carry signs with names of “occupied cities” with fascist mayors.

Bolshevik-Leninist party. As Leon Trotsky wrote in *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (January 1932), his ringing call for united proletarian action to stop the Nazis before it was too late:

“The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious.... “The historical interests of the proletariat find their expression in the Communist Party—when its policies are correct. The task of the Communist Party consists in winning over the majority of the proletariat; and only thus is the socialist revolution made possible.”

The bankruptcy of the Stalinized Communist parties was demonstrated when they allowed Hitler to march to power in Germany unimpeded. From that point on, Trotsky insisted that the Third International, ravaged by Stalinism and its nationalist doctrine of “socialism in one country,” was dead for revolution. Today, a truly communist party can only be built in the struggle to reforge the Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. This is the lesson of history that must be learned if the tragedies of the past are not to be repeated. ■



J rome de Perlinghi/Lib ration

Workers from Renault plant in Vilvorde, Belgium demonstrate outside Belgian prime minister's office April 5, protesting announced closure of plant in July.

Belgian Renault Workers, German Miners and Steel Workers . . .

West Europe: Workers on the Battle Lines

No to the Bosses' Europe of Maastricht— For a Socialist United States of Europe!

When the president of the French auto manufacturer Renault announced the pending closure of the company's assembly plant in Vilvorde, Belgium on February 27, he must have calculated it was a smart move. By shutting down a foreign plant, he would avoid a clash with the French unions, whose nationalism would prevent solidarity with the Belgian workers. Instead, he ran into a hornet's nest of opposition. The Vilvorde workers immediately seized the plant, which they have continued to occupy. But most importantly, the 3,000 Vilvorde workers quickly took their struggle over the border to France, calling on fellow Renault employees to join them in fighting against the cutback plans that threaten them all. This was the

opening shot in a series of workers protests that spread through West Europe this spring.

Renault's divide-and-conquer plans were further undermined when word soon leaked out that almost 2,800 firings were planned in France as well, part of a plan to eliminate 8,000-10,000 Renault jobs worldwide. On March 7, French and Spanish unions called simultaneous work stoppages at Renault plants, as did the Belgian factories of Volkswagen, Volvo, Opel and Ford, in what labor leaders called "the first Euro-strike." In most of the plants, the action itself amounted to little more than an extended lunch hour, as the union bureaucrats tried to pressure management into bargaining or at least "consulting" with them. But the workers' response showed that under a class-struggle leadership the Europe-wide bosses' offensive could be met with powerful labor action across the continent.

The potential for internationalist working-class struggle is



AP/Michel Spingler



Jerome de Perlinghi/Libération

Belgian strikers burst through gate (left) to reach fellow workers at Renault plant in Douai, France, March 5. Returning a week later, Belgian workers paraded through assembly hall at Douai, calling on workers to join them. More than 1,000 rallied in demonstration of international solidarity against their common bosses.

very real. On February 5, some 70,000 Belgian workers demonstrated in protest against the declaration of bankruptcy of the Forges de Clabecq steel plant. On February 22, more than 100,000 people marched in the streets of Paris against a vicious new immigration law. On March 11, some 6,000 Belgian workers traveled to Paris in a convoy of 140 buses to demonstrate outside Renault headquarters at Boulogne-Billancourt, where they were joined by workers' delegations from the major French plants. On March 16, close to 100,000 metal workers marched in Brussels. In solidarity with their colleagues in Vilvorde, contingents of French, German and Italian workers chanted, "We are all Belgian workers!" And on March 22, a Renault worker addressed a rally of several hundred thousand Italian workers in Rome.

The Belgian Renault workers' fight intersects a series of labor battles around West Europe. Directly or indirectly, almost all of these struggles have a common origin: the drive by the European bourgeoisies to gut long-established welfare systems, eliminate jobs wholesale, cut wages, and in general rip up the elaborate framework of labor-management relations of post-World War II West Europe. This elaborate edifice of institutionalized class collaboration and social benefits was set up during the anti-Soviet Cold War to keep labor from succumbing to the "red menace." Declaring communism dead, the bourgeoisie is now determined to eliminate what it sees as profit-draining concessions in the new period of unbridled international capitalist competition. The bosses' immediate push is to meet the 1998 deadline for fulfilling the economic criteria for a common European currency established by the Maastricht treaty under the diktat of the German Bundesbank.

This has touched off sharp workers' resistance in Germany itself. At the beginning of March, coal miners shut down every pit in the Ruhr and the Saar. They were enraged by Christian Democratic chancellor Helmut Kohl's announcement that the wholesale elimination of government subsidies would mean the closure of most of Germany's remaining mines. On March

11 and 12, tens of thousands of miners marched on Bonn. Despite being saddled with one of the most right-wing Social Democratic (SPD) union leaderships in the country, the angry miners surged past police barricades and union officials with bullhorns into the area around the chancellor's office where demonstrations are strictly *verboten*. It took a full mobilization by the SPD and union tops to send the miners home by nightfall. Two weeks later, 20,000 German steel workers invaded the banking citadel of Frankfurt/Main to denounce the role of the money moguls of "Mainhattan" in engineering a Krupp-Thyssen takeover bid that would cost thousands of jobs.

In France there has been an escalation of labor struggles in recent weeks including strikes, walkouts, demonstrations and occupations. In the first week of April, bank workers protested government plans to lengthen the workweek and cut more than 50,000 jobs; ground crews, pilots and flight attendants of the former Air Inter walked out one after another against threatened job losses resulting from a fusion with Air France; postal workers in 130 sorting centers declared a one-day stoppage in support of drawn-out local conflicts; Alcatel workers blocked the gates of the phone equipment manufacturer; and truckers threatened to go out again because the bosses have not carried out the settlement that ended the national road haulers' strike last December. For over a month, interns in hospitals across France struck against government moves to slash social security medical expenses. And ever since workers in Crédit Foncier occupied bank headquarters in January and kept the boss in his office for several days, managers in postal centers, electronics manufacturers and other firms have complained of being "kidnapped" by strikers.

For various reformists, the fight over the Belgian Renault plant shutdown has crystallized the demand for a "social Europe," summed up in the slogan: "The Europe of Vilvorde vs. the Europe of Maastricht." This is simply the class-collaborationist pipedream of recreating on the European plane the now defunct national "welfare state." But although the bosses have

backed off in some initial skirmishes, they are not interested in renegotiating a new "social contract." They are preparing for a showdown with the working class.

During the late 1970s and the '80s, American labor leaders complained that the bosses were waging "one-sided class war" against the unions. If so, it was because the union tops were engaged in *one-sided class collaboration*. Decades of concessions to the capitalists sapped the fighting strength of the workers organizations and set them up for the kill. And as the blows came down, when Ronald Reagan fired the entire national force of 14,000 PATCO air controllers for daring to strike against the government, the strikers were left to hang by the labor fakers. The same occurred in Britain when the National Union of Miners under Arthur Scargill stood alone against the union-busting assault by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. As a result of that bitter defeat, today there are barely over 10,000 British miners left, compared to 190,000 before the 1984-85 coal strike.

Pressed by the heightened interimperialist rivalries and competing international economic blocs taking shape, the West European bourgeoisies want to cut costs by cutting social overhead expenses and "flexibilizing" the work force. This drive is enforced by their social-democratic lieutenants. The head of Renault (which was nationalized following World War II, and is still 47 percent owned by the French state), Louis Schweitzer (nephew of the famous doctor Albert), is a prominent social-democratic technocrat. He was the chief of staff of Socialist premier Laurent Fabius during the mid-1980s, at a time when the PS government instituted rigid austerity, leading to mass layoffs in state industries. "Someone must do the dirty work," was Fabius' infamous comment. Now his former minion Schweitzer is doing the dirty work.

What is needed is not a "social" Europe of class collaboration, but a Europe of sharp class struggle. The need for powerful cross-border labor action against the bosses' offensive is obvious and urgent. *But such anti-capitalist struggle will not be carried out by the present pro-capitalist misleaders of the workers movement.* In the face of the highest levels of unemployment since the 1930s, what's needed is a struggle for a *sliding scale of wages*, for a drastically shorter workweek with no loss in pay, to provide jobs for all. Against cuts in medical insurance, there must be a fight for *free, high-quality medical care for all*. To combat youth unemployment levels double those for adults and the increasing exclusion of women from the work force, there must be a fight for training programs and free, 24-hour child care to include these sectors in social labor.

In particular, there must be a fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, who form a sizable section of the working class throughout Europe. A class-struggle leadership of the workers movement would bring out union power to defend immigrants and crush the fascists. In Vilvorde, the Flemish nationalist fascists of the Vlaams Blok tried to capitalize on anger over the Renault shutdown, but their orange leaflets around the plant were systematically ripped down by the workers. That's only a first step. The working class must fight against the capitalist Europe of Maastricht and of the Schengen treaty on borders, which set

out racist immigration controls for a Fortress Europe.

The potential for powerful international workers action was dramatically shown when hundreds of Vilvorde workers descended on the Renault plant in Douai, France in one of their early surprise actions, ripping open the fence surrounding the plant to reach the workers there. They came back on March 13, and even though the social-democratic union bureaucrats did not call the ranks out, the audacious action of the Belgian strikers gave the French workers confidence to join an "illegal" impromptu work stoppage and solidarity rally of 1,000 inside the plant. But the key question is leadership.

While the labor fakers are currently putting on a "Euro" façade, the pro-capitalist union bureaucracies are inherently national in scope. They seek to divert workers' struggles by wrapping them in the national colors. In the dispute over the planned privatization of the Thomson electronics industries, French union leaders appealed to tricolor nationalism against a Korean company. In Germany, even though many of the miners are Turkish and Kurdish immigrants, the coal union tops have been pushing poisonous protectionist appeals for "strong German industry." Construction unions in Berlin have been stoking chauvinist sentiment against "cheap foreign workers." A class-conscious workers movement must defend all immigrant workers and wage an explicit fight against racism.

The reformists instead seek to bind the working class hand and foot to bourgeois legality. After the entire Vilvorde work force travelled to Paris and surrounded Renault corporate headquarters on May 11, the head of the unions' European enterprise committee told the rally there was no movement from the company and the workers should go home while the bureaucrats went to court. But while initial court rulings in Brussels and Paris went against management, citing insufficient "consultation," these are the *capitalist courts*—they are not allies nor neutrals but part of the repressive apparatus of the class enemy. What is "legal" is a reflection of the balance of class forces. This was driven home last year in Germany, when the Bundestag (parliament) passed a law cutting sick pay to 80 percent of full salary. After huge labor mobilizations, a series of leading companies agreed to union demands to ignore the new law and continue full sick pay.

But even partial victories will not defeat the bourgeois offensive. What is posed is the need for working-class mobilizations far exceeding in scope the French workers strike movement against social security cuts in November-December 1995. Above all, it is necessary to forge a revolutionary leadership of the working class and oppressed that can turn defensive struggles into an attack on the capitalist system itself, raising demands that taken together challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie and organize the proletariat in a struggle for its own class rule.

To unite the working class across national boundaries into a solid force requires an *internationalist* proletarian leadership. This means building revolutionary workers parties in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. The watchword must be: relentless combat against national and Eurochauvinism—unstinting defense of immigrant workers! Against the Europe of the bosses, the Trotskyists fight for a *Socialist United States of Europe!* ■

France

From Millerand to Mitterrand . . .

Popular Front Chains the Workers

Break with the Class Collaborators! Build a Trotskyist Party!

As France heats up with protests over the growing threat of the fascist National Front (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen and against the right-wing government's anti-immigrant Debré Law, the response of the reformist workers parties has been to seek a political alliance with "democratic" sectors of the ruling class. In early February, the Socialist Party (PS) held a convention at which they drew up a slate of candidates for the 1998 parliamentary elections, including representatives of the Radical Socialists and the Greens, two minor bourgeois parties. At the same time, desperately trying to stave off an FN victory in municipal elections in the Marseille suburb of Vitrolles, both the PS and the Communist Party (PCF) called in the second, decisive round of voting for a "republican front."

This traditional French form of electoral class-collaboration consists of calling on all supporters of the "values of the Republic" to unite behind a single candidate to oppose a fascist, monarchist or other ultra-reactionary. In the case of Vitrolles, the standard-bearer was a notoriously corrupt Socialist; in other cases, this means telling the workers to vote for candidates of right-wing "republican" capitalist parties on the grounds that they are supposedly a lesser evil compared to an even more rightist candidate. In reality, such coalitions with the bourgeoisie—the classic example being the Popular Front which arose in the 1930s—serve above all to strangle the struggles of the workers and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors. Far from blocking the fascists, the popular front serves as a roadblock to revolution, and thus prepares the way for the victory of capitalist reaction. Defending the fundamental Marxist principle of the political independence of the working class, Trotskyists call for *proletarian opposition to the popular front* and *no vote to any candidate of class-collaborationist coalitions*.

Ever since the Dreyfus affair at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, "The Republic in danger!" has been the cry of alarm of the frightened reformists as they seek refuge in the embrace of the bourgeoisie. When the French Army general staff, the high clergy, and assorted royalists and aristocrats used the 1894 frame-up treason trial of a Jewish officer, Alfred Dreyfus, to mobilize against the parliamentary republic, the initial response of most French Socialists was indifference. The "workerist" wing led by Jules Guède argued that this was nothing but a dispute within the bourgeois-

ie, of no concern to the workers. But recognizing the militarist-monarchist-clericalist threat, Socialist leader Jean Jaurès took up the battle in defense of Dreyfus against the rightist-nationalist conspiracy. The *dreyfusards* correctly stood for intransigent proletarian defense of democratic rights. Yet as the crisis came to a head and France headed to the brink of civil war, instead of mobilizing the workers in revolutionary struggle, in 1899 Jaurès endorsed the entry of the Socialist minister Alexandre-Étienne Millerand into the bourgeois Radical government of Waldeck-Rousseau.

This "socialist ministerialism" was a *betrayal* of the interests of the working class, as Guède, Paul Lafargue and other revolutionary socialists insisted. In her essay on "The Socialist Crisis in France" (1900) Rosa Luxemburg wrote bitterly:

"The Republic is in danger! Therefore it was necessary that a Socialist become the bourgeois minister of trade. The Republic is in danger! Therefore the Socialist had to remain in the ministry even after the massacre of striking workers on the island of Martinique and in Chalon. The Republic is in danger! As a result, the inquiry into this massacre had to be rejected, the parliamentary investigation into the colonial atrocity was quashed, and an amnesty declared."

With its job completed of "saving the Republic" *from the workers*, the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet was unceremoniously dismissed in 1902, although Millerand later continued his ministerial career as a bourgeois Radical. Luxemburg summed up the disastrous experience:

"And so the books are closed on ministerial socialism. Going from defeat to defeat, it eventually experienced the fiasco of 'republican defense,' of social reform, of coalition politics and finally of socialist unity. Instead of the promised strengthening of the 'political and economic power' of the working class, it only brought political weakening and disorganization. And also *moral degradation* on top of this."
—Rosa Luxemburg, "The Close of the Socialist Crisis in France" (1902)

Luxemburg's devastating verdict on Millerandism could be applied almost word for word 90 years later to the 14-year presidential reign of the François Mitterrand. Their policy consisting of anti-working-class austerity, anti-immigrant racism and anti-Soviet Cold War, the initial Socialist cabinets (with PCF ministers) soon passed over without a hitch to "cohabitation" of the Socialist president with a right-wing cabinet. After a dozen years in and out of ministerial office, the reformist left has become synonymous with the status quo, the rampant corruption of the parliamentary regime, and the mass unemployment and racist police terror against "foreigners" which demoralize the working class and provide fodder for

the fascists.

From Millerand to Mitterrand, "socialist" ministerialism under different names (Left Bloc in the 1920s, Popular Front in the 1930s and '40s, Union of the Left in the 1970s and '80s) has been the penultimate recourse of the capitalist ruling class to tame a rebellious proletariat. If the "progressive" rhetoric and reactionary policies of the popular front are insufficient to submit the workers to the dictates of capital, the bourgeoisie's ultimate weapon is fascism and the iron fist of naked bonapartist military rule. The classic case is of the Popular Front government of the Socialist Léon Blum of 1936-38. Today, while Mitterrand's Union of the Left is deeply discredited, many French workers look back to the Popular Front as a golden age when the eight-hour day and paid vacations were first introduced. Yet these concessions were granted by the bourgeoisie in extremis as the price for *stopping workers revolution*. The Blum government lasted only a couple of years in office, then gave way to the right-wing Radical Daladier, who handed over power to Marshal Pétain, who in turn ceded half of France to Hitler and presided over the rest of the country as a de facto Nazi protectorate.

Since many French leftists have illusions in the popular front, and most of the misnamed "far left" wants to recreate it, it is crucial for authentic Trotskyists to hammer home the bitter lessons of class collaboration. The very first act of Leon Blum's cabinet as it took office in June 1936 was to quash a massive general strike that swept the country in anticipation of the new regime. The first strikes broke out a week after the victory of the Popular Front in the May elections. On May 24, hundreds of thousands of workers came out to commemorate the 1871 Paris Commune at the Mur des Fédérés in Père Lachaise Cemetery where the *communards* were shot. On May 28, Renault workers occupied their plant and raised the red flag. Soon metal workers throughout Paris had struck.

As the strike movement spread to the provinces, by June 4 some 12,000 strikes had been reported, 9,000 of them plant occupations. In an article titled "The French Revolution Has Begun!" (9 June 1936), Leon Trotsky wrote: "The movement takes on the character of an epidemic. The contagion spreads from factory to factory, from craft to craft, from district to district. All the layers of the working class seem to be giving echoing answers to a roll call.... These are not just strikes. This is a *strike*. This is the open rallying of the oppressed against the oppressors. This is the classic beginning of a revolution." The bulk of the



Citroën workers returning to work after the June 1936 general strike believing they had won. In fact, the popular front served to head off revolution. Stalinist leader Thorez declared, "It is necessary to know how to end a strike."

militant workers were following the Communist Party. Trotsky noted that in the past, the PCF had often called for "Soviets Everywhere!" in situations where this slogan was completely artificial. Now it was not, and Trotsky wrote: "'Soviets Everywhere'? Agreed. But it is time to pass from words to action."

Instead, the PCF leadership went all out to *stop* the strike and *prevent* the appearance of workers councils. On June 11, in a meeting of Communist militants in Paris, PCF leader Maurice Thorez spelled out the counterrevolutionary policy: "It is not a question of taking power at present.... So it is necessary to know how to end a strike" (quoted in Jacques Danos and Marcel Gibelin, *Juin 36* [1972]). Thorez' second in command, Jacques Duclos, wrote an article in the PCF's



AFP

Fascist and monarchist leagues rioted against Radical government on 6 February 1934 (above). Workers responded with powerful united-front mobilization. Fearing revolutionary potential, reformist leaders rushed to embrace bourgeoisie in Popular Front.

L'Humanité (27 June 1936), titled "The Radicals Are Right," referring to the bourgeois party that was the linchpin of the French Third Republic (1871-1940). Summing up the meaning of the popular front, Duclos wrote: "We are there to maintain order." He went on:

"The Radicals are right when they say they will not accept any threat to private property, and we Communists do not hesitate to proclaim that this is also our concern.... In short, the radicals are right to recall that *the reforms on which the parties of the Popular Front have agreed, when you add them all up, are nothing but the old program of the [bourgeois] Radical Socialist Party.*"
—cited in Charles Berg and Stéphane Just, *Fronts populaires d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (1977)

The Stalinists' exhortations were backed up with muscle. The Blum government immediately seized the first issue of the Trotskyist newspaper, *La Lutte Ouvrière* (Workers Struggle), when it came out on June 12 with the front page headlines:

"IN THE FACTORIES AND IN THE STREETS, POWER TO THE WORKERS

"Go Over From Strike Committees to Standing Factory Committees!

"Form Your Armed Workers Militias!"

The Trotskyist paper also called for a congress of factory committees to prepare the struggle. That same day, a meeting of representatives of 250 enterprises in the Paris region called for the formation of a liaison committee among the factories. Deathly afraid that soviets could indeed

spring up everywhere, the Popular Front with the Stalinists as chief hatchet men rushed to put a halt to the burgeoning unrest. The means were the Matignon Accords. The terms originally negotiated on June 7 by Blum with representatives of the employers and union tops included a pay raise, no reprisals and the right to unionize. The PCF declared victory, but the metal workers refused to go back. Finally, on June 12, in desperation the bosses agreed to two weeks' paid vacation and a 40-hour workweek with no loss in pay. It was that or else let the revolution continue to unfold.

Over the next two years, the Blum government gradually wore down the workers' militancy. Meanwhile, the monarchist and fascist right grew increasingly aggressive, emboldened by the advance

of Franco in Spain with the aid of Hitler and Mussolini. Originally, at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in July 1935, the popular front was put forward by Stalin's henchman Georgi Dimitrov as a "People's Front against fascism." While throwing in empty rhetoric about "resolute action by the revolutionary proletariat," Dimitrov insisted it should not be so radical as to let the right wing "terrorize the petty bourgeoisie with the spectre of the 'red menace'." The adoption of the popular front marked the point at which the Stalinized Comintern definitively passed from bureaucratic centrism, characterized by wild zig-



Keystone

Construction workers during French general strike of June 1936, which mobilized more than 2 million workers. Trotsky said soviets were on the order of the day. Fearing revolution, the bourgeoisie rushed to put Popular Front government in office to end the strike.

zags, to antirevolutionary reformism, joining with the social democrats in pledging with the workers' blood to uphold the rule of the bourgeoisie.

What the popular front actually meant for the fight against fascism was brought home on 16 March 1937, when fascists decided to hold a meeting in the Paris suburb of Clichy. After the government refused to ban it, local officials called a counterdemonstration. The Socialist minister of the interior called in the police, who fired on the anti-fascist mobilization, killing five and wounding hundreds. Stalinist leader Thorez' only comment was to blame everything on "dirty Trotskyites." Workers at Renault and elsewhere struck in protest, but the PCF once again headed it off, voting confidence in the Blum government in parliament. In December 1937, when the Gardes Mobiles riot police attempted to break up a plant occupation at the Goodyear tire factory, 30,000 workers surrounded the plant to stop it. But the union tops ordered a return to work. Four months later, as an ever bolder right wing attacked the Popular Front, Blum resigned, replaced by the Radical Edouard Daladier.

As the workers were thoroughly demoralized by the Popular Front in office, when the CGT called a half-hearted general strike on 30 November 1938, in a last-ditch attempt to block the right, it was broken by army troops occupying the train stations. Ten days later, Daladier formed a National Bloc with the right, the workweek was extended up to 60 hours, the Popular Front was dead. In March 1939, the Daladier government demanded full powers and repression against the left was stepped up. After the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the Communist Party was banned. By 10 July 1940, after the French Army collapsed before the German Wehrmacht, what was left of the Chamber of Deputies elected in May 1936 (the Communists having meanwhile been thrown out) voted to hand over power to Marshal Pétain. The next day he declared himself president, seized legislative power and abolished the Republic.

What lay behind this ignominious demise of the Popular Front in France? Various pseudo-explanations have been put forward. Guy Bourd  in his book, *La d faite du front populaire* (1977) lists several: the points of the 1936 electoral pact meant different things to the different signers, its economic policy was incoherent and impotent, it was constantly under the threat of war. All true, but the fundamental explanation is far simpler: the Popular Front had fulfilled its mission for the French ruling class. It straitjacketed the workers at the crucial moment, and with the crisis past it was no longer needed to protect the interests of capital—so it was cast aside. Even before the 1936 election, Trotsky had warned in a prophetic article titled "France at the Turning Point" (March 1936): "The People's Front, the conspiracy between the labor bureaucracy and the worst political exploiters of the middle classes, is capable only of killing the faith of the masses in the revolutionary road and of driving them into the arms of the fascist counterrevolution." Following the debacle of the 30 November 1938 "general strike," Trotsky summed up the bitter lessons:

"In order to lead the revolutionary struggle for power, it is necessary to clearly see the class from which the power must



Keystone

Leon Blum, Socialist president of the Popular Front government of France, as he took office in 1936.

be wrested. The workers did not recognize the enemy because he was disguised as a friend. In order to struggle for power, it is necessary, moreover, to have the instruments of struggle: the party, trade unions, and soviets. The workers were deprived of these instruments because the leaders of the workers' organizations formed a wall around the bourgeois power in order to disguise it, to render it unrecognizable and invulnerable. Thus the revolution that began found itself braked, arrested, demoralized.

"The past two and a half years since then have revealed step by step the impotence, the falsity, and the hollowness of the People's Front. What appeared to the laboring masses as a 'popular' government is revealed to be simply a temporary mask of the imperialist bourgeoisie. This mask is now discarded. The bourgeoisie apparently thinks that the workers are sufficiently deluded and weakened; that the immediate danger of a revolution has passed. The ministry of Daladier is only, in accordance with the design of the bourgeoisie, an unavoidable stage in passing over to a stronger and more substantial government of the imperialist dictatorship."

—Leon Trotsky, "The Decisive Hour" (December 1938)

Today, in the heated exchanges between the right-wing government and the parliamentary opposition, one of the leaders of the conservative majority, Fran ois L otard, head of the UDF (Union of French Democracy) denounced "this seeking refuge in the past which evokes Marshal P tain, while forgetting to say that it was the Chamber of Deputies of the

Popular Front which brought us to that... We will have no complacency, either for the Popular Front or for the National Front." As *Le Monde* (18 March) editorialized, this was an echo of the sinister slogan of Léotard's forebears in the late 1930s, "better Hitler than the Popular Front!" Meanwhile, *Le Figaro Magazine* (1 March), house organ of the by now not-so-New Right, publishes yet another vile apology for the Vichy regime. This really is proto-fascist propaganda. But the reformists cannot disguise the fact that the Popular Front did prepare the way for Pétain.

One need only to look at the history of François Mitterrand, who began his political career in 1934 as a member of the National Volunteers, a satellite of the Croix de Feu (Cross of Fire), an ultra-rightist veterans organization. He later became an official of the secret police of the Vichy regime, where he put together lists of Communists, Socialists and other "anti-national elements." For this dirty work Mitterrand received the "Francisque," the highest award of the Vichy regime. Opportunistically switching sides during the war, afterwards Mitterrand founded the tiny UDSR (Democratic Socialist Union of the Resistance) as an anti-Communist vehicle. He became a member of virtually every government of the Fourth Republic, lasting from 1945 to De Gaulle's takeover in 1958. Mitterrand was minister eleven times, including colonial minister, and justice minister during the Algerian war, signing a decree giving full powers to the military (i.e., the green light for the dirty war) and signing a death sentence for a PCF member of the Algerian FLN, Fernand Yveton. Mitterrand is the man who in the Fifth Republic became the perennial presidential candidate of the "left" (in 1965 and 1974) until he was finally elected in 1981 and reelected in 1988.

The former Vichy secret policeman turned Socialist Mitterrand acted as a fireman for the bourgeoisie. As the flames of the tumultuous 1968 worker-student revolt were dying down, he rushed to offer himself as president as the man who could definitively put out the conflagration—and keep it out. And the task conferred by the bourgeoisie on the Union of the Left, this latter-day popular front, was to liquidate the legacy of 1968. Mitterrand adroitly accomplished this mission, enlisting former "far-leftists" to carry out anti-working-class, anti-immigrant, anti-Soviet policies which greatly demoralized the workers and strengthened the right, paving the way for the Chirac-Juppé government and providing the feeding trough for the fascist National Front.

From Millerand to Mitterrand, "socialist ministerialism" has been the antechamber to right-wing reaction. As Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Pro-



RAPHO

Popular Front paved the way for fascism. Marshal Pétain, bonapartist dictator of Nazi-allied Vichy France, was voted into power in 1940 by the Chamber of Deputies that elected Popular Front government in 1936. Here, Pétain being tried for war crimes in July 1945, for which he was hanged.

gram (1938), "People's Fronts' on the one hand—fascism on the other; these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution." Nor is this limited to France: in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the Stalinists beheaded the proletarian revolution on the altar of the Republic, paving the way for bloody victory of Franco; in Indonesia, the CP's disastrous support to the nationalist Sukarno led to the 1965 CIA-sponsored massacre of more than a million Communists; in Chile, Salvador

Allende's Unidad Popular led to the Pinochet coup in 1973. Historical experience throughout this century shows that *the popular front means workers blood.*

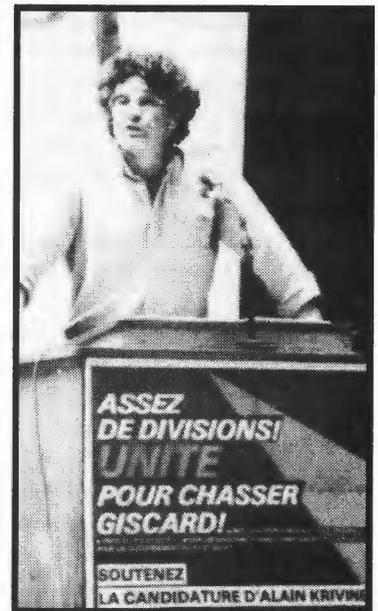
It is up to the Trotskyists to drive home this truth in the struggle to forge a genuinely Bolshevik-Leninist party, a party which can break the stranglehold of the reformists over the working class, a party which can provide the revolutionary leadership to mobilize the exploited and oppressed to crush the fascists in the egg, and open the road not to new Vichys but to new Red Octobers. ■



Gamma

François Mitterrand (right) being received by Marshal Pétain, head of the Nazi-collaborationist regime during World War II. Mitterrand compiled dossiers on Communists for the secret police and received the highest award of Vichy France.

France



Left: Pole of respectability: Alain Krivine (far right) rubs shoulders with leaders of new popular front in formation. From left: Jean-Pierre Chevènement (Citizens Movement), Jean-Michel Baylet (Radicals), Lionel Jospin (Socialist Party), Robert Hue (Communist Party) and Dominique Voynet (Greens). Right: Krivine in 1981, when he declared “far left” part of the Mitterrand majority.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Ex-Far Left in the Reformist Swamp

Friedrich Engels wrote in his 1885 introduction to Karl Marx’s pamphlet, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that “France is the land where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are summarised have been stamped in the sharpest outlines.” It was in France that the greatest of the bourgeois revolutions broke out in 1789, and here too occurred the first incipient experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the 1871 Paris Commune. In this century, France has experienced sharp social and political crises with striking regularity every decade or two. The tumultuous French May/June 1968 worker-student struggles were the high point of the radical upsurge of the 1960s. As a result of the 1968 events, it was in France that the largest “far left” took shape, with three different organizations claiming to be Trotskyist, each counting several thousand members and supporters.

In recent years, following the capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe during 1989-92 culminating in the destruction of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state, there has been a generalized bourgeois assault on the gains of the workers

movement in West Europe. However, the present “post-Soviet” period has also seen strong resistance to the capitalist rampage. The November/December 1995 strike movement in France was the largest and most extended working-class mobilization in West Europe since 1968. Even though it ended in defeat, called off at the decisive moment by the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats who feared the explosive consequences of a frontal confrontation with the state, the struggles of the workers and oppressed have continued. The nationwide French truckers’ strike that shut down road transport for two weeks in November 1996 has been followed by an outpouring of opposition to a new anti-immigrant law, and the largest-ever demonstrations against the fascist National Front. Yet every one of these struggles has been stymied for one central reason: lack of a revolutionary leadership.

Often, the insurgent workers’ fire has been directed as much at their own sellout leaders as against the class enemy. In Italy in 1992, union tops covered behind plexiglas police shields as metal workers heaved bolts at them for signing away the *scala mobile*, the sliding scale of wages that was a minimal protection against the ravages of inflation. In November/December 1995, the French Communist (PCF) and Socialist (PS) leaders in France kept a deliberately low profile, fearful that

direct intervention would backfire against them. The huge march of over 100,000 in Paris this past February 22 in defense of immigrants, although it was a demonstration of "the left," was organized largely outside the framework of the PS/PCF and partly against these parties that help whip up anti-"foreigner" chauvinism. And in the March 29 demonstration of 50,000 in Strasbourg against the National Front, Socialist Party chief Lionel Jospin tried to hide halfway back in the line of march. Even then he was greeted with vituperation against the PS.

The political bankruptcy of the existing reformist leaderships is manifest to all, not least to themselves. In its editorial on Strasbourg, *L'Humanité* (1 April) wrote apologetically that the Communist Party "is coming out of the hard crisis of Communism, but today it is at the rendezvous." So the PCF made it to Strasbourg...to submerge itself in a sea of "citizens." Across the political spectrum of the left there is a dramatic "red shift" to the right. Ex-Stalinists who are still called "Communist" want to rebaptize themselves as Social Democrats, while social democrats from Blair in Britain to Jospin in France to D'Alema in Italy want to be born again as bourgeois Clinton Democrats. And the former "red '68ers" of the French "far left" have long since become pink parlor socialists. Having amply demonstrated their loyalty to French capitalism through a dozen years of the reign of Socialist president François Mitterrand, they are now getting in on the ground floor of a new class-collaborationist popular front.

But the working class, immigrant populations and their supporters are locked in a hard struggle with the bourgeoisie. What they urgently need is a party like the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky, a party that can "extend and intensify every defensive struggle, transforming it into an attack on capitalist society," as the Third Congress of the Communist International called for in 1923. The alternative is ignominious defeat.

"Socialist" Managers for French Capital

The parliamentary reformist left in France is widely discredited, and justly so, as a pillar of the status quo of corruption, mass unemployment and anti-immigrant chauvinism. This is true above all of Jospin's Socialists. The PS, a loose federation of administrators of *dirigiste* (heavily state-"directed") French capitalism and CIA-financed anti-Communist labor fakers, has actually come out *against* most recent struggles. In 1995, PS leader Jospin voted for Juppé's "reform" of pension laws. As hundreds of thousands were in the streets demonstrating against the government attacks, social-democratic CFDT union federation chief Nicole Notat *supported* this gutting of social security. Six months later, in payment for services rendered and in order to punish the other social-democratic labor federation, Force Ouvrière (FO), for its role in the protests, the government rewarded Notat by giving the CFDT control of the national health insurance fund. This source of millions of francs in salaries for union functionaries and union dues had been held by FO since 1967. On the issue of immigration, PS deputies absented themselves from the chamber during the first reading of the Debré Law last December.

A number of former far-leftists have made their careers in

the PS, this mélange of labor lieutenants and social-technocratic managers of French capital. Among those who graduated from café revolutionaries to salon social democrats are Régis Debray, ex-Castroite become Mitterrand advisor (and admiring biographer of General Charles De Gaulle), and several ex-leaders of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), such as Henri Weber. The Gauche Socialiste (Socialist Left) tendency led by Julien Dray (ex-LCR) and Harlem Désir (SOS-Racisme) is currently calling on the French capitalist state (in the person of Interior Minister Louis Debré!) to outlaw the National Front. Meanwhile, others of this "Generation Ex," such as Jean-Christophe Cambadélis (formerly of Pierre Lambert's PCI, now in charge of the PS' relations with other groups), are militantly pro-Jospin.

In 1924, Trotsky wrote that "The Socialist Party represents an apparatus for attracting workers into the camp of the 'radical' bourgeoisie" (introduction to *The First Five Years of the Communist International*). One could say that today the PS serves as an employment agency for retired far leftists seeking a second career in (capitalist) government service. But for those seeking to really "Stop Le Pen" and to seriously combat the attacks on immigrants, the Socialists have become a dirty word. In Strasbourg on March 29, when PS leader Jospin showed up, he was greeted with catcalls and insults from the antifascist crowd. Some yelled "Yoyo go home" and "Politicians go to the rear," while others cried out the initials of the Socialist Party: "P as in *pourri* (rotten), S as in *salaud* (creep)." (This was a takeoff on the popular chant against the National Front, "F as in fascist, N as in Nazi.")

PCF Mutates, Tricolor Remains

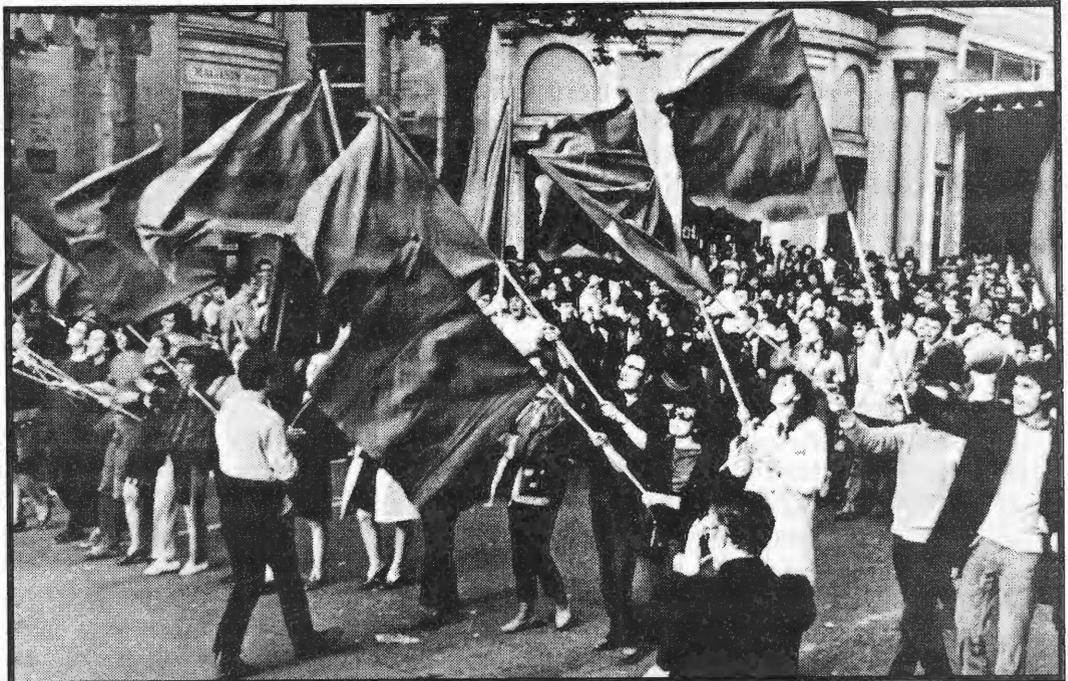
The Communist Party is now trying to make a comeback after seeing its electoral scores sink to barely more than the votes received by the pseudo-Trotskyists that the PCF used to derisively dismiss as "*groupuscules*" (grouplets). The PCF leadership around Robert Hue would like to drop its "Communist" trappings so that its brand name could correspond to the social-democratic politics it has long followed. At its 29th Congress last December, the PCF adopted the slogan "*mutation*" (change) as its watchword. But these ex-Stalinists have been mutating for some time now. At earlier congresses the PCF dropped any token reference to "democratic centralism" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat." At this congress Hue replaced "working class" and "working people," terms which he found "terribly inconvenient," with the more convenient "citizens."

So what does the PCF stand for today? The Congress resolution calls for "communist modernity," emphasizing "the primacy of the individual, of personal intervention, of democracy" while exalting "the original French conception of citizenship, of the Republic, inherited from the Revolution of 1789." And as always, the PCF accuses French rulers of "putting in peril the nation itself, its sovereignty, its identity, its Republican values." The blathering about the role of the individual is copied straight out of the campaign playbooks of American bourgeois politicians. It is cynical preparation for voting to eliminate social welfare measures on the grounds that they supposedly "stifle initia-

“tive” because “the individual” is not afraid of starving to death. Hue & Co.’s attempt to wrap themselves in the tricolor flag at least has a certain consistency: from the time it embraced reformism in the 1930s Popular Front through the World War II Resistance to its late ’70s Eurocommunist talk of “socialism in French colors,” PCF leaders have portrayed themselves as a party of French nationalism. This is the terrain on which they seek to compete with the fascist National Front today.

The PCF’s media consultants with their focus groups and sidewalk polls counsel the PCF to “modernize” its image, to go from “Uncle Joe” Stalin to an avuncular Robert Hue. They even stopped singing the *Internationale*, replacing it with *Tous ensemble* (Everyone together), theme song of the 1995 strike movement. In this vein, the 29th Congress document calls for “a new political construction” on the left, “a new union based on citizen intervention.” The new construction would be “strategic” rather than an occasional electoral alliance. This recalls the campaign in 1989 by leaders of the Italian Communist Party to transform it into a new political formation, dubbed “*la cosa*” (the thing) before they settled on the name of Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). Today “the thing” is the leading party in the capitalist government, in coalition with former Christian Democrats and Bank of Italy technocrats, and supported from the outside by Rifondazione Comunista. By hog-tying the workers, this government of the parliamentary center-left is now ramming through the same drastic cuts in social programs that the right-wing coalition of Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia and the fascist MSI/AN couldn’t achieve in the face of mass workers’ resistance.

In fact the *function* of popular fronts is to chain the exploited to their exploiters in the name of progress, democracy, antifascism, etc. The reformist PCF and PS are what Lenin called bourgeois workers parties; that is, there is a contradiction between their organizational character as parties based on the working class and the pro-capitalist politics of the leadership, who are committed not to the revolutionary interests of the proletariat but to maintaining bourgeois rule. The popular front serves to suppress that contradiction by formally subordinating the workers to a bourgeois political formation, the coalition. Thus in the first imperialist world war, most social-democratic parties voted mili-

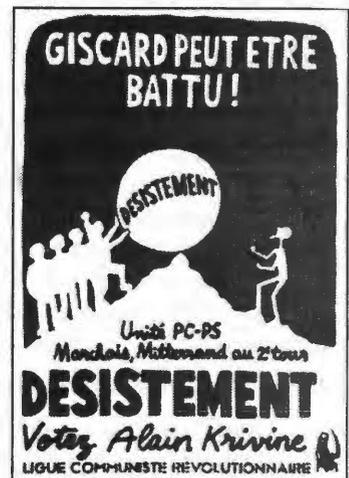


Radical youth marching in 29 May 1968 demonstration during general strike. In those days, the LCR chanted “The only solution, revolution!” In 1981 Mitterrand election, LCR changed this to: “Only one solution, *désistement*” (standing down on second round of elections in favor of Mitterrand).

tary credits and even joined wartime governments of “national unity.” In World War II, social democrats and the by-then reformist Stalinists lined up behind the “democratic” imperialists.

Hue would dearly like his wished-for “new political construction” (*la chose?*) to do for the PCF what *la cosa* did for the leaders of the PCI—allow it to become a respectable social democratic party, fully acceptable to the capitalists with no more encumbering political baggage from its Stalinist past. But Hue has problems. In the first place, in the French political spectrum that space is already occupied by the Socialist Party, unlike in Italy where the PSI collapsed as its leader, former prime minister Bettino Craxi, fled to self-exile in Tunisia to avoid jail on corruption charges. Moreover, some of the old-line PCF bureaucrats are wary of a new Union of the Left with the Socialists, remembering how they were “marginalized” in the last one, being shunted aside for minister’s portfolios while the Communist vote plunged.

Meanwhile, the once monolithic PCF is fracturing. On the one hand, there are the diehard Stalinists: the party’s Pas-de-Calais regional federation in the north voted against the document of the 29th congress, saying that the party leadership had become reformist and was “abandoning socialism” (actually that hap-



pened more than 60 years ago). This line is also taken by the Coordination Communiste tendency, with support in the north and in the Aubervilliers suburb of Paris. On the other wing of the Communist Party, the Refondateurs current wants to immediately dissolve the PCF into a "common house of the communists" together with various former PCF dissidents and possibly including Alain Krivine's LCR. The Refondateurs are looking for an even broader electoral bloc, a "pole of radicalism (*radicalité*)" to the left of the Socialists, which would include the left wing of the Greens, the Citizens Movement (MC) of Jean-Paul Chevènement and the Convention for a Progressive Alternative (CAP) of Marcel Rigout and Charles Fiterman, former PCF ministers under Mitterrand.

While it might take on more left-wing airs than a bloc with the PS, this popular front lash-up necessarily stands for "Republican" French nationalism directed against "foreigners." Chevènement's chauvinism is notorious: the former Socialist technocrat-minister signed a petition with ultra-rightist Philippe Villiers calling for French families to have more children, and signed appeals against the Europe of Maastricht in league with immigrant-bashing former interior minister Pasqua. And the CAP's sole parliamentary deputy, Jean-Pierre Brard, was criticized at its recent congress for the mistreatment of Malian immigrants in Montreuil, where he is mayor (*Le Monde*, 25 March).

The Communist Party no less than the Socialists helped prepare the terrain for the growth of the fascist National Front with decades of nationalist, anti-immigrant policies. This was directly derived from the Stalinist PCF's reformist loyalty to French capitalism, which it shares with the PS and the various petty-bourgeois formations in their orbit. And in this they are joined by the remnants of the "far left" of yesteryear, today indistinguishable from the other components of the new popular front under construction.

LCR: 100 Percent in the Popular Front

Indeed, what was striking in the recent mass demonstrations was the absence of any sizable militant left. In Strasbourg, *Le Monde* (1 April) commented:

"The left? Where is the left? The word is not written on the banners. In the streets of Strasbourg, Saturday, March 29, the left is everywhere, and at the same time nowhere.... One knows also that the left is against the National Front. But the crowd which marched in the Alsatian capital is only a pale reflection—perhaps because of its young age—of the militant left such as one saw marching over many years."

The LCR was there, of course, but mainly in the form of Alain Krivine marching in the blue-white-red line of reformist and bourgeois political leaders, and as anonymous activists of Ras l'Front. It's all consistent, as today the tamed New Leftists want nothing more than to be part of a "pole of *radicalité*" (really, a pole of respectability) in a new pop front.

Krivine's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire is the French affiliate of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, which falsely claims to be Trotskyist and indeed to be the Fourth International. Growing out of the 1968 worker-student struggles, only a few years later French Mandelites were calling to vote for Mitterrand on the second (decisive) round of

the 1974 presidential elections. By the time of the 1981 vote, when the LCR again plumped for Mitterrand and the Union of the Left, Krivine proclaimed that the "far left" was the "third component of the majority" (after the PS and PCF). Actually, it was the fourth—after the token bourgeois parties—and its real function was as the fifth wheel of the popular front. Now, finally, the LCR has made it into the big time. Krivine finally had his long-awaited dinner with PCF leader Robert Hue (at La Chaumière, Hue paid) at the end of January. And in Strasbourg on March 29, there he was marching together with the leaders of the reformist Socialist and Communist parties and the bourgeois Greens and Radical Socialists.

Last year, when Hue invited the LCR leader to a PCF-sponsored forum of leaders of "the left," *Libération* (4 April 1996) headlined, "Krivine Star for a Night at Bercy." The LCR's paper *Rouge* waxed lyrical, calling the encounter "a historic event," because it was "the first time that all the sensibilities of the left could compare their points of view and their propositions." Neglecting to mention that these "sensibilities" extended to the bourgeois Radicals and Greens seated down the table from him, Krivine called for a vapid "Entente for Hope" that would include everyone "in solidarity with the movement of December" (1995)—presumably including the PS and PCF leaders on the stage who played a key role in burying that movement! What can you expect from someone who 15 years ago voted for the Union of the Left, under the slogan "For Tomorrows That Sing"? Did the "tomorrows" of the Union of the Left "sing" for the French workers and immigrants? Not hardly.

Spelling out Krivine's proposition, the LCR political bureau issued a manifesto, "Build the Entente of Hope" (*Rouge*, 6 June 1996). In this fundamental document, addressed to the "people of the left," Krivine & Co. made not one mention of capitalism or socialism, much less socialist revolution, and called for "a new party of social transformation"! The manifesto's maximum demands are: "For an end to the authoritarianism of the rulers, for a democratic break with the Fifth Republic!" and for "the construction of another Europe than that of Maastricht" (so much for the Trotskyist call for a socialist United States of Europe).

Today, as it positions itself as a constituent part of a new popular front in gestation, Krivine's organization is thoroughly reformist. Occasionally, the LCR makes a "left" gesture, as in the election in Gardanne last fall, where it ran together with and supported the victorious PCF candidate for mayor over the promi-

Krivine vedette d'un soir à Bercy

Le leader trotskiste a adopté le discours que le PCF n'ose plus tenir.

On attendait en face de la salle, plutôt étroite jusqu'ici, s'est soudainement libérée. Heureusement d'entendre un discours que Robert Hue n'avait plus tenu depuis son départ de la présidence de la Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR). Alain Krivine est le seul de nos dirigeants qui ait osé se rapprocher d'un tel discours. Il était accompagné de son secrétaire général, Jean-Pierre Chevènement (MDC), Dominique Voynet (Verts), Jean-Christophe Baylet (Radical), Robert Hue n'était déjà plus là. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée.

Alain Krivine a tenu tête à Robert Hue, le secrétaire général du PCF, au moment de la gauche. Bercy l'a impliqué dans un discours, en résumant ses accords avec le PS. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée. L'entente de décembre a été oubliée.

car, Les députés ont été élus par les électeurs. Le scrutin a été libre. Le scrutin a été libre. Le scrutin a été libre.

"Krivine, Star for a Night at Bercy." *Libération* (4 April 1996) reports on LCR leader's coming-out party as full partner in popular front.

nent Radical Bernard Kouchner backed by the Socialists. In *Le Monde*, Krivine hailed this as bringing together "all the components of a resolutely anti-liberal left," to carry out a "100 percent left" policy. This was not a call for working-class political independence from the bourgeoisie on the LCR's part, but a maneuver to squeeze Jospin and pressure Hue into an electoral bloc (the "pole of radicalité"). In fact, there was a real opening for revolutionary agitation in Gardanne, a mining town where

half the population is North African immigrants. But that would have had to go beyond the ballot box to mobilizing the workers in action to drive the fascists out!

Ever since the Communist Party ministers were dumped from the Socialist cabinets in 1984, and these ministerial "communists" then broke with the PCF because they considered Georges Marchais insufficiently Mitterrandist, the LCR has tried to make blocs with these ex-PCF ministers (Juquin, Fiterman, Ralite) and with the ex-PS minister Chevènement. Krivine's policy was one maneuver after another on the fringes of the popular front. What this means in real terms was shown during last November's nationwide road transport strike. The French truckers shut down the country to protest regulations which didn't pay them for down time (loading and waiting between assignments), regulations that were introduced by Charles Fiterman when he was PCF transport minister for Mitterrand (and before he was a bloc partner of the LCR)!

Leading up to the LCR congress last November, there was some discontent with the Krivine leadership's calls for a retreaded popular front. Echoing the PCF's "new political construction," the LCR majority called for "a new political force connected to social movements," underlining that this "will not arise directly as a revolutionary alternative to the reformist workers movement." In classic popular-front language, it called for "a unitary orientation toward the workers movement such as it is," and for "our participation in a united front of the left against the FN." Shades of Dimitrov. This orientation led to some dispute within the LCR. A dissident Tendency R (for "Revolution") characterized the majority's line as "create two, three, many Gardannes," while pointing out that this subordinates the LCR politically to the PCF or PS. However, the "alternative" proposed by this tendency is for "building a new labor party [*parti des travailleurs*] which responds to the aspirations shown in all the social movements



Eric Franceschi/Libération

Supporters of LCR-led Ras L'Front (Fed Up with the National Front). Indicative of deepening reformism, LCR largely operates through single-issue groups. Building a Leninist party is key to smashing the fascist FN.

and which sets its course toward a society without exploitation and without oppression" (*Rouge*, 24 October 1996). Such a party could be a thoroughly reformist party, as long as it bandied about a little rhetoric about socialism.

For the leaders of the LCR, *la guerre est finie* (the war is over). The student agitators who led workers and youth into the Charléty stadium on 28 May 1968 to chants of "Don't sign!" (the Grenelle accords with the De

Gaulle government), by December 1995 had become medium and upper-echelon union bureaucrats who "know how to end a strike"—and they did. LCR supporters and other leftists expelled from the CFDT formed their own union in the PTT (postal/telecommunications) and railroads, SUD (for "Solidaire, Unitaire, Democratique"). In mid-December 1995, SUD officials played a key role in sending postal workers back when union tops called off strikes. Recently, two leaders of the SUD postal workers union published an article in *Le Monde* (25 February) headlined, "For a Trade Unionism of Social Transformation." As with Krivine's call for a new "party of social transformation," this meaningless phrase really means "not socialism."

Lutte Ouvrière: Competing on Le Pen's Terrain

The second of the "big three" of French pseudo-Trotskyism is Lutte Ouvrière (LO). Quite a few of the depleted numbers of ostensible Trotskyists in Europe (including both the Tendency R and another minority grouping in the LCR, the Unite and Build Tendency) were impressed with the score racked up by LO's Arlette Laguiller in the 1995 elections, where she won 5.3 percent of the total vote compared to barely over 9 percent for the PCF. Sensing a potential for a protest vote against the staid *immobilisme* personified by the crew at Place Colonel-Fabien (PCF headquarters), Laguiller put on a more militant veneer and the media obliged by presenting her as "the revolutionary candidate." But aside from some rhetorical flourishes, LO's politics are scarcely to the left of the Communist Party. Where the PCF's Hue calls for a "new political construction" and the LCR's Krivine conjures up a "new party of social transformation" (while both LCR minorities want an undefined "labor party"), in the competition to see who can come up with the most puerile subreformist "alternative" to the discredited French left LO's Laguiller bid

was for "the creation of a much larger party than ours" which would "resolutely" stand for "political defense of the exploited."

Lutte Ouvrière's politics are miserably reformist, but with a twist: seeking to connect up with grass-roots sentiment of *la France profonde* (the depths of France), it ends up celebrating social backwardness among the workers and competing with Le Pen on the terrain of French chauvinism. Indeed, LO has long denied that the National Front is fascist. Thus in the resolution on the French domestic situation at its last congress, LO declared: "This verbal radicalism [of the FN] is not sufficient to make the National Front a fascist party in the full sense of the term, because it lacks a social base" (*Lutte de Classe* No. 24, December 1996). This is no abstract matter. In 1987 Laguiller along with the PS' Jospin and the PCF scandalously debated the FN. It should be an elemental reflex for socialists, much less ostensible Trotskyists, that one does not discuss with fascists. These are racist murderers, not debating partners! More recently, LO has "resolutely" picked up many of the immigrant-bashing themes being pushed by all the parliamentary parties, from right to left. Thus under the guise of feminism and defending secular education, LO has repeatedly demanded (in Creil, Villeneuve-la-Garenne, Natua and elsewhere) that schoolgirls who wear the Islamic head scarf, the *hijab*, be expelled from school! LO accused right-wing education minister Bayrou of being soft on *hijab*-wearing girls, and in October 1994 Laguiller's party even demonstrated in Lille against North African students protesting school expulsions.

To be sure, the Islamic *hijab* is a symbol of patriarchal oppression of women. Ultimately, such enforced standards of "modesty" lead to the head-to-toe shroud of the *chador*, imposed by the Iranian mullahs and Afghan Taliban, and *pardah*, the entombing of women in domestic slavery. Communists fight against all such anti-women practices. We honor the women Bolshevik agitators who risked their lives to organize Central Asian women in the 1920s and '30s to discard the veil in the face of the counterrevolutionary Bashmachi revolt against Soviet power.

In the 1980s, when most of the left lined up with Western imperialism against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, with social democrat Mitterrand acting as point man in Europe for this anti-Soviet Cold War II, the international Spartacist tendency forthrightly proclaimed, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" explaining that the fate of millions of Afghan women was at stake. Today the tragic consequences of the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan are being felt by Afghan women thrown out of their jobs, subjected to the veil, confined to the home and stoned to death for "adultery." In Afghanistan, defense of women wearing Western dress was a real fight for women's liberation and against Islamic feudal oppression. But to demand in France that female secondary school students of North African background be expelled from the *lycées* for wearing Islamic head scarves, as LO does, is a vicious racist anti-immigrant act, whose effects are to segregate and deny education to minority women.

This is part of a broader program of French chauvinism put forward by LO in the name of fighting Islamic fundamentalism. Thus these "socialists" offer the imperialist state advice in how to better implement its terrorist repression of Afri-

can immigrants. Referring to the anti-immigrant sweeps, codenamed "Vigipirate," which were imposed by Mitterrand and Pasqua in late 1995, Arlette Laguiller editorialized: "If the government really wanted Vigipirate to have a chance to work, it would try to win over the immigrant and particularly North African population to it" (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 20 October 1995). Her editorial went on, saying "it's necessary to show to this population that it has nothing to fear from the Vigipirate plan." But the North African immigrant population knows that it has *everything* to fear from Vigipirate. The task of communists is to mobilize the whole of the working class against this racist state terror. What LO does is to offer its advice on how to improve the efficacy of anti-immigrant repression by getting the victims to acquiesce in their oppression.

Today, in the heat of a full-fledged assault on immigrants, Lutte Ouvrière once again capitulates to French chauvinism. Last summer, LO only belatedly took up defense of the *sans papiers*, the undocumented immigrants occupying Paris churches—even then merely calling on the government to "negotiate" with them. Then in a *Lutte Ouvrière* (21 February) editorial on the eve of the huge Paris march against the new deportation bill, Arlette Laguiller writes dismissively: "The intellectuals who call for disobeying the Debré immigration law are, in their large majority, far from the concerns of the working people, including of the large majority of immigrant workers." What a disgusting, cynical cover-up! If the participation of workers and labor in the protests against the racist immigration law and the fascist threat has been minimal, *this is centrally the responsibility of the reformist pseudo-socialists* (including LO) *who have refused to mobilize the working class against the fascist threat, and who for years have promoted anti-"foreigner" sentiment.*

Lutte Ouvrière would pretend that deportation laws and anti-immigrant repression are of no "concern" to working people. How obscene! This brazen subterfuge serves the same purpose as Socialist Party leader Jospin's statement that "immigration is not the primary issue in France today": it is an excuse for refusing to fight the FN (which Jospin, like LO, denies is fascist) and the Chirac/Juppé government head on in defense of immigrants. For both LO and the PS, this directly reflects their reformism, that is, their loyalty to the French bourgeoisie and its state. It is an expression of their parliamentary cretinism, and in LO's case, of its characteristic economist cretinism as well. Today, LO makes left-sounding noises about the danger of a new Union of the Left. But in the 1981 elections, when the question of voting for Mitterrand's Union of the Left was posed point blank, LO called to vote for Mitterrand on the second round "without illusions but without reservations" (*Lutte Ouvrière* No. 674, 2 May 1981), just as it voted for the popular front in 1973, 1974 and 1978.

To justify its virtual abstention from struggle in defense of immigrants, Lutte Ouvrière cynically appeals to Marxist orthodoxy. "There is no 'positive policy' on immigration matters; there is no 'good solution' within the framework of the capitalist system," it writes (*Lutte de Classe* No. 22, September 1996). Quite correct. In the case of social democrats like

SOS Racisme and the Gauche Socialiste current in the PS, their "positive" program is *immigration quotas*—i.e., to regularize the supply of Third World labor for French capital. A smattering of centrist and New Left-derived groups (such as the Pouvoir Ouvrier [Workers Power] group in France) call for "down with the borders," a utopian demand which amounts to a call on the capitalist state to dissolve itself. This is just as illusory as calling for the police to disarm, or for the abolition of the army: ultimately such slogans reveal reformist illusions in the possibility of reforming the state.

While Marxists oppose all bourgeois immigration laws as inherently discriminatory, we also fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. But for LO, the statement that there is no "positive policy" on immigration under capitalism serves as an excuse not to actively fight the racist immigration policies of the capitalist state. While saying that "obviously" it was necessary to be in "solidarity" with the undocumented immigrants occupying the Saint-Bernard church last summer, LO's solidarity was devoid of any content, except for a half-sentence saying that all workers should have the same rights. Recently, its fig-leaf slogan to cover its abstentionist policy was to call for "no to reinforcement of anti-immigrant laws." And those already on the books?

Lambertistes: From the IMF to NATO

As for the third major ostensibly Trotskyist organization in France, Pierre Lambert's OCI/PCI, it essentially liquidated itself into a labor party front, the Parti des Travailleurs (PT), where it controls behind the scenes as the "Internationalist Communist Current." In addition, while the ex-PCI proclaimed the Fourth International refounded as of June 1993, its PT façade simultaneously set up an international counterpart, which goes by the name of "Entente des Travailleurs et des Peuples" (Entente of the Workers and Peoples) in French or "Liaison Committee for a Workers International" in English. (The Lambertiste grouping should not be confused with the "Committee for a Workers International" of Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in Britain, formerly the Militant Labour tendency.) This lash-up claims to be following in the footsteps of the First International, by including "all the genuine currents in the workers' movement, respecting their diversity...." In reality, the purpose of all these fronts within fronts is to have an amorphous social-democratic current, in which they can hobnob with the most egregiously rightist elements, "respecting their diversity" of course.

And this "*entente cordiale*" extends well beyond the limits of the workers movement. The Lambertistes' "Liaison Committee" is constantly calling for campaigns to get together with dissident capitalist politicians. In 1993, it called a day of action against the North American Free Trade Agreement and against privatizations, with the aim of sidling up to the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as well as various union bureaucrats in the U.S. While Lutte Ouvrière advises Chirac on how to more efficiently implement his "Vigipirate" campaign of repression against North Africans in France, Lambert's "Liaison Committee" visited the International Monetary Fund in Washington in

February 1994 to lobby the IMF about its austerity cutback policies. Their delegation included Daniel Gluckstein, organization man of the PT/CCI in France; a Mexican PRD deputy; and the leader of the Algerian Lambertiste group, Louiza Hanoune. Her advice to the international bankers was to support the Algerian opposition (including the fundamentalist FIS) rather than the military government.

In France as well, the PT seeks the company of all manner of social democrats and minor bourgeois figures. Its domestic campaign for 1995 focused on "defense of communal democracy," a device for making a bloc with a hodgepodge of municipal councilors, deputy mayors and the like. Currently, PT is trying to form an anti-Maastricht coalition with sundry social-chauvinists, particularly the PCF Stalinist hards around Coordination Communiste. (The CoordComm, however, denounced the Lambertiste initiative for not mentioning the "risks" to French "national sovereignty" posed by Maastricht.) And, of course, there is Lambert's old standby, a coalition to defend of secularism (*laïcité*), which for decades has served as the meeting ground between bourgeois Radicals and reformist social democrats. These various coalitions of front groups are nothing but miniature popular fronts.

But the main focus of the Lambertistes in France is on extending their organizational clout in the social-democratic Force Ouvrière (FO—Workers Strength) union federation. The PT currently has the national organization secretary of FO as well as the press, the FO bodies of 17 *départements* (administrative subdivisions of France) and four or five regional federations (according to the LCR's *Rouge*, 7 March 1996). In effect, they run the FO in conjunction with its national leader Marc Blondel. PT leader Gluckstein freely admits that this union federation is "led by a reformist current," and it doesn't bother him that FO was for years the recipient of substantial CIA funding during the Cold War. After all, the Lambertistes also were heavily involved during the 1980s in building "Solidarity with Solidarność," that anti-Soviet, Polish nationalist company union of the CIA and the Vatican which spearheaded counterrevolution in Poland. For Lambert, who befouls of the name of Trotskyism, any rotten bloc with social democrats and the bourgeoisie was permitted in the name of anti-Stalinism.

Virtually the entire pseudo-Trotskyist spectrum internationally, including the "big three" (LCR, LO, Lambertistes) in France and a host of smaller currents (e.g., the Morenoites), campaigned for solidarity with Walesa's Polish nationalist Solidarność. This linked them in an anti-Soviet chain with Mitterrand's Cold War social democracy and the imperialist overlords in Washington (and the pope of counterrevolution in the Vatican). In contrast, the international Spartacist tendency stood by the Trotskyist program of unconditional defense of the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states against the threat of capitalist restoration, calling to "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" History has tragically proven how right this stand was, as Solidarność led the counterrevolution in Poland, which has meant misery for the working people as well as persecution of Roma, assaults on women's rights (abortion) and pervasive clerical reaction.

And now Lambert & Co. have another dirty deal going, this

time in Slovakia. In March 1995, the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) of Jan Luptak sponsored an international conference together with the Lambertiste Entente/Liaison Committee, with delegates from 38 countries, calling for a "Third Open World Conference for a Workers' International" (which was held last October). In its election program, the ZRS proclaimed itself opposed to participation by Slovakia in NATO. However, the ZRS then joined the Slovak government, in coalition with the bourgeois Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the ultranationalist Slovak National Party (partisans of the pro-Nazi Slovak protectorate of Monsignor Tiso during World War II). In doing so, the ZRS signed the program of that government which calls for joining "the European and trans-Atlantic political, economic and security structures"—i.e., to join the Western imperialist military alliance. A ZRS member, Josef Kalman, was named chairman of the government committee in charge of negotiating the integration of Slovakia into NATO and the European Union, while another was...the Minister for Privatizations (from *Solidaire* No. 10, 7 August 1996).

Reforge an Authentically Trotskyist Fourth International!

We of the Internationalist Group, expelled last year from the International Communist League in a bureaucratic purge, stand on the long record of the ICL in aggressively fighting for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. This was a constant focus of our work in France. In 1981, in close consultation with the International Secretariat of the Spartacist tendency, the Ligue Trotskyiste (LTF) denounced the PCF's vile attack on Malian workers in Vitry, declaring "Turn the Bulldozers Against the Bourgeoisie." In the '81 elections, as in those of the 1970s, the LTF called for no vote to any party of the PS-led popular front as the rest of the "far left" was calling to vote for the anti-immigrant, anti-Soviet, anti-working-class Union of the Left. In the winter of 1983-84, the LTF fought for the unions to undertake concrete measures to aid the largely North African immigrant workers strike at Talbot. In the spring of 1993, the Ligue Trotskyiste fought for worker/immigrant mobilizations in the 17th arrondissement of Paris, after cops murdered an African immigrant inside the police station there. In early 1995, at the time of a strike of largely immigrant workers at the Flins auto plant outside Paris, the LTF put out a leaflet calling on the workers movement to defend immigrants, and presenting a transitional program leading to a workers government ("The Flins Strike Must Unleash a Working-Class Anti-Capitalist Offensive," *Le Bolchévique* No. 132, March-April 1995).

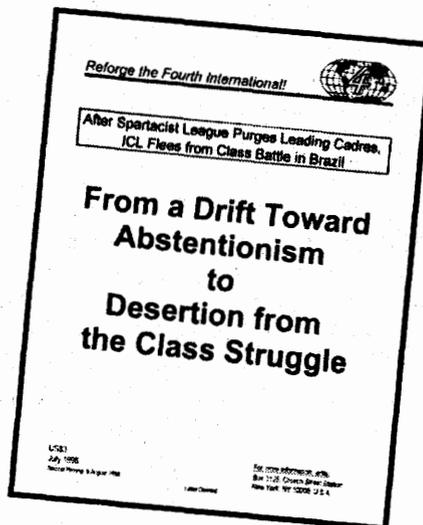
By the end of 1995, this perspective of intervention in the class struggle with the Trotskyist program was gravely threatened. A picture caption in the latest polemic against the Internationalist Group in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 663, 7 March) states: "During December 1995 strike wave in France, our comrades of the LTF emphasized the need to forge a revolutionary party to lead workers' struggles to victory." Actually, under the pressure of the workers mobilizations, the LTF leadership *collapsed*, unable to write a leaflet to intervene in the burgeoning strike movement, and initially deciding to instruct

comrades not to intervene in workplace meetings. This was corrected, and an LTF strike supplement stressing the importance of bringing the private sector with its large component of immigrant workers into the strikes and of building the revolutionary party through intervention in such struggles, was written in the international center.

But this stunning collapse of the French section of the ICL in the face of the biggest working-class struggles since 1968 went barely mentioned in the January 1996 meeting of the International Executive Committee. This was striking considering the enormity of the implosion in the LTF (the entire Central Committee was voted out at an emergency conference), which any serious leadership would want to discuss. Instead of analyzing the origins and the implications for the international of the political capitulation in the midst of a major working-class mobilization in France, the reconfigured International Secretariat pursued an escalating fight first over work in Germany, and then in succeeding months over Mexico and Brazil. In the course of doing so, drawing out the logic of the positions it had assumed, the self-described "new I.S." went from a tendency toward abstentionism to desertion from an important class battle (to remove police from a union in Brazil). The lesson codified by the ICL in

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the fight against the comrades who later formed the Internationalist Group was that this was a period of defeat, and efforts to seek opportunities for intervention were *ipso facto* opportunism.

By the summer of 1996, when thousands of workers and supporters of immigrants rights demonstrated in Paris in defense of the *sans papiers* immigrants fighting deportation, the only reported action by the French section of the ICL was a statement by an LTF supporter at a union assembly. We asked in *The Internationalist* No. 1 what other intervention the LTF made in that struggle, but there has been no response. By today, the conception that a strike could “unleash a working-class anticapitalist offensive,” as called for in the front-page headline of the March-April 1995 *Le Bolchévique*, would be labeled fundamentally deviant by the ICL leadership. Yet the continuing string of working-class struggles in France and elsewhere in Europe today underlines the opening for and urgent necessity to build a revolutionary leadership through active intervention in the class struggle. The fact that the November-December 1995 strikes were ultimately defeated, that the anti-immigrant Juppé Law was passed, that the largest-ever mobilizations against the National Front failed to deliver a sharp blow to the fascists is centrally due to the absence of a genuinely communist leadership.

That is certainly not to be found in the popular-frontist French “far left,” whose politics are counterposed to everything Trotsky fought for. The LCR-LO-PT calls for a party of social transformation, for a large party of the exploited, for a labor party *à la française*; their appeals for an “entente for hope” or for an all-inclusive “workers international,” only prove that they have long hence formally renounced Leninism. The need for a *separate party of the revolutionary vanguard* was at the root of the division at the 1920 Congress of Tours where the majority of the French Socialists went over to the Communists. Today the pretenders to the mantle of the Fourth International want to “overcome” (i.e., undo) the division between the Second and Third Internationals, so they can all find a niche in a broad church social democracy, as many of their former comrades already have in the PS. This may get these *ex-gauchistes* in the good graces of their larger reformist brothers. It only underlines the need for revolutionary leadership for the struggles now unfolding in France and elsewhere Europe.

We in the Internationalist Group have committed our efforts to the fight to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. We stand for a party of irreconcilable opposition to capitalism, to its state, its parties, its labor lieutenants. This can only be built through a hard political fight against the host of class collaborators, both big-time and small; against the parliamentary and ministerial social democrats, actual and aspiring; against dead-end reformists and erratic centrists of all stripes. It requires sharp programmatic combat with those who, rather than drawing the revolutionary conclusions from the colossal defeats suffered by the working class internationally, instead write defeat into their programs, as the ICL leadership is doing. Without a party built on the political legacy of Lenin and Trotsky, the existing misleaders of the class will confine the struggle to what is “possible” under capitalism, and thus, aided



“L’Illustration”/Sygma

Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with Lenin of the October Revolution and founder of the Red Army, addressing departing troops in the campaign against Polish nationalist dictator Pilsudski, summer 1920.

and abetted by latter-day *possibilistes* masquerading as Trotskyists, they will only prepare new defeats. As Trotsky wrote of the Fourth International in its founding program: “There is not and there cannot be a place for it in any of the People’s Fronts. It uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task—the abolition of capitalism’s domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—the proletarian revolution.”

Against the impostors and posturers, reforge a Fourth International that Trotsky would have recognized as his own! ■

“By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralyzing their will to struggle, the People’s Front creates favorable conditions for the victory of fascism. The policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie must be paid for by the proletariat with years of new torments and sacrifice, if not by decades of fascist terror.... The administrative dissolution of the fascist leagues while the bourgeois state apparatus is maintained is, as the Spanish example shows, a lie and a deception. Only the armed workers can resist fascism.”

—Leon Trotsky, “The New Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International” (July 1936)

Mexico

Militarization Made in U.S.A.

Yankee Imperialism Hands Off!

From the Clinton White House and the Pentagon to the Mexican presidential residence in Los Pinos, the capitalist rulers are seriously preparing for an explosion of mass unrest in Mexico. They have good reason to be worried, for their system and their policies are producing the social tinder for a conflagration. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), sold as a guarantee of peace, stability and economic growth, has instead produced Mexico's worst economic depression in this century, the removal of millions of peasants from their lands, a huge drop in workers' wages, mass unemployment and rampant crime in the cities. The instability of Mexico was highlighted by the sudden appearance of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the southern state of Chiapas as NAFTA went into effect on New Year's Day 1994; by the assassinations of the presidential candidate of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), of the PRI's secretary general and of a Catholic cardinal; and by the December 1994 peso crash which shook Wall Street. Washington is well aware that, with a population of more than 95 million in Mexico and another 8 million-plus Mexicans in the U.S., a crisis would quickly be felt on both sides of the 2,000-mile border. And it is moving to do something about it.

As the Mexican armed forces have increased in size by over 40 percent in the last four years, U.S. military equipment has poured into the country at a rate never before seen in history: more than 200 helicopters delivered from to Mexico in the last year, as well as hundreds of tanks and other heavy weaponry. While it is claimed that this is for the "war on drugs," in fact the massive arms build-up is intended to combat rural guerrilla movements that have now surfaced all over southern and central Mexico, and particularly to *suppress urban insurgency*. The more than 3,000 military vehicles imported to Mexico from the U.S. during the first four months of 1994, the period just before the



Jesus Carlos/Impact Visuals

Mexican army burning coca fields. "War on drugs" is ploy to tighten U.S. imperialist domination of Latin America, and wage war on ghettos and barrios at home. The biggest drug traffickers of all have been involved with the CIA. Marxists oppose all laws criminalizing drugs. U.S. hands off Latin America!

last presidential election, included the latest in riot control equipment: at least 18 Commando LAV-150 water cannon and another 16 Cobra armored trucks, equipped with gun ports, plows to remove street barricades, a video recording system to single out individual demonstrators and special guns to shoot indelible dye to mark protest leaders so that they can be picked up by specially trained "snatch squads." This is the weaponry for *a new October 1968 massacre*, when the army surrounded a leftist student demonstration in Mexico City's Tlatelolco plaza and opened fire, killing hundreds.

As the military stepped up its internal patrolling in rural areas from 5.9 million kilometers in the first five months of 1995 to 8 million kilometers in the same period last year, in the urban areas the police apparatus of capitalist state repression is being militarized from top to bottom. In late 1995, the Mexican Congress passed a law setting up a National System of Public Security including representatives of the army in a new national "public security" council to coordinate the nu-

merous police forces. Last July, General Enrique Salgado was named Mexico City's top cop. Formerly in charge of the military district of Guerrero, where the infamous Aguas Blancas massacre of 17 peasants by state police took place in June 1995, Salgado named some 20 generals, colonels and lieutenant colonels to the central police command, and another 30 military officers to divisional offices. In August, when 737 out of the 4,400 agents of the attorney general's office (PGR) were dismissed for corruption, they were replaced with hundreds of military officers in PGR offices around the country. In December, General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo was named to head the institute for drug control.

Various leading mouthpieces of bourgeois opinion expressed concerns about this growing use of the military for internal policing. The Mexico City business daily, *El Financiero* (3 December 1995), published a special report on "Public Security in Crisis" including a section on "The Dangers of Militarization." The *New York Times* (20 October 1996) warned in an editorial about "A Risky New Role for the Mexican Army," saying that if the military should become "a new center of power" this could be "a calamity for Mexico." The ruling-class concerns about the impact of police roles on the army were underlined when General Gutiérrez Rebollo and several of his top officers were arrested in February for complicity with the head of one of the leading drug cartels. Coming in the middle of Congressional review of the U.S. "certification" of Mexico on its cooperation in the "war on drugs," this fiasco embarrassed the Clinton administration. But the imperialists and spokesmen for Mexican capital are only worried that drug money could undermine the army's effectiveness as an instrument of large-scale repression. Thus military-style police occupation of neighborhoods and army training of Mexico City cops have been stepped up recently, while various politicians have proposed reinstating the death penalty, which was abolished by the Mexican Revolution.

In fact, the United States government has been behind the increasing use of the military to police Mexico. A 1996 book by Carlos Fazio, *El tercer vinculo* (The Third Link), quotes the official in charge of Mexican affairs at the U.S. State Department saying that "the militarization of the police and the new judicial framework were being instituted at the suggestion of the State Department." Last August, Washington's "drug czar," General Barry McCaffrey, former head of the U.S. Army's Southern Command in Panama, applauded the decision of Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo to use "military officials worthy of confidence" in key police positions. This goes hand in hand with a broader drive to increase U.S. imperialist control by "integrating" the Mexican military under Pentagon control. Historically, Mexico has been the only country in the Western Hemisphere other than Cuba whose armed forces do not formally participate in "Inter-American defense" systems. The Clinton White House has used the crisis produced by the Zapatista uprising to try to tighten its control of the Mexican army, both from without and within.

In June 1995, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff hosted a meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia of the military chiefs of the Orga-

nization of American States (OAS), the "Pan American" institution that Che Guevara accurately termed a "Yankee ministry of colonies." While Mexico's minister of defense, General Enrique Cervantes, didn't attend, the Mexican ambassador to the U.S. did, and Cervantes himself met with the Pentagon chiefs in Washington only three days beforehand. When William Perry arrived in Mexico in October 1995, the first American defense secretary ever to visit the country since the position was created in 1948, he was greeted with a lavish ceremony involving 10,000 soldiers and cadets. In his speech to the assembly, Perry called for a "third link" in military matters between the U.S. and Mexico to complement the already existing political and economic links. In reality, this link already exists. In addition to the mountain of military hardware mentioned earlier, in recent years slightly under one thousand Mexican military officials, including elite troops, have received training by the U.S. in the former Panama Canal Zone and the continental United States.

But even that is not enough for Washington. Pentagon planners are already working out their moves in case Mexico should fall into "the wrong hands." Last November, there was outrage over a new book by Ronald Reagan's secretary of "defense" which portrayed a U.S. invasion of Mexico, beginning on 7 March 2003. *The Next War* (Regnery, 1996), by Caspar Weinberger with his Hoover Institution ghostwriter Peter Schweizer (and a laudatory introduction by Lady Margaret Thatcher), gives a fictional rendition of several war scenarios in order to complain that since the Persian Gulf War the United States has suffered from "victory disease" leading to "declining U.S. military readiness." Although the scenarios on this techno-potboiler are crude (Weinberger's hypothetical invasion of Mexico is in response to chaos following the assassination of a "President Zapata," while the military heavy is a "General Cardenas"), these "war games" of literary tin soldiers are indicative of strategic thinking at the command level.

Weinberger's summary of his invasion scenario blames the "lack of detailed intelligence pertaining to the domestic crisis in Mexico," and concludes: "The United States must work aggressively to construct a deep, effective HUMINT [human intelligence] network in Latin America and elsewhere." From a different standpoint, similar views are to be found in a recent study of Mexico by Stephen J. Wager and Donald E. Schulz, *The Awakening: The Zapatista Revolt and Its Implications for Civil-Military Relations and the Future of Mexico*, published by the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College in December 1994. No hawkish Reaganite Cold Warriors, Wager and Schulz call to "bring the rebels in from the cold," urging Zedillo to "explore ways to co-opt the Zapatistas and their supporters," and even remark: "Indeed, the Zapatistas may have done more to accelerate the process of Mexican democratization than the previous 5 years of dramatic economic reform under the Salinas administration." At the same time, these U.S. strategists complain that, "Due to a massive intelligence failure, the Zapatista uprising caught the Salinas administration by surprise."

The Pentagon pamphlet significantly pointed to "a distancing by the military from the PRI," remarking that "the military

has grown increasingly disenchanted with having to clean up after politicians' mistakes." These observations were cited when there was a flurry of coup rumors in late 1995, linked to market speculation in New York, which were seen as a "Veiled Warning of Wall Street to Zedillo" (*La Crisis*, 22 November 1995). Meanwhile, U.S. plans for restructuring the Mexican military are proceeding. Earlier, Wager called for replacing the present territorial military zones with a "corps system" of mobile and rapid reaction units, while Schulz declared "the need for changes in the command, intelligence and mission structures of the [Mexican] Armed Forces" (quoted in Fazio, *El tercer vínculo*). At U.S. suggestion, an intelligence center was created in President Zedillo's office headed by his chief of staff, while Mexico's spy agency CISN (Center of National Security and Investigation) has been reorganized. More generally, U.S. military advisers want to create national police forces throughout Latin America, a kind of gendarmerie to maintain domestic "security," particularly in remote areas, along the lines of the Chilean *carabineros* or the British colonial constabulary.

The gullible (as well as interested parties) will argue that this is of no import, since after all Washington has contingency plans and war games for every eventuality. It is useful to recall that when the U.S. Army War College was set up in 1903, one of its first "contingencies" was for an invasion of Mexico. The first director of the College, Brigadier General Bliss, explained the most likely scenarios for U.S. action: "I do not think that when the United States comes to fight it will be for the declared purpose of extension of trade, although that may be the real cause of war and its real object, concealed under an appeal to the Monroe Doctrine." In 1912, after the liberal Francisco Madero was elected of Mexico and dictator Porfirio Díaz went into exile, a preliminary plan was elaborated and countersigned by Republican president Taft for a U.S. invasion to put a stop to revolutionary unrest in Mexico. In 1913, the plans were modified to focus on seizing

Mexico's main east coast ports of Tampico and Veracruz. In 1914, under Democratic president Wilson, Tampico and Veracruz were occupied by Marines. Later, after U.S. withdrawal, a more economical plan was devised to "Mexicanize" the repression of guerilla actions.

Mexico is, after all, the "vital piece" of Washington's "grand strategy" for "continental security"—i.e., U.S. control of Latin America—as U.S. Air Force Colonel Michael Dzedzic put it in an essay on "Mexico and the Strategy of the United States: Geostrategic Axis for Security and Prosperity." This chapter in a new book, *La seguridad de Estados Unidos y México en un momento de transición* (1997), worries that if Mexico should succumb to a "new world disorder," it "would be difficult to avoid the consequences of future anarchy, which is why Mexico plays a key role for the very security of its neighbor," the United States. He complains that "Mexico's aversion to multilateral military initiatives thus holds back collective action to deal with current questions of national security." According to Dzedzic, "the interests of the United States include 500,000 U.S. citizens resident in Mexico and direct investments of \$30.6 billion dollars in fixed assets (two-thirds of total foreign investment in Mexico)." A civil revolt would have "devastating" consequences for the U.S., he notes, including a "wave of illegal immigrants" heading north. That is, in fact, the opening scene of former Pentagon chief Weinberger's "next war."

These are the driving concerns behind Washington's demands that it be allowed to send U.S. planes in "hot pursuit" into Mexican air space, that U.S. warships be able to seize vessels in Mexican waters, that DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) operatives be allowed to carry and use guns inside Mexico, and that Mexico be required to extradite its citizens to be tried by U.S. courts. The aim of the U.S. doctrine of "limited sovereignty" for its neo-colonial subjects is to further imperialist intervention across the board—the so-called war on

continued on page 55

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Armored cars on parade in Mexico City's Zócalo (central square). While peasant struggles shake the countryside, Mexican bourgeoisie and its Yankee imperialist masters fear above all working-class upheaval

Militarization, Murderous Feuds in Ruling Party,
Mass Hunger as Guerrillas, Peasant Unrest Spread

Mexico: Regime in Crisis

Part 2 of 2

The first part of this article, in The Internationalist No. 1 (January-February 1997), discussed the sharp crisis in the Mexican ruling class as well as the appearance of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and other guerrilla groups in various regions. The answer to the drastic impoverishment of the working masses is not peasant-based "armed reformism," we emphasized, but workers revolution. Meanwhile, Wall Street's ravaging of Mexico's economy has been accompanied by a mounting use of the military for internal policing, which is discussed in "Militarization Made in U.S.A.," on page 30 of this issue. In Part 2 of the article we analyze the bonapartist nature of the Mexican regime, em-

phasizing the key task of breaking its corporatist stranglehold on the working class. In contrast to the political self-liquidation of most of the Mexican left, the central task remains the forging of a Trotskyist party.

Today the political regime of Mexican capitalism is unravelling under the impact of tremendous domestic and international pressure and its own internal deterioration. Washington is no longer content to let client regimes run its Latin American semi-colonies while raking off huge sums from state-owned capitalist industries. Under the watchwords of "free trade" and "privatization," U.S. imperialism has been moving to take more direct control of its Western Hemisphere hinterland as it gears up for sharpened economic competition with a

For Workers Revolution Across the Borders!

German-dominated Europe and a Japan-dominated East Asia. Imperialist rivalries have been behind U.S. economic policies ever since the Wall Street-engineered Mexican bank crisis of 1982. North American capitalists are particularly set on nailing down control of the Mexican financial system following reprivatization of the banks during the *sexenio* (six year rule) of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and on carving up PEMEX, Mexico's state oil company, which they have lusted for ever since the nationalization of U.S. and British oil companies in 1938.

As a condition of Clinton's \$20 billion U.S. bailout (of U.S. investors) following the 1994 peso crisis, the revenue from Mexican petroleum exports were to be paid directly to Wall Street—deposited in the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank in New York City as collateral. Now that Zedillo has paid off that extortionate loan with billions sweated out of the labor of the Mexican working people, the oil money no longer goes first to the Fed. (About 70 percent of it still goes to pay off debt to the imperialist banks.) But today a United States Treasury man sits inside the Banco de México offices in Mexico City with access to the government's internal economic information in order to protect the interests of Citibank (the personal bankers for Raúl Salinas, the ex-president's now-jailed brother) and other U.S. financiers. The arrangement is not unlike the way National City Bank moved in to take over the Customs House in Haiti in 1915—except that instead of the Marines guarding the vaults, Wall Street and Washington want to have the Mexican Army do its bidding.

PRI Rule Unravels

Why is this militarization of Mexico taking place, why this crisis of the regime in Mexico, and why now? Many liberals and pseudo-socialists locate the cause in a "national security state" in the United States. According to this conspiracy theory, the forces of progress could prevail but for the usurpation of democratic institutions by a "military-industrial complex." Yet the anti-Soviet Cold War was supported by the *entire* U.S. capitalist class, which also upholds its Monroe Doctrine of neo-colonial domination of Latin America no less today than it did in the 19th century. And the Latin American branch-office bourgeoisies fall into line in the greater interests of defending the system of exploitation that fills their coffers by sucking billions in superprofits out of the labor of the millions who toil in the mines, fields and sweatshops. The liberals put the blame on "neo-liberalism," yet the root cause is capitalism. The political forms shift from time to time according to the signals from Washington, from open military dictatorships throughout Latin America in the 1970s to supposed parliamentary democracies today. Yet the latter are under tight military custody, from General Pinochet's constitutional immunity from civilian control in Chile to Fujimori's "self coup" that brought out the tanks to close down the Peruvian parliament in 1990 and replace it with a more compliant legislature.

Historical experience throughout this century shows that in the imperialist epoch, capitalist rule is incompatible with a stable bourgeois-democratic regime in the countries of belated capitalist development. Because of the weakness of the "na-

tional" bourgeoisie in the face of imperialism and the weight of the working class and peasantry, Marxists have noted that capitalist rule in the neo-colonies of Latin America, Asia and Africa typically has a *bonapartist* character. That is, the political regimes share common characteristics with the French capitalist emperors Napoleon Bonaparte, who ruled from 1804 to 1815, and Louis Napoleon, whose Second Empire lasted from 1852 until its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. A classically bonapartist regime would be a military-police dictatorship, such as Pinochet's Chile after the 1973 coup, the generals' rule in Brazil from 1964 to 1985, or Argentina under the junta that took power in 1976. But frequently a bonapartist regime may adopt civilian trappings, and at times in neo-colonial capitalist countries under pressure from imperialism, such governments put on more leftist airs and seek the support of the workers.

In his writings on Mexico, Leon Trotsky, who lived the last years of his exile there until he was murdered by an assassin sent by Stalin in 1940, characterized the bourgeois-nationalist regime of General Lázaro Cárdenas as "bonapartism *sui generis*" (of a unique kind). Trotsky noted:

"In the industrially backward countries foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence the relative weakness of the *national* bourgeoisie in relation to the *national* proletariat. This creates special conditions of state power. The government veers between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a Bonapartist character of a unique type. It raises itself, so to speak, above classes. Actually, it can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it, thus gaining the possibility of a certain freedom toward the foreign capitalists. The present policy [of the Mexican government] is in the second stage; its greatest conquests are the expropriations of the railroads and the oil industries."

—Leon Trotsky, "Nationalized Industry and Workers Management" (May 1939)

The Mexican government's policy soon veered back to the "first stage," with the election of right-winger General Manuel Avila Camacho as president in 1940. In recent years, the PRI-government has incorporated some parliamentary window-dressing, gradually assuming a *semi*-bonapartist character. But the presidential regime continues to dominate through an all-powerful state bureaucracy fused with the massive apparatus of the state party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has run Mexico for decades and which in disguised form consumes a huge portion of the government budget.

From its inception, the PRI regime has always had a bonapartist character. From the early 1920s to 1946, Mexico's presidents were all generals (Carranza, Obregón, Calles, Cárdenas, Avila Camacho) or their flunkies, and while thereafter civilians sat in the president's chair, from 1946 to 1964 the heads of the government party were also all generals. The progenitor of the PRI, the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), was formed in 1929 by General Plutarco Elías Calles to put an

Archivo Casa Sola



Emiliano Zapata (left) led peasant insurgency during 1910-1917 Mexican Revolution. Zapatista spokesman Subcomandante Marcos (right) invokes images and nationalist program of the past. Next Mexican revolution must be a workers revolution, led by internationalist Bolshevik party.



La Jornada

end to the murderous feuding between the regional *caudillos*. Calles established a system based on the inclusion of all the fractious generals and parcelling out the fruits of power in exchange for their subordination to a supreme arbiter, namely himself. Ruling as president during 1924-28, and then as de facto *jefe máximo* (top boss) during the next six years (known as the *maximato*), Calles managed through a combination of repression and concessions to put the lid on workers' strikes and peasant land seizures, crush a conservative Catholic clericalist rebellion, and establish sufficient "social peace" for profitable capitalist exploitation.

General Lázaro Cárdenas, in office between 1934 and 1940, did away with the purely military character of the government, renaming the PNR the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM). Cárdenas actively sought peasant and worker backing, particularly in the confrontation with British and U.S. imperialist interests over his 1938 nationalization of the railways and petroleum industry. However, he also broke strikes and sought to subordinate the workers and peasants by organizing them into a state-controlled Federation of Mexican Labor (CTM) and as "sectors" of the PRM (which also had a military sector). The state party's politics soon shifted to the right, and to this day the PRI has maintained itself in power in large part through its semi-corporatist control of labor and the brutal suppression of independent unions.

In its successive incarnations (PNR-PRM-PRI), this regime has presented itself as the "party of the Mexican Revolu-

tion." This is an enormous historical falsification. In truth it is the *party of the firing squad against the revolution*, the party of the northern ranchers who assassinated the radical peasant and plebeian leaders Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa, and put an end to the revolution before it could become a full-fledged social revolution. Various pseudo-Marxists who have made a profession out of tailing the PRI and its offshoot, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (son of former president Lázaro), pretend that the revolution never stopped. This echoes the PRI regime's self-justifying historical lie. Adolfo Gilly, the Cardenista ideologue and now Zapatista advisor who at one time called himself a Trotskyist, wrote a book titled *La revolución interrumpida* (1971), the "interrupted revolution." In this work, written while he was in jail following the government's 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre, Gilly painted Zapata as a premature Che Guevara, and Guevara as a proletarian revolutionary without a proletariat. Of Lázaro Cárdenas, he wrote:

"Cardenism emerged...as the political expression of the second ascending phase of the Mexican Revolution and, once in power, it imposed itself and developed as a revolutionary nationalist and anti-imperialist government faced with the particular form of the capitalist state that emerged from the agrarian revolution of 1910-1920."

This is contrary to everything Leon Trotsky wrote about the Cárdenas regime. While Trotsky underlined that even Cárdenas' bourgeois nationalization of the railroads and oil industry represented a limited blow against imperialism in semi-colonial Mexico, he emphasized that *no* capitalist government, including that of Cárdenas, could act in a truly revolutionary fashion against imperialism, because they are all in fact dependent on it. Trotsky made a very different point regarding the nature of bonapartism. In his key pamphlet on Germany,



Women maquiladora workers at Magnéticos de México (subsidiary of Sony) in Nuevo Laredo fight off attempts by corporatist CTM "union" bureaucrats to bus in scabs during April 1994 strike.

he noted:

"The Bonapartist regime can attain a comparatively stable and durable character only in the event that it brings a revolutionary epoch to a close; when the relationship of forces has already been tested in battles; when the revolutionary classes are already spent, but the possessing classes have not yet freed themselves from the fear: will not tomorrow bring new convulsions? Without this basic condition, that is, without a preceding exhaustion of the mass energies in battles, the Bonapartist regime is in no position to develop."

Thus the first Napoleon took power following the period of Thermidor in the French Revolution—when the most revolutionary elements of the petty bourgeoisie were ousted—and clamped down firmly to put an end to the agitated revolutionary period. Louis Napoleon was brought in by the Party of Order following the defeat of the Revolution of 1848, to make sure the revolution stayed defeated.

The PNM/PRM/PRI regime was installed as a result of the fact that the peasant-based Mexican Revolution was *aborted*—frustrated, thwarted, blocked and defeated in its attempt to achieve radical agrarian and anti-imperialist demands—precisely because the peasantry was incapable of taking power and reorganizing society. There was no proletarian vanguard which could have given the peasant revolutionaries the firm class leadership they desperately needed. What was required was a workers revolution, supported by the peasant war, that would expropriate the entire bourgeoisie, including the new northern capitalist landowning elite who donned the revolutionary mantle even as they murdered the revolutionaries. It was because of the Mexican bourgeoisie's fear that *los de abajo* (the downtrodden) would rise up again that it has continued to maintain a bonapartist (now semi-bonapartist) regime, keeping all potential opposition firmly in check for almost seven decades. But now they feel the rigid

social controls have outlived their purpose.

Particularly following the destruction of the Soviet Union, the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist overlords have been moving not only to dispense with the empty nationalist trappings of the PRI regime but also to dismantle its formerly heavily state-capitalist economy (some 1,200 state-owned companies were sold off in the space of a few years) and hand it over to private capital. In tandem with this, they are junking the worn-out mechanisms of semi-bonapartist rule which they see as a hindrance to the new policies of unbridled "free market" and "free trade" capitalism, while escalating more "traditional" Latin American-style military repression. As the PRI-government comes apart and its once all-encompassing machinery of rigid social

control breaks down, workers, peasants and indigenous peoples have begun to act. The question is not whether an explosion of social unrest is coming—it is whether there will be a leadership to give the necessary internationalist revolutionary direction to the struggle of the Mexican proletariat and its allies, on both sides of the border.

Forward to Workers Revolution

It is symptomatic that not only the Zapatistas but the other armed peasant-based formations that have appeared in Mexico in the last several years wrap themselves in the Mexican tricolor flag and the imagery, rhetoric and program of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. (Yet another guerrilla group, a "Revolutionary Army of Popular Insurrection," proclaimed its existence in mid-November, harking back to "the struggle of the Mexicans against the dictatorship of Díaz.") In his analysis of the origins of the French Second Empire, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852), Karl Marx noted:

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language."

In the French bourgeois revolution of 1789 and subsequent years, this awakening of the dead served the purpose of "finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk about again," Marx wrote. But "from 1848 to 1851 only the ghost of the old revolution walked about." He concluded:

"The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead."

All the more so for the revolutions of the 20th and 21st centuries!

Mexico is notable for the fact that it has had no less than three decade-long bourgeois-democratic revolutions—the War of Independence (1810-21) against Spanish colonialism; the war of the Reform (1854-67) against first clerical conservatism and then French imperial military occupation; and the Mexican Revolution (1910-17, with its rearguard struggles extending to 1920). Each of these failed to establish a viable bourgeois democracy, and soon gave way to a new dictatorial regime. Mexico's national heroes—Morelos, Guerrero, Zapata, Villa—were all defeated and killed; they are ritually honored today by bourgeois politicians who are the heirs of their assassins. The failure of the bourgeois revolutions, originally reflecting the inadequate development of the productive forces, in this century is centrally due to the heavy weight of imperialist domination and the organic weakness of the local bourgeoisie. This is not some Mexican peculiarity but an expression of a fundamental law of capitalism in its period of decay.

The Bolshevik revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky elaborated the program and perspective of *permanent revolution*, generalizing from the development of the three Russian revolutions in the early 20th century (1905, February 1917, October 1917). His central conclusion: in the epoch of imperialism it is no longer possible to achieve the fundamental gains of the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions without the working class taking power, under the leadership of its communist party and backed up by a peasant uprising. The revolutionary proletariat in power would then pass over to socialist tasks, expropriating the bourgeoisie and extending the revolution to the most advanced capitalist countries. Due to the phenomenon of uneven and combined development, the peasant and proletarian working masses are too numerous and the domestic bourgeoisie too weak for the latter to dominate on its own and follow the traditional path of capitalist development:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses....

"The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfillment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution....

"The completion of the socialist revolution within national

limits is unthinkable. One of the basic reasons for the crisis in bourgeois society is the fact that the productive forces created by it can no longer be reconciled with the framework of the national state.... The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena."

—*The Permanent Revolution* (1930)

This program of world socialist revolution was that of the 1917 October Revolution and of the Third (Communist) International in its early years. It is the program that was betrayed by Stalin and his successors, with their anti-Marxist dogma of "revolution in stages," ultimately paving the way for counterrevolution. Today the program of permanent revolution is defended by those who fight for an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. This is the perspective of the future proletarian revolution throughout Latin America and extending to the imperialist centers. As the 1921 call by the Communist International to the workers of the Americas stated: "The revolution in our country, combined with proletarian revolution in the United States, that is the slogan of the revolutionary proletariat and poor peasantry of South America."

Trotsky wrote that "the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the Communist Party." This was the original watchword of the Comintern as well, corresponding to the Marxist analysis of the incapacity of the peasantry to provide revolutionary leadership. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the fact that this intermediate social layer, petty-bourgeois in character, cannot independently reorganize society was seen in the Mexican Revolution when Zapata and Villa entered Mexico City at the end of 1914 at the head of their peasant detachments, the Liberating Army of the South and the Division of the North. A famous photo shows them sitting awkwardly in the presidential palace, unsure what to do now that they had "won." Zapata's Plan de Ayala called for land to the tiller, but did not outline a new social order. The radical Convention of Villista and Zapatista forces debated endlessly but did not pass an agrarian law, nor even a law providing a minimum wage to the workers. After barely two months, the peasant armies withdrew from the capital.

Although the Mexico City working class initially supported the peasant revolutionaries, soon they were out of work and without food and became disillusioned. The workers were organized, in the Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World Worker), but there was no independent proletarian leadership that could forge a worker-peasant alliance. The anarchists withdrew into passive opposition to all sides. General Obregón, meanwhile, wooed the Casa del Obrero on behalf of the mistrusted landowner-general Carranza, demagogically promising labor reforms, passing out money to union bureaucrats, settling strikes in favor of the workers. When Obregón appealed for the formation of Red Battalions of workers to fight Villa, the union bureaucrats finally agreed (despite continued opposition in the ranks). A year later, their job done, Carranza dissolved the battalions and arrested the workers' leaders. The Mexican Revolution was frus-

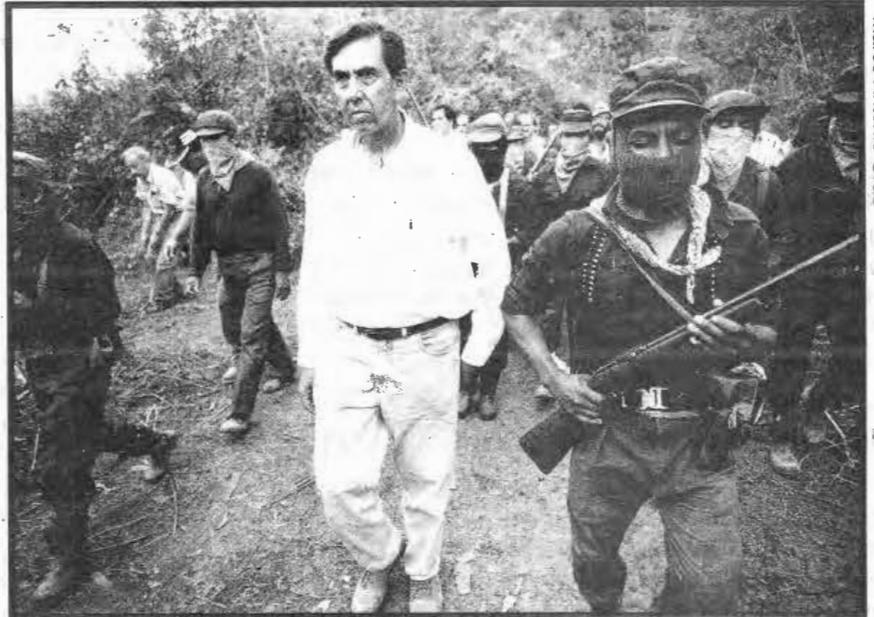
trated above all due to the absence of a proletarian vanguard armed with a program for workers revolution—the only way to complete the agrarian revolution and free the country from the imperialist yoke.

Another important aspect of permanent revolution in Mexico is the question of the liberation of the indigenous population from age-old oppression dating back to colonial times. The Indian question has been highlighted by the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, involving tens of thousands of Maya-speaking Indians. According to the 1990 census, there were 6.4 million Indians in Mexico, roughly 8 percent of the officially tallied population at the time. Speaking some 56 languages, Indians represent up to a third (Oaxaca) or a quarter (Chiapas) of the population in some states. However, despite their relative weight in the population, indigenous peoples have been effectively excluded from political life and political and economic

power in Mexico for centuries. Dominated by large landowners and the church up to the time of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the Indians' communally owned lands (*ejidos*) were recognized in the Constitution of 1917. However, actual restitution of lands seized from them has taken decades, and Indians have continued to be subjected to grinding poverty, isolation, racist discrimination and systematic abuse by local PRI *caudillos* (political bosses) and their *guardias blancas* ("white guard" private armies) together with the heavy-handed apparatus of state repression.

The EZLN demanded regional and local autonomy for indigenous peoples, and this was agreed to in principle in negotiations with government representatives in February 1996. Among the provisions of the accord was official recognition of local elections held according to traditional custom. However, when a proposed law of Indian autonomy based on those principles was presented to Zedillo in December, the government reneged on its earlier promises, demagogically alleging there was a threat to "national unity," a danger of "Balkanization" of the country, of the formation of "reservations" which would only further isolate the Indian population. Marxists support the right of the native peoples to decide their own fate. For the areas where Indians are concentrated, we join in demanding the *right of regional and local autonomy*. For this to have any reality, it must include control over natural resources, including land, water and petroleum. This will be strenuously resisted by Mexico's capitalist rulers, as the state of Chiapas, where the Mayan Indians live in pervasive poverty, produces 21 percent of the country's oil output, 47 percent of its natural gas, and 55-60 percent of total electrical production, mainly from hydroelectric stations.

At the same time, communists support revolutionary struggle for social emancipation within the indigenous peoples as well. The popular-front left has long tended to idealize the



Marco Antonio Cruz

Bourgeois opposition leader Cauhtémoc Cárdenas visits the Zapatistas, May 1994.

village community, ignoring the fact, for instance, that elections by established custom (already being carried out in Oaxaca) have often meant the exclusion of women from the vote. Moreover, regional and local autonomy at the political level will be massively undercut by the operation of the capitalist economy, in which the Indian population already heavily participates. Even largely subsistence farmers are dependent upon outside resources and markets, and most corn, coffee, cacao, sorghum, bananas, honey and animal products are grown for the national market or for export. To the extent that their isolation is overcome, powerful market forces will increasingly break down Indian communities. Effective autonomy for indigenous peoples will only be possible through socialist revolution instituting a planned economy. In fact, the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky wrote into the fundamental laws of Soviet regime the right of national self-determination for all the nations and nationalities of the former tsarist empire. In addition, they provided for regional autonomy for pre-national peoples and ethnic groups. This policy, and the whole concept of a voluntary union of socialist republics—which was sabotaged by Stalin's Great Russian chauvinism—is the only one that holds out the promise of genuine emancipation for indigenous peoples in an egalitarian socialist society.

The next Mexican Revolution will be not another nationalist peasant uprising, such as failed already in 1910-17, but an internationalist proletarian revolution that must extend across the border to the North (and the South), sparking socialist revolution in the imperialist powerhouse of the United States. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism and all superstition regarding the past must be overcome in order that the working class embrace the program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism. Mexican nationalists repeat the lament of Porfirio Díaz: Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States. Their program of an independent capital-

ist Mexico is increasingly unreal and unrealizable under the tremendous weight of U.S. capital. In contrast, for proletarian revolutionaries Mexico's location just across a porous border from the citadel of world imperialism is a *tremendous strategic advantage*. The millions of Mexican workers inside the U.S. can serve as a human bridge to unite the working class and spread revolutionary struggle. *Mexico is the weak link of North American imperialism*. What is needed is a Trotskyist workers party that knows how to break that chain of imperialist oppression and unite the proletarians of both countries in common struggle.

Only Revolutionary Leadership Can Unchain Mexican Labor from State Control

The Mexican working class is *many millions strong*, laboring in all manner of heavy, medium and light manufacturing, in extractive industries of mining and petroleum production, and extending across the line into the United States. Under NAFTA, Mexico's domestic market has become mired in the deepest depression in this century, devastated by Zedillo's brutal austerity policies in order to pay off billions of dollars in debt to Wall Street and Washington. Yet at the same time, concentrated along the northern border with the United States, a huge new industrial belt of *maquiladora* (free trade) manufacturing for export has grown up. More than 2,300 plants employ some 730,000 workers, overwhelmingly young and predominantly female, producing everything from domestic appliances to auto parts, cars and trucks to electronic chips and computers for the North American market. As we noted in the article, "Mexican Maquiladora Workers Fight for Their Rights," published in our previous issue: "A battle to unionize this new industrial belt is looming, which poses the need for a revolutionary leadership that champions the cause of oppressed women workers." In addition, several million Mexican workers, documented and undocumented, have become an important part of the U.S. workforce.

It is striking that in the face of the increasing integration of Mexico into the dominant North American capitalist economy, the Mexican petty-bourgeois left directs its attention and energies mainly to the peasantry. It virtually ignores the bulk of the working class, which for decades has been under the iron control of the PRI's "labor" machinery. This focus is not accidental. Politically, the various components of the Mexican left are subordinated, directly or indirectly, to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution. Mexican steel workers in Michoacán, auto workers in Puebla, electronics assemblers in Tijuana and construction workers in Orange County, California, will not be liberated by dreaming of new Zapatistas. They will find the road to liberation in the program of the Trotskyists, which alone corresponds to the international character and revolutionary interests of the working class.

While the attention of the left and the media has been focused on peasant guerrilla groups, the working class has been far from quiescent. Although hard hit by the more than 2 million layoffs following the December 1994 devaluation, and consequently reluctant to engage in economic strikes, Mexi-

can workers have repeatedly mobilized in large numbers against the vicious austerity program of the government.

On May Day 1995, for the first time in decades, the PRI's Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and the PRI-controlled Congress of Labor (CT) umbrella group called off the official celebration of the international workers holiday. The 96-year-old CTM patriarch Fidel Velásquez openly admitted that this was out of fear that the workers' anger over Zedillo's draconian austerity could boil over and lead to a riot in front of the presidential palace. So instead of the usual one million workers parading past to salute the president on the balcony, hundreds of thousands of workers and supporters of the Zapatista rebels jammed into the capital's main square, the Zócalo. It was the first May Day celebration since the 1930s that was not controlled by the government. Then once again on May Day 1996, upwards of 250,000 workers marched to express their opposition to the regime and its economic policies. While politically dominated by nationalism rather than socialism—the band of the nuclear workers union, SUTIN, played the Mexican national anthem instead of the *The Internationale*, as it had on past May Days—the march represented a significant break in PRI control. For the first time, some of the CT unions disobeyed their federation and joined the protest.

Over a huge photo of the march, *La Jornada* (2 May 1996) headlined, "Watershed in the Labor Movement." For almost seven decades, the PRI-government has rested on its rigid state control of the workers. It is crucial to understand that the CTM and CT are not working-class organizations but a corporatist straitjacket for government regimentation of labor in the interests of Mexican capital (and by extension, of its imperialist patrons). The CTM is officially part of the state party, and all members of CTM unions are automatically enrolled as PRI members. Over the decades, the PRI/CTM has had an effective two-pronged program for frustrating independent union organization: *cooptation*, which produced several semi-PRI federations such as the CROC and the COR, and led in the late 1970s to the formation of the CT as an umbrella group to keep breakaway unions under control; or *brutal repression*, such as the jailing of hundreds of railroad strikers and their leaders in 1958, many of whom were still in jail when the students revolted in 1968. Now that rigid system is breaking down, and this presents an important opportunity for intervention by proletarian revolutionaries.

In his 1940 essay, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," Trotsky noted: "In Mexico the trade unions have been transformed by law into semistate institutions and have, in the nature of things, assumed a semitotalitarian character." Mexico's Federal Labor Code, implementing Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution, establishes an elaborate system of state and federal Arbitration and Conciliation Boards which have the authority to recognize and minutely supervise unions, union elections and leaderships. If the government wants to crush a strike, it simply declares it "nonexistent." Union elections are rigged, opposition victories are routinely rejected and oppositionists are beaten bloody by PRI/CTM thugs. When Salinas decided in 1989 to break the power of the Oil Workers union, he sent the army to storm the house of union leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia (La Quina), arresting him on trumped-up charges of arms possession and throwing him in prison where he remains eight years later.



David Maung/Impact Visuals

Border fence between Tijuana, Baja California and San Diego, California. Sign reads: "Neither Illegals Nor Criminals—International Workers. Justice in the Maquiladoras NOW." Mexican workers in free trade zone and immigrant workers in the United States are part of a human bridge that can unite proletariat on both sides of the border. It will take a revolutionary internationalist leadership to realize this potential.

When Zedillo decided to try his hand at union-busting, going after the militant Mexico City Ruta-100 bus drivers, he simply dissolved the company, fired all 14,000 workers and arrested eleven leaders of their union, SUTAU-100. They were kept in jail for a year (negotiations were conducted inside the prison) before a deal was reached. Now the former union has been given a few outlying bus lines to run as a cooperative, in exchange for which several hundred former SUTAU members joined the PRI!

The semi-bonapartist regime is now in deep crisis. The elaborate system of state control of labor, one of the key pillars of PRI rule, is on the verge of collapse. In large part, this is a result of anger over the terrible beating workers have taken. For the past 17 years, the CTM has signed annual pacts with the government and bosses to hold wages in check while prices soared. As a result, the purchasing power of the minimum wage (adjusted for inflation), which is received by about half the workers, has fallen by an incredible 76 percent since 1979; it is now almost 50 percent below the level of 1939 (*NACLA Report on the Americas*, January/February 1997). This is no statistical trick: most Mexican working people are significantly worse off than half a century ago. Look at Luis Buñuel's 1950 film *Los Olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones): the impoverished Mexico City working-class family portrayed there lives sub-

stantially *better* than a typical family in the slums of Naucalpan or Nezahualcóyotl today (for one thing, they had a metal bed instead of sleeping on the floor).

Accumulating pressure from below against this massive impoverishment over the last decade and a half is now beginning to produce fractures in the corporatist structure of union control. But they are only the first fissures. The dissident groups which broke with the CT to march on May Day, notably the huge Federation of Workers in the Service of the State (FSTSS), are just as corporatist as those of the CTM, if not more so. Their leaders sit in the administrative and advisory councils of the Social Security Institute, the Education Ministry and various health and social welfare agencies. The "union" bureaucrats are paid by the state, plus they get rakeoffs from running a huge social service and medical system of their own financed by members' dues and government subsidies. The head of the telephone workers union, Francisco Hernández Juárez, is now being heavily financed by the American AFL-CIO, traditionally a funnel for U.S. government dollars (and CIA agents) to control and keep "reds" out of Latin American unions. Elba Esther Gordillo, today the head of the Foro Sindical (Trade-Union Forum), the grouping of dissident CT unions, was the loyal lieutenant installed at the head of the SNTE teachers union

by Calos Jonguitud, the long-time San Luis Potosí PRI boss and archetype of a *charro* bureaucrat (literally "cowboy," after the government flunkey installed in the railroad workers union to bring it to heel in the late 1940s).

The neo-*charros* of the Foro Sindical like Gordillo and Hernández Juárez are just as much agents of state control as those who still follow the dictates of "Don Fidel" Velásquez. The program of the Foro was to "push for agreement to a new social pact." Moreover, sensing an opportunity, the PRD under its new party leader Andrés López Obrador, is trying to supplant the PRI in the bureaucratic machinery of the CTM/CT "unions." As we have said of the PRD since its formation, it seeks to be a second PRI. Cárdenas Jr. merely wants to cloak this system with a pale reflection of the more "progressive" policies of Cárdenas Sr. rather than the openly anti-labor policies of Salinas, Zedillo & Co.

During the campaign leading up to the 1988 elections, when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas first broke with the PRI (he had been governor of the state of Michoacán), the relatively few left-led "independent" unions squelched a growing strike movement in order to support this breakaway bourgeois candidacy. Cárdenas left the PRI because he saw that the ruling party's decrepit *dinosaurios* were losing the capacity to control worker and peasant discontent. A new form had to be brought into being to fulfill the old functions. The Cárdenas movement and the PRD that grew out of it were the pole of attraction for a popular front, headed by long-time capitalist politicians, which has served as the final resting place for a series of left organizations in the process of liquidation and as an instrument to rein in the movement for independent unions. The PRD seeks to gain influence or control in the present corporatist "union" structure in order to rejuvenate the system of state domination.

It will require the intervention of Marxist revolutionaries to fight for unions that are genuinely free of control by the capitalists and their state. As Trotsky wrote in 1940, "the independence of the trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state, can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International." Thus Trotskyists put forward a program of *transitional demands* to broaden the fight against PRI control of labor into a fight to mobilize the working class against capitalism:

Neither neo-charros nor a neo-PRI! It is urgent to fight to break the bureaucratic/state stranglehold over labor to form *elected workers committees*, independent of control by the state or any of the bourgeois parties.

There must be a fight to *break the wage controls* and unleash a vast movement of the proletariat against the savage reduction in the masses' buying power, which endangers the very existence of the proletariat. *Quadruple* the minimum wage and establish a *sliding scale of wages* to defend the workers against the ravages of inflation.

Because the government statistics on price increases are notoriously inaccurate and vastly understated, it is necessary to form neighborhood committees in conjunction with the workers movement to monitor and control prices.

Against sabotage by the bosses, *workers control of production!* In response to mass unemployment, there must be a fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, for a *sliding scale of hours* to provide jobs for all.

Against the employers' attacks, *sit-down strikes and plant occupations*, with the formation of *factory committees* and *workers self-defense groups* to defend against the CTM goons.

These are the kind of demands needed to wage a serious class struggle at Ford Cuautitlán, for example, where union dissidents have been repeatedly beaten bloody and even murdered, or in the numerous strikes by the dissident teachers union tendency, CNTE, or against the government's union-busting assault on the SUTAU-100 workers. To implement this perspective, it is necessary above all to build a revolutionary workers party.

Only a transitional program for workers revolution can arouse the working people to the kind of determined struggles it will take to break the death grip of the PRI-government, stop the reactionary clericalist Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and defeat the PRD's attempts to shackle the workers and peasants through the popular front. It is with a bold program of class struggle, not the small change of electoral maneuvering, that an independent workers movement could draw in its wake the ruined petty bourgeois, who have swelled the ranks of the El Barzón debtors' movement. A revolutionary-led workers movement could mobilize pent-up peasant discontent by calling for *agrarian revolution*: not a timid reform administered by the capitalist state with its murderous federal army, judicial police and "white guards," but the peasant and Indian masses seizing the large estates with the support of workers and peasant militias.

Not through isolated guerrilla actions, not through popular-front alliances and bourgeois electoral politics, but only through mass working-class struggle led by a revolutionary workers party can the demands of Zapata and his peasant revolutionaries be realized, in establishing a *workers and peasants government*, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasants, in a new October Revolution, crossing the line to *el gran Norte*.

Build a Trotskyist Party in Mexico!

Forging the Leninist vanguard party needed to lead this fight—a party of professional revolutionaries, governed by democratic centralism and built on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution—is the central task facing revolutionaries today in Mexico, a country where conditions cry out for workers revolution. This struggle must be waged against the legacy of Stalinism, not only that of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) and its successors (PSUM, PMS), which for decades helped cover the left flank of the PRI, but also against the Maoist and Castroist currents historically associated with guerrillaism. Today, all these Stalinist remnants are to be found in or around the bourgeois PRD of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The PRD can hardly be called a rotten bloc, as they all agree on the program of a "democratic revolution," which, of course, will be neither democratic nor revolutionary, for that is impossible under present-day capitalism. Carrying the class-collaborationist logic of Stalinist popular-frontism to its logical conclusion,

putting the seal on its nationalist reformism, after having long ago dropped any lip service to communism, most of what's left of the Mexican left is deeply buried in this capitalist party that seeks to be the new PRI.

The fight for a Bolshevik-Leninist party must also be waged against those who have besmirched the name of Trotskyism in Mexico, in particular those who used the name of the great Bolshevik revolutionary to peddle a line of reformist parliamentary cretinism. This is the "contribution" of the followers of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec), for many years organized in the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party). Living off the government subsidies provided to its few deputies, when these were cut off after its poor showing in the 1992 elections, the PRT disappeared from the scene. It has since divided "definitively" (for now) into those following Edgard Sánchez, who was elected as a deputy to the federal congress in 1994 on the ticket of Cárdenas' PRD, and the former majority, which tried to position itself ever so slightly to the left by endorsing the PRD and Cárdenas from the outside. The ex-majority changed its name last fall to "Democracia Radical," and then, a few months later, announced it was dissolving in order to join the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN) formed by Subcomandante Marcos' EZLN.

From its start two decades ago, the PRT was wedded to the program of Pabloism, the endless search for non-proletarian forces to chase after rather than waging the hard fight to forge a Trotskyist party to lead the working class in a revolutionary fight for power. After tailing the Moscow Stalinists in the early 1950s, Mandel & Co. embraced Castroite guerrillism in the '60s, and searching for a "new mass vanguard" in Europe they landed in the '70s in the camp of pro-imperialist social democracy, such as Mitterrand in France and Felipe González in Spain. In Mexico, the PRT has been an electoral party from the moment PRI strategist Jesús Reyes Heróles designed the "political opening" of the regime in 1978, allowing a kept "opposition" to have a few deputies and a lot of government money. It was by acting as a pressure group on the PRI regime that the PRT managed to get a certain amount of peasant support in the 1980s. Much of this evaporated in the '90s when its top peasant leader, Margarito Montes, was absorbed by Salinas' Solidaridad program and signed the government's agrarian manifesto for the liquidation of the *ejidos*! Now, well-trained by Mandel in Pabloism, all wings of the PRT have carried this liquidationist program to its logical consequences.

Currently the ex-Mandelites' central point of reference is the EZLN and its political front, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN). In February 1996, the United Secretariat's magazine *International Viewpoint* published a rather strange article by Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, leader of Democracia Radical, which is described as "the Mexican section of the Fourth International," i.e., of the USec. The article hails the EZLN's January 1996 Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, which calls to build the FZLN as a "political force as a new type" that doesn't participate in elections. Discarding any pretense of Trotskyism or Marxism, Rodríguez presents a magical mystery tour of the world from the stand-

point of classless "democracy." Instead of a transitional program to act as a bridge to international socialist revolution, he calls for a "multicolored rainbow" to serve as a bridge to Mexico's future. Where it touches earth, this "rainbow" is nothing but the tricolor banner of Mexican bourgeois nationalism.

Two months later, *International Viewpoint* (April 1996) published a letter from Democracia Radical explaining why they had dissolved their organization and disaffiliated from the USec in order to join the FZLN. It notes that "our peasant work was always weighed down with aid paternalism which ended up developing into corruption and an adaptation to the modernising ideology of the Mexican state." How delicately put, considering that the government literally bought the head of the PRT's peasant work. According to the DR letter, most of the PRT's peasant leaders and much of the party's leadership itself opposed fighting against the Salinas government's amendment of Article 27 of the Constitution, which abolished the prohibition on buying *ejido* property, preparing the way for a giant sell-off of peasant lands. The PRT, they say, was "the victim of a process of institutionalisation on the part of the state and of a growing pragmatism," traits that were true of the Mandelite party since its inception.

The same issue contains a second article on the FZLN, this one by Edgard Sánchez, who heads a rump PRT, which by default is now acting as the USec's group in Mexico. The Cardenista parliamentary deputy Sánchez mildly objects to the FZLN's opposition to electoral participation, and expresses disappointment that Marcos didn't call for the formation of a new alternative party that the PRT could join. Sánchez also politely dissents from the "shocking" statement in the Fourth Declaration that the Zapatistas don't struggle for power. Defending the good name of the EZLN, he says "it would be a mistake to equate Zapatismo with a pressure group to achieve some changes" or "sectional or corporate demands." That is, in fact, exactly how the EZLN has acted.

Sánchez writes, "We need...a revolution that will make possible the Revolution." The first stage of this explicitly stagist conception is "the struggle for democracy and the end of the party-state system." That is a ticket for joining forces not only with the PRD but also with the right-wing PAN. When these reformists talk of putting an end to the regime of the state party, the PRI, it is in order to justify a program of "two-stage" revolution and an alliance with bourgeois parties in the "democratic" stage. For Trotskyists, in contrast, the fight against capitalist bonapartism must have as its goal a workers revolution, not the myth of a democratic capitalism.

In an account of its "refoundation congress" last summer (*La Bola*, 1 October 1996), the PRT claims 5,655 members, although it doesn't even have a regular newspaper or journal. Its activity consists essentially of peasant-based electoralism (they control two largely Indian rural municipalities in the state of Guerrero) combined with lobbying of government agencies by the UGOCP (Worker-Peasant-People's General Union) National Coordinating Committee, in which the PRT is dominant.

Now, according to an account in the February 1997 *Socialist Action*, a new Mandelite group has been formed in Mex-

ico, the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS), which criticized the PRT's dependence on government funding and look to labor. The various elements in this heterogeneous lash-up claimed to oppose the policy of voting for Cárdenas, which is what both halves of the PRT did repeatedly. Yet the reporter on this subject at the LUS' founding convention, long-time PRT leader Manuel Aguilar Mora, neglected to mention this in his report. Although upon being challenged he said this policy was a mistake, he added that in "exceptional circumstances" it was all right to support "community candidates" endorsed by the bourgeois parties. However, genuine Trotskyists oppose not only any vote for a bourgeois party but also for any left or workers party that joins class-collaborationist alliances, for by doing so they negate and suppress the fundamental principle of working-class political independence.

The other substantial current of Mexican pseudo-Trotskyism in the past, the followers of the late Argentine Nahuel Moreno, has also undergone repeated splits in recent years. Moreno was notorious for his rapid shifts of political line over the years—he was a quick-change artist whom we satirized as "the Cantinflas of pseudo-Trotskyism." The main Morenoite grouping in Mexico, the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS—Socialist Workers Party), is now putting on laborite airs, so that it is currently tailing after the dissident PRI union bureaucrats in the Foro Sindical and particularly the May 1st Trade Union Coordinating Committee (Intersindical), which includes the university unions and other traditionally more leftist unions allied with Cárdenas' PRD. Urging these neo-*charros* and Cardenistas to form an "independent union federation that puts an end to corporatism and defeats the economic plans of the regime" (*El Socialista*, February 1997), the POS participated in meetings in January of both the Foro and the Intersindical. While the Morenoites tried to put a left face on the bureaucrats, it had to admit that there were quite a few in the Intersindical who wanted a "broad front" with bourgeois parties. The Foro Sindical, meanwhile, actually voted last November for the Zedillo government's wage-gouging "pact for growth" together with the CTM/CT.

The various Mandelite and Morenoite currents are united in their Pabloist outlook, always on the lookout for some "new mass vanguard" that would "roughly outline a revolutionary orientation," preferring such a "blunted instrument" over the painstaking struggle to forge an independent Trotskyist vanguard of the proletariat. Their differences are mainly over which non-proletarian force to bestow their opportunist affections on; when they talk of labor, it is only to capitulate to the petty-bourgeois labor bureaucracy. Over the last eight years, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, counterposed to this tailism the building of a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group, which would seek to build a revolutionary vanguard party. Yet over the last year the GEM has undergone two purges of leading cadres, which has been accompanied by a noticeable shift in the orientation of the dwindling Mexican section of the ICL.

The expulsions were carried out in conjunction with the ICL's flight from a key class battle in Brazil, a fight which it

had encouraged to oust police from the Municipal Workers Union of the steel city of Volta Redonda (see our July 1996 bulletin, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*). The abstentionist policies codified in that fight are now being translated onto other terrains. An article on Mexico in *Workers Vanguard* No. 647 (7 June 1996) said not a word about the semi-bonapartist nature of the PRI regime, nor about the current sharp political crisis, and raised no transitional demands for working-class struggle. The same is true of an article in *WV* No. 658 (27 December 1996) on increasing U.S. military intervention in Mexico, and of an article in *WV* No. 664 (21 March) on Washington's "drug war." The ICL's recent propaganda is primarily U.S.-centered, and provides no focus for intervention in the class struggle in Mexico. But a genuinely Bolshevik party cannot simply be proclaimed; the Trotskyist Fourth International can only be reformed in a fight for leadership of the working class, providing revolutionary direction to its struggles.

Noting that the minimum wage had lost half of its purchasing power since 1982, economist José Luis Calva wrote last fall, "Mexico will reach the 21st century with Porfirian patterns of income distribution," alluding to the liberal dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz that was brought down by the Mexican Revolution (*Proceso*, 25 November 1996). The parallels between the Díaz regime a century ago and the recent PRI regimes are striking. Both invited massive foreign investment, both sought to free up the sale of Indian land to large capitalist landowners, both combined superficial "modernization" for the capitalist elite with abject poverty for *los de abajo*. Díaz built a national railroad system, while Salinas in his *sexenio* built thousands of kilometers of super-highways while making a couple dozen of his cronies into billionaires. And where Díaz' rule of supposedly enlightened despotism was organized by the *científicos*, a core of technocratic advisers, that role is played today by the arrogant Harvard boys who are shamelessly looting the Mexican economy. This development was inherent in the post-revolution capitalist regime from the start. Already in the 1920s, General Alvaro Obregón remarked: "We'll be the *científicos* of tomorrow."

As the PRI-government totters, it is crucial that a revolutionary party be formed that fights against the popular front that would once again subordinate the Mexican working masses to the "democratic" (and not so democratic) bourgeoisie. Cárdenas may ultimately be no more able to keep the lid on social struggle than Madero was, but as the *aborted* Mexican Revolution of 1910-17 dramatically showed, a revolutionary leadership of the proletariat is the key requirement for victory. The Mexican workers revolution will not be carried out under the 1910 watchword of "effective suffrage, no re-election" but of "all power to the soviets." Not another nationalist bourgeois revolution, doomed to failure, but an internationalist proletarian revolution that can take the struggle to the U.S. workers in the imperialist heartland: laying the groundwork for this is the task facing revolutionaries today, on both sides of the border.

*For workers revolution across the borders!
Reforge the Fourth International!*

The Bisbee Arizona Deportation of 1917

“Reds” and Immigrants

Throughout the modern history of the United States, anti-immigrant hysteria has been accompanied by anti-communist witch-hunting, racist repression of blacks and union-busting. The victims and targets of the all-sided nativist reaction, however, have not always united their forces against the common enemy. In particular, the bureaucratic misleaders of the labor movement have often led the pack in whipping up chauvinist demagoguery about foreign workers “stealing American jobs.”

In fact, it is the capitalist captains of industry and finance who have been axing jobs, particularly union jobs, in a frenzied drive to jack up their profit rates. They have been assisted by the AFL-CIO union leadership, the bosses’ “labor lieutenants.” But when there were forces active in organizing labor who challenged the rule of capital, they took up the cause of immigrant workers, not only defending them but also organizing them as some of the most militant sectors of the working class. When they did, it sent shudders down the collective spine of the ruling class.

In the early years of this century, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were particularly active in organizing foreign-born workers in the factories of the Northeast and among Mexican and Japanese workers in the mines and fields of the Southwest. The internationalism of the “Wobblies” reflected their stated purpose to overthrow capitalism. The preamble to the IWW constitution declared: “the working class and the employing class have nothing in common.... Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.”

The IWW published periodicals in more than a dozen languages, including Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Russian and Yiddish. While the bosses played on national differences among the heavily immigrant workers in mass production industries, seeking to keep their wage slaves divided by ethnic tensions, the IWW sought to unite the workers in struggle against the class enemy. In the great Lawrence, Massachusetts textile workers strike of 1912,



Company-organized vigilantes load strikers into box cars during 1917 copper strike at Bisbee. Mexican workers were largest group among deportees.

which the IWW led to victory, the 30,000 strikers included at least 25 different nationalities.

Early in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17, the IWW actively mobilized against threats by Republican president Taft to send in the Marines. When Democratic president Woodrow Wilson ordered a U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1914, he was supported by American Federation of Labor chief Samuel Gompers. “Big Bill” Haywood responded for the IWW, announcing at a Carnegie Hall meeting in New York that if Congress declared war on Mexico, the IWW would “automatically start the greatest general strike this country has ever known” (quoted in Philip S. Foner, *U.S. Labor Movement and Latin America*, Vol. I: 1846-1919 [1988]).

Wilson’s invasion of Mexico occurred at the same time as militiamen were gunning down striking coal miners and their wives and children in Ludlow, Colorado, many of whom were of Mexican origin. Around the country, workers protested that “the war in Mexico and Colorado are both Standard Oil wars,” as Rockefeller owned the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and his puppet Wilson was seeking to oust Mexican leader Huerta who favored British oil interests over Rockefeller’s Standard Oil



One of many foreign-language pamphlets published by the IWW.

tiwar stance, they were soon the object of heavy repression throughout the U.S. as supposed German agents. This came to a head when Wobbly-led copper strikes occurred simultaneously in Arizona and Butte, Montana. The strikes broke out in response to a drive by employers to take advantage of wartime shortages to break the back of labor radicalism in the mines. In Arizona, in the copper districts of Globe and Bisbee, the copper barons tried to foment antagonism between Mexicans (who had long been paid at a lower rate) and other miners. The IWW was strongest among Mexican miners, while the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (formerly the Western Federation of Miners, which split from the Wobblies in 1908) was stronger among other groups. The job-trusting AFL, for its part, had supported an Arizona law requiring that 80 percent of jobs in every industry be reserved for native-born Americans.

When the IWW launched a mine strike in Bisbee on 27 June 1917, the *New York Times* headlined "Big Copper Strike Blamed on Germans." Strikers were villified as "aliens" and "traitors." The head of the Phelps-Dodge copper corporation, Walter Douglas, prepared an elaborate plan to deport the entire body of striking workers. For this he assembled a force of 2,000 vigilantes in a Bisbee Loyalty League and a Businessmen's Protective League.

Company officials made a list of strikers and other "undesirable" Bisbee residents who were hauled out of their beds at dawn on July 12. Hundreds of miners and their supporters were hauled into the local baseball stadium at gunpoint. The Catholic priest drove the sheriff around in a Ford touring car with a 7.62 mm. Marlin machine gun mounted on it (see James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War, 1901-1921* [1982]).

When the strikers refused to go back to work, some 1,386

trust. But despite widespread anti-imperialist sympathies among the most class-conscious workers, the IWW's general strike against war never came to pass. Later, when Wilson took the U.S. into World War I, IWW leader Haywood wrote in an April 1917 letter to Wobbly militant Frank Little, "I am at a loss as to definite steps to be taken against the war." This frank statement summed up the inability of syndicalism to provide a revolutionary strategy.

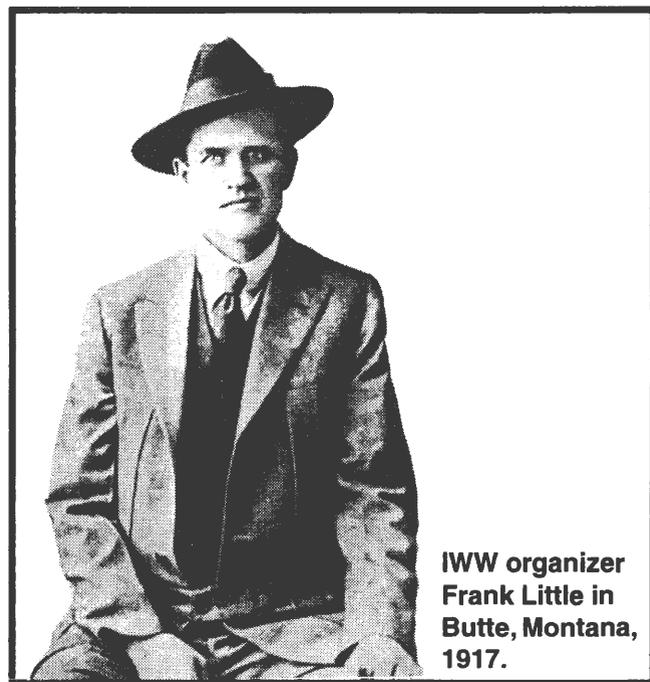
Nevertheless, as a result of the IWW's anti-

of them were herded onto 23 box cars of a special train that had been dispatched to Bisbee by the Phelps Dodge-owned El Paso and Southwestern Railroad. Western Union cut off telegraph communication with the outside world, so that word of this outrage could not get out. Armed guards were posted on the roofs of the rail cars. Attempts to bring food and water to the penned men were stopped. The deportation train pulled out at noon, heading 176 miles east toward Columbus, New Mexico on the Mexican border, where Pancho Villa had carried out a raid the year before. They then dropped the cars off on a siding in the middle of the desert, leaving the men to die in the hot sun.

Some of the deportees managed to hop on a passing freight train and made it into town, where they bought food supplies and fired off telegrams. The Bisbee strikers were saved, only to be locked up under military control in a federal stockade built for Mexican refugees. According to figures reported by Justice Felix Frankfurter, who headed a federal "mediation" commission, half of the Bisbee deportees were foreign born. Of the 426 who were members of the IWW, the largest percentage was Mexican (Juan Gómez-Quifiones and David Maciel, *La clase obrera en la historia de México*, Vol. 16: *Al norte del Río Bravo, pasado lejano, 1600-1930* [1981]). Many of their IWW leaders soon faced federal prosecution on charges of sedition. Frank Little, of native American Indian origin, came down from Montana to organize protests against the deportation. When he returned to Butte in August, he was lynched by company goons, who had earlier dynamited the union hall.

In 1918, 101 Wobbly leaders and militants were put on trial in Chicago on charges of sabotage and conspiracy to obstruct the war effort. Hundreds more were paraded before show trials in Wichita, Sacramento and elsewhere. More than two hundred IWW class-war prisoners were jailed for six years in

continued on page 63



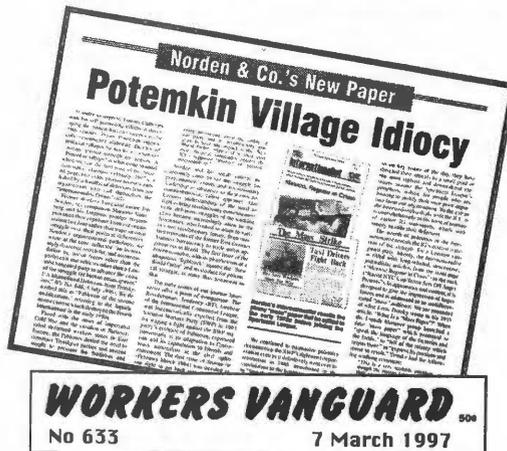
**IWW organizer
Frank Little in
Butte, Montana,
1917.**

WV's Smear Job

HOW THEY DEFEND THE INDEFENSIBLE

In June 1996, the leadership of the International Communist League carried out a purge of leading cadres, broke fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) and walked out on an important class battle as it was coming to a head. The ICL had first encouraged the Brazilian comrades to undertake a struggle to remove police from the municipal workers union of Volta Redonda. But when the struggle reached a boiling point in May-June of last year, in the face of escalating attacks by the bourgeoisie, the ICL's International Secretariat suddenly did an about-face. Capitulating before the pressure of the bourgeoisie, the ICL tried to get the LQB to abandon the fight, publicly dissociate itself from the union led by its supporters, and even leave town. But the LQB refused this disgraceful demand, and continued the fight while the ICL demonstratively washed its hands of any responsibility.

Since that time, *Workers Vanguard* has pumped out a series of articles on the expulsions and the events in Brazil that have left many readers dissatisfied. These articles read like hack smear jobs—because they are. Patchworks of evasion and

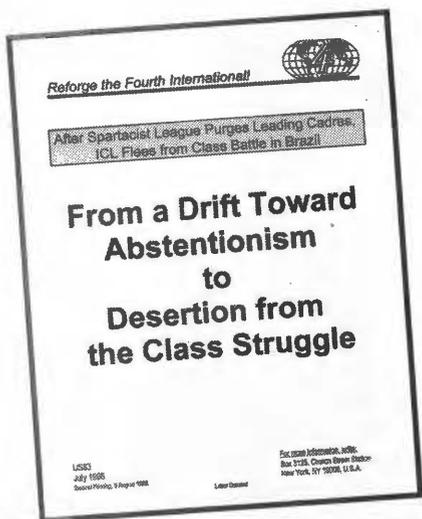


WV polemic against Internationalist Group

obfuscation, they are held together with outright inventions and lies. They are so lacking in consistency and coherence, that they call to mind Gertrude Stein's celebrated phrase: "there's no there there." The articles' high points are an exercise in fancy footwork to distract from a vulgar purge and turn to the right; their low points are slander, pure and simple. The charges are not believable even in their own right, for a simple reason: they are not true. The articles are a cover story, whose purpose is to defend the indefensible.

Now the ICL has responded to the publication of the first issue of *The Internationalist* with a lengthy article entitled "Norden & Co.'s New Paper—Potemkin Village Idiocy" (*WV* No. 663, 7 March 1997). The article's authors seek to compensate for its lack of coherence by trying to convince readers that they are clever, through childish word games, phony analogies and empty baiting—exemplified by the title and their obsessive name-calling (for example, calling the members of the Internationalist Group "IGlets," continuing their predilection for comparing us to animals and even inanimate objects). The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci remarked that in polemics, one should attack the strongest points of the adversary's argument. This is not the method of the new *Workers Vanguard*. The ICL leaders are so conscious of the hollowness of their official story that they are compelled to *invent* positions to attack, based on "facts" that they make up at will and change with dizzying speed. The dubious virtue of the latest *WV* attack is that it shows readers the tip of the iceberg of how the purge against us was waged, from the "Germany fight" to Mexico and Brazil.

WV sets up one "straw man" after another in order to knock them down. Webster's Dictionary could have been reviewing *WV* No. 633 when it defined this debater's trick as "a weak argument or opposing view set up by a politician, debater, etc. so that he may attack it and gain an easy, showy victory." Thus the article has indignant denunciations of *The Internationalist* for allegedly opposing polemics, worshipping the present con-



Internationalist Group's first publication documented truth about expulsions, ICL's flight from class battle.

sciousness of the working class and denying the need for revolutionary leadership. Yet each of these supposed positions is simply *invented*—in fact, they are the opposite of what we say, as those who read our paper can see for themselves.

But straw men only go so far. In the ICL leaders' dirty game, these are only the preliminaries, leading from character assassination to the basest slander. To take one telling example, *WV* No. 663 sums up by claiming that the Internationalist Group is "for sale." Let's see what is behind this smear. Here is the end of the article:

"Talk of 'revolutionary regroupment' is all the rage among the centrist swamp internationally; the one common denominator for the many politically heterogeneous rotten blocs flirting with each other is hatred for the authentic Leninism represented by the ICL. In their uncritical non-polemical new journal, the IG declares as its 'aim to work toward an early fusion of our forces in a common Fourth-Internationalist tendency.' Thus the IG has posted its big 'for sale' sign. *Caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware!"

The unaware reader is supposed to think that when the Internationalist Group talks of "an early fusion of our forces," this was an appeal to the multifarious centrist groups who incessantly swap bloc partners and political positions in pursuit of their opportunist appetites. What dishonesty! The truncated quotation is cut and pasted from the joint statement of the IG with our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (see page 23 of *The Internationalist* No. 1), and refers to the goal of a *fusion between the IG and the LQB*. In other words, the charge is an outright fraud.

In introducing the first issue of *The Internationalist*, we cited the Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky's declaration that "the attitude of the revolutionary press toward its readers is the most important test of a political line." Writing in 1929 after Stalin expelled him from the Communist International and exiled him from the Soviet Union, Trotsky noted:

"The reformists deliberately lie to their readers in order to preserve the bourgeois system. The centrists employ lies to cloak their vacillations, their uncertainty, their capitulation, and their adventures. They do not trust themselves and therefore do not trust their readers."

In contrast, he stated:

"The politics of communism can only gain from a truthful clarification of reality. Untruth is needed for salvaging false reputations, but not for the education of the masses. The workers need the truth as an instrument of revolutionary action."

In the interests of such clarification of reality, we will expose how the new *WV* lies, and to what purpose.

***WV*'s "Potemkin Village" of Straw Men**

Founded in 1971, the Spartacist League's *Workers Vanguard* acquired a reputation for accuracy and the hard-hitting integrity of a newspaper seeking to present the program of revolutionary Marxism unblunted by adaptation to the lying ideology of capitalist society. Yet for going on a year now, *WV* has been ripping this hard-earned reputation to shreds. Given the thankless task of defending the indefensible, it has resorted to obvious distortions and sheer inventions. As a result, the

glaring internal contradictions in *WV*'s articles give the (correct) impression that its unlucky polemicists are making it up as they go along. One blatant example was in the *WV* No. 648 (5 July 1996) article announcing our expulsion. The piece accused expelled *Workers Vanguard* editor Jan Norden of having a "Stalinoid bent," and then gave as proof of his political "pathology" that back in 1973 Norden was too harsh in his appraisal of the Stalinist-led Vietnam National Liberation Front. To say the least, this doesn't add up. Inside the ICL, members are told the Internationalist Group (IG) is **obsessed** with "destroying" the ICL—while the latest *WV* article **complains** that there are not enough polemics in *The Internationalist* against the ICL. We are called "defectors"—when the **fact** is that we were bureaucratically expelled as the culmination of a frenzied purge campaign.

WV calls us a latter-day version of Michel Pablo, whose despair about the capacity of the proletariat for conscious revolutionary struggle set the stage for his liquidation of Trotsky's Fourth International. At the same time, it repeatedly accuses us of having *too much* confidence in the capacity of the working class to undertake wide-ranging struggles today. The ICL leadership stakes its all on the perspective that this is a bad period in which the outlook for revolutionary struggle is grim on a world scale. Meanwhile, it has begun to rewrite the party's history and revise basic conceptions that have been key to the party's program and intervention. While *WV* talks about the need for polemics, ICL members have proven strikingly unable to defend the leadership's story in the face of any kind of systematic questioning.

The scaffolding on which the *WV* 663 article is built is the repeated assertion that our paper exhibits "disdain for polemical struggle," a "lack of polemics," a "notable absence of any attempt...to define itself as opposed to other organizations and tendencies which claim the mantle of Trotskyism"; and that *The Internationalist* is an "uncritical non-polemical new journal" pretending to be a "mass paper." Anyone who picks up *The Internationalist* can see that it neither is nor pretends to be a "mass" press. It is an instrument for cohering a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group, intervening in the class struggle with the Marxist program.

As for polemics, we're left wondering: should we list them in alphabetical order or by country? Our first issue polemicized against Stalinists and Social Democrats, the strategy of guerrilla warfare, the Mexican EZLN and EPR (while defending them against state repression), American Maoists and SWPers, the French Communist Party, Italian Rifondazione Comunista and Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores.

Is *WV* referring only to polemics against self-professed Trotskyist organizations? Our paper polemicized against the Mandeliste United Secretariat; the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, Lutte Ouvrière and Pouvoir Ouvrier in France; Workers Power in Britain; the Cliffites; the Bolshevik Tendency; and in Latin America, the followers of Bolivian centrist Guillermo Lora, the deceased Argentine adventurer Nahuel Moreno, the Partido Obrero/Causa Operaria tendency led by Jorge Altamira and the Brazilian Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista.

Or maybe only polemics against the International Communist League count. Our origins and relation to the ICL are explained at length in "Introducing *The Internationalist*," "Internationalist Group Founded" and the "Joint Statement of Commitment to Reforge the Fourth International" signed by the IG and the Brazilian LQB.

But possibly according to *WV*, a polemic may be called a polemic only when it occupies an entire article. After all: "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less'" (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*). Yet the first issue of *The Internationalist* contains two lengthy polemics devoted entirely to the ICL ("The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles" and "The ICL Leaders' Cover Story: Smokescreen for a Betrayal").

Ah, *WV* grouches, but those are reprints of previous documents. At the same time, it says: "The early issues of our journal *Spartacist* offer a point of comparison." Yes, and in fact the polemical material in the first issue of *Spartacist* consisted overwhelmingly of reprints. (Early issues of *Spartacist* also contained what today's *WV* would no doubt mock as "long-winded, descriptive, journalistic articles"—which in fact were excellent examples of revolutionary journalism—under headlines like "Negro Struggle in the North," "Harlem Riot and After," "Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking," "Texas Farm Strike," etc.)

Then perhaps what *WV* means is that a polemic doesn't "count" unless it is printed on the cover! In any case, our first publication was the July 1996 bulletin *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, in which not only the cover but the other 95 pages were devoted to polemicizing against the ICL leadership.

The *WV* 633 article's claim that our paper is non-polemical is self-evidently false, and the political conclusions drawn from this invention are fake. Is there something behind the charge other than the attempt to build a straw man to knock down? We can only guess that the ICL leadership is unhappy that our paper did not manifest the sort of single-minded fixation on them, to the exclusion of key events in the world at large, that they would like us to display.

Underestimating the Peasantry? Overestimating the Truckers?

The distinctive characteristic of *WV*'s polemics against us, and of the method used by the ICL leadership in the internal fights that preceded the expulsion of the cadres who founded the Internationalist Group, is the construction of a whole polemical edifice on the basis of a false charge. And if a particular invention doesn't work the first time, they just recycle it.

Thus after *WV* 648 claimed last July that the 1994 "Declaration of Fraternal Relations" between the ICL and Luta Metalúrgica (precursor of the LQB)—which the ICL leadership now renounces—didn't even mention Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, we showed that permanent revolution was cited *twice* in that declaration. No matter, *WV* 663 simply repeats the charge about "the glaring omission of the program

of permanent revolution" in that declaration, and then accuses us of "refusing to raise permanent revolution" in the joint statement of the IG and the LQB. Of course, that statement explicitly incorporates the 1994 ICL/LM declaration, which stresses: "As the tribune of the oppressed, it is indispensable that the Leninist party raise the banner of struggle against the oppression of women, rooted in the institution of the bourgeois family—a question of utmost importance in Brazil—as part of the program of permanent revolution."

WV then uses its falsification as the foundation for an elaborate house of cards—claiming in a subhead in the latest article: "IG 'Disappears' Permanent Revolution"! Yet anyone who opens our paper to page 4 can read for themselves a section of the founding statement of the Internationalist Group, beginning: "Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution sums up the experience of the three Russian Revolutions and constitutes the program for new Octobers in the countries of belated capitalist development, where the unresolved tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can be fulfilled only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, by means of the socialist revolution which must be extended to the centers of world capitalism."

Meanwhile, the front page of the first issue of the LQB's *Vanguarda Operária* (a newspaper about which the ICL has written not one word, because it isn't supposed to exist) raises permanent revolution prominently in the second paragraph of its article, "The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil: Who We Are and What We Want." But does that matter to the ICL leadership? Not in the least.

In *The Internationalist* No. 1, we criticized *WV*'s recent claim that Spanish colonialism was "feudal" and that "feudal peonage in the countryside...continue[s] to plague the countries of Latin America." We pointed out that Spanish colonialism had a "combined character, in which feudal and even pre-feudal forms of servitude were used in the interests of production for the capitalist market...." And we noted that "the myth of Latin American 'feudalism,' now repeated by the Spartacist League, was invented by the Stalinized Communist parties to justify their stagist politics." In fact, the agrarian question in Latin America today is a product of *capitalism*. The peasants' struggle is not against feudalists but against capitalist *latifundistas* (large landowners), who are often the very same people as the industrialists and bankers. Now *WV* digs in and defends its earlier statements, while backpedaling to references to "remnants of pre-industrial society" and seeking refuge in a quotation from Trotsky referring to "semifeudal" conditions.

Grasping at straw men, *WV* then tries to buttress its claim that the IG "disappears" permanent revolution by saying that we never talk about it in the article on Mexico. In fact, the first part of the article contains a head-on polemic against the Stalinist/guerrillaist dogmas of two-stage revolution and "socialism in one country," and stresses: "Marxists seek to organize the workers' class struggle, culminating in a mass proletarian-led insurrection, drawing in other oppressed sectors (such as the peasant and urban poor) behind the working class led by its revolutionary party." Trying to cover itself in advance, the *WV* article adds: "We await Norden's usual lawyer's argument that their main ar-



Members of Brazil's landless peasant movement occupy plantation owned by lumber company in state of Paraná. Peasant struggle in Latin America today is against capitalist landowners, not feudalism. Photo by Sebastião Salgado is from book, *Terra—Struggle of the Landless* (1997), published by Phaidon Press.

ticle on Mexico, nine pages long, is only the first of two parts!" (Part two of that article is printed in this issue, starting on page 33.)

But consider this: in the entire article from which *WV* quoted Trotsky's reference to "semifeudal" conditions ("War and the Fourth International," June 1934), *nowhere* does he mention permanent revolution. With *WV*'s new method of vapid point-scoring, it should by all rights launch an absurd attack on Trotsky for "'disappearing' permanent revolution."

Arguing by induction from a deduction from a fraud, *WV* 633 claims that "If the IG denies that Latin America remains saddled with an inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism, then it is theoretically dismissing the program of permanent revolution for that region outright." This argument not only demonstrates that *WV* misunderstands the nature of Spanish colonialism, which had a combined character as noted above and which played a decisive role in the primitive accumulation of capital (see Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 31), but also *distorts the fundamentals of permanent revolution*.

Trotsky's theory is based on the fact that in the countries of belated capitalist development, the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remain unfulfilled; it does not depend on there being feudal or even semi-feudal relations in the countryside. *WV* should ponder this: in Trotsky's summary "What Is the Permanent Revolution? Basic Postulates" in his book *Permanent Revolution* (1930), not once does he mention feudal or semi-feudal conditions.

And consider this as well: *WV* 633 notes that "As Chiang Kai-shek's bloody suppression of the 1925-27 Chinese Revo-

lution showed, the second stage of 'two-stage revolution' is mass murder of communists!" Very true. Stalin and Bukharin attempted to justify their fatal collaborationist policies with references to "feudalism" in China. In a polemic against them, Trotsky wrote:

"Unless one is playing with words, there is no feudalism in China.... Of course, in China poverty and bondage take inhumane forms such as were hardly to be encountered even in the age of feudalism. Nonetheless, the attempt [by Stalin and Bukharin] to create feudalism in China, still more its prevalence, relies not on facts, but on the naked desire to justify collaboration with the bourgeoisie."

—"New Opportunities for the Chinese Revolution, New Tasks, and New Mistakes" (September 1927)

It was precisely through the experience of China, where there was no feudalism, that Trotsky generalized the theory of permanent revolution, first formulated for Russia, to the colonial and semi-colonial countries on a world scale.

We will take up the question of "feudalism" in Latin America in greater depth in an upcoming issue. If the ICL were engaged in a serious discussion of revolutionary strategy rather than petty word games, it would consider the disorientation that its incorrect formulation can cause. Yet no such scruples stand in the way of its blindly defending the statement in the interest of prestige politics.

Of a piece with *WV*'s claim that we "disappear" permanent revolution is its mere assertion that we have a perspective of "economism," that is, of glorifying the workers' economic struggles and existing consciousness rather than fighting for

revolutionary leadership. In our article on last December's French truckers' strike, we observed that unlike recent defensive workers' struggles in Europe, this strike was "offensive" in that it sought to win new gains for a relatively low-paid sector. *WV* takes this as the basis to assert that we present the image of "a kind of universal 'fightback'" which serves our supposed "denial of the role of consciousness, and the indispensable necessity of a Leninist vanguard party in fighting for that consciousness"; that we "suggest that the working class will acquire revolutionary consciousness 'spontaneously' in the course of its economic struggles, as those struggles 'inevitably' get bigger and bigger and more and more militant."

Let's look at these remarks carefully. *WV* puts several words in quotation marks—"fightback," "spontaneously," "inevitably." But *none* of them appeared in our article. Nor did we ever say or "suggest" any such thing. In fact, what we wrote is the exact *opposite* of the position *WV* tries to put in our mouths. Our article stresses:

"What is required above all is the forging of a genuinely communist, working-class vanguard party based on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky for world socialist revolution.

"...the fact that the struggle did not expand beyond narrow trade-union limits was in good part due to the action and inaction of the 'far-leftists' of yesterday, who today are a big chunk of the mid-level and even upper-level union leaderships....

"There is a burning need to build an authentically Trotskyist party in France.... And in order to lead the workers to a consciousness of their own class interests and a struggle for power—to transform the proletariat, in Karl Marx's expression, from a class *in* itself to a class *for* itself—a revolutionary party must be forged that puts forward a *transitional program* leading to workers revolution....

"A revolutionary workers party must drive home the fundamental lesson that the fight for the emancipation of the working class cannot be a narrow union action, but must include and champion the cause of all the oppressed....

"...a general strike only *poses* the fundamental question of a struggle for power. To resolve this, the urgent need is for a Trotskyist party to lead the fight to victory. On *this* question of questions, [the] centrists are silent.... *the central lesson of the French workers struggles of 1995 and 1996 is precisely the indispensability of an authentically Leninist party that can intervene in the explosive mass struggles to lead them toward a fight for a workers government.*" [emphasis in original]

WV's claim is simply made up. It is the height of fakery to claim that the perspective we put forward has something in common with the outlook of the venal Samuel Gompers, a pillar of the pro-imperialist union bureaucracy who in *WV's* description held that "the only purpose of unions was to fight for more material goodies under capitalism."

In stubborn denial of everything we write, say and do, *WV* pretends we *really* hold the opposite. It pretends to see what the idealist philosopher Kant called the inner "thing in itself," the existence of which must be accepted on faith. This is the method the LCP called "illusionism." It is deeply dishonest and corrosive to genuine revolutionary consciousness, because it makes people affirm things that are patently false.

Why does *WV* want to claim that what we wrote (quoted

above) is somehow "economist"? Their claim corresponds to the underlying view of the ICL leadership, derived from its outlook on the current period, that to pose a fight for revolutionary leadership in the struggles of the working class at this time is necessarily economist. But Trotsky's call for a program of *transitional demands* was formulated precisely in order "to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution."

A Defeatist Perspective

Through the intervention of a Leninist party, workers struggles such as those that have rocked France can be led towards a conscious revolutionary challenge to the capitalist order. But as we noted in our article on France, "In effect, the ICL shares with centrists like Workers Power and Altamira's Partido Obrero the conception that these struggles are necessarily limited to the capitalist framework." The ICL's sour response to these struggles accords with its view that this is a bad period worldwide, in which not much can be done. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR was a defeat of historic proportions for the world working class. But rather than taking the lessons of this defeat to the most combative sectors of the working class and oppressed, for whom these lessons are crucial in order to move forward, the ICL leadership has drawn *defeatist* conclusions, which are developing a logic and momentum of their own.

What is characteristic of the present period is not that the working class is quiescent or that its struggles lead only to defeat and hence openings for intervention by authentic Trotskyists are supposedly few and far between. While the class struggle has continued and even sharpened, the defeat represented by the destruction of the Soviet Union has decimated the ostensibly socialist left. The crisis of revolutionary leadership is as acute as ever, and those who fight for Trotskyism must seek to intervene to resolve that crisis. The various reformist and centrist pseudo-socialists all buy the lie that communism is dead, and set about writing their own epitaphs; the ICL leadership is buying into this bourgeois myth at one remove.

It is striking to compare the ICL's approach with statements by the French Lutte Ouvrière (LO) organization. In a resolution at its recent national conference, LO stated that the "possibilities for revolutionary militants to play a leading role" at the present time "are slim" and "we must not cultivate leftist illusions about the current possibilities by overstating the significance of the recent movements" (*Lutte de Classe*, December 1996). In Britain, Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party used the defeat of the 1984-85 miners strike to preach a "theory of the downturn," which the ICL effectively polemicized against as a defeatist recipe for accommodation to the status quo. In the United States, illusions in the "stability" of American capitalism after the defeat of the revolutionary wave following World War I played an important role in the degeneration of the Communist Party, as James P. Cannon noted in *The First Ten Years of American Communism*. In each case, defeatism served and fueled a rightist course.

It does no good for the ICL leadership to argue that recent anti-fascist demonstrations in Chicago and Germany somehow

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After breach of Berlin Wall, November 1989. In absence of revolutionary leadership, nascent political revolution in DDR was overtaken by capitalist counterrevolution.

terminal collapse of Stalinism poses great dangers for the Soviet Union. But the ensuing loss of political and moral authority of the Stalinists, combined with the broad-based, repressive police regime, also...

Photo caption from Winter 1990-91 *Spartacist* points to absence of revolutionary leadership in the DDR. To state this basic fact is now demagogically attacked as denying ICL's role.

prove that its shameful *desertion* in the middle of a key class battle in Brazil is all right after all. This is the sort of demagogic argument that has been used over the decades by the CP to excuse its betrayals. The Chicago demonstration was a blow against the KKK, and we wholeheartedly defend the participants in that action who continue to face state repression. The German section of the ICL played a good role in the recent Berlin demonstration against Nazi skinheads. Yet prior to this it did nothing for an entire month about a hunger strike of Turkish immigrants which was supported by Kurdish immigrants, and it has also rewritten the party's history to denounce as "tokenistic" its effective defense of an immigrant hostel in Berlin in 1993. As we have consistently argued, the tendency toward abstentionism and passive propagandism is uneven and unfinished, and will likely follow a zigzag course.

Crucially, in Brazil the ICL *assumed responsibilities in the class struggle*, involving itself in a situation where the choice was posed to fight or get out—and they got out, covering their trail with lies and slanders against those who refused to follow this shameful course. Telling this truth is not trivial "chicken baiting," as *WV* pretends. It is a *programmatic question*: a revolutionary party does not say one thing and do another. A Leninist vanguard can be built only by saying what is, as part of intervention in the class struggle to carry out the revolutionary program. The betrayal in Brazil speaks volumes about the course undertaken by the ICL leadership.

In insisting that around the world, this is a terrible period for revolutionary struggle, the ICL leadership is not just responding to the destruction of the Soviet Union. It is giving voice to a mood of routinism and weariness among a substantial section of the ICL's cadres, particularly in the United States, where almost two decades of Reagan-style reaction—under both Republicans and Democrats—have taken a real toll on the organization. In presenting us as troublemaking optimists who had to be gotten rid of for the smooth functioning of the self-described "new I.S." (International Secretariat), the ICL leaders reflected this mood, as it brought forth choruses of "get out, get out" at party meetings. When we wouldn't get out, we were purged.

Did Stalinists "Lead" Counterrevolution in the DDR?

The *WV* No. 663 article returns to the theme that as a spokesman for the ICL, during a January 1995 talk at Berlin's Humboldt University, "Norden disappeared the central purpose and intent of the intervention of the ICL in East Germany during the tumultuous events of 1989-90: to organize for a political revolution against the Stalinist regime and the threat of capitalist counterrevolution." The article charges that Norden "repeatedly denied the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard." Even the most cursory reading of this speech, reprinted in the "special ICL bulletin" titled *Norden's "Group": Shamefaced Defectors From Trotskyism* (June 1996), shows that this is yet another in the endless series of flat-out inventions. That speech *highlighted* the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard fighting to forge a revolutionary leadership of the working class.

What *is* true—as Norden stated at Humboldt and *as was repeatedly stated by the ICL* during and after the tumultuous events of 1989-90—was that the crisis of revolutionary leadership was not overcome in Germany. The ICL strained its forces to the maximum to bring the Trotskyist program to the working masses in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) at this crucial moment when the question of revolution vs. counterrevolution hung in the balance, with worldwide consequences. It was an intervention of which every member of the ICL can be justly proud and which exposed all the pretensions of the fakers who claim to be Trotskyists while they directly or indirectly acted as handmaidens to counterrevolution by tailing after Social Democracy. In the decisive hour, as Norden emphasized in his Humboldt speech, we stood at our posts on the barricades, as genuine Trotskyists must. Yet in the short time

available to us and in the face of enormous odds, the ICL was not able to win the leadership of the mass of the working class and lead the political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy that was necessary to prevent capitalist reunification. To state that fact in no way detracts from the ICL's revolutionary intervention in Germany in 1989-90. Only a poseur would pretend otherwise.

In the service of a rightward turn and an unprincipled purge, the party's own history is being rewritten. Six years after the destruction of the bureaucratically deformed workers state of the DDR, the ICL leaders began to argue that "the Stalinists had *led* the counterrevolution" (*WV* No. 663). This new line was put forward by Albert St. John as the supposedly crowning blow against Norden in the 1995-96 fight inside the ICL over Germany. When we pointed out in our bulletin, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism...*, that this analysis was contrary to what happened in the DDR and counterposed to the Trotskyist analysis of the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the ICL leadership simply dug in, justifying, deepening and widening its revisionist conception. As we pointed out in our bulletin and again in our 13 September 1996 leaflet, "The ICL Leaders' Cover Story: Smokescreen for a Betrayal" (reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 1), the Stalinists "*prepared the way* for counterrevolution" and they "*play a counterrevolutionary role,*" but they did not *lead* the counterrevolution, as the ICL leadership now claims.

We have pointed out that this line is historically inaccurate and theoretically untenable. It also was *not* the policy of the International Communist League at the time of the events in East Europe and the USSR, neither in theory nor in practice. The ICL had always emphasized the dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a parasitic, nationalist caste resting atop and deriving its privileges from the collectivized economy as it sought to balance between imperialism and the proletariat. In a key article, "How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled" (*WV* No. 564, 27 November 1992), before the new line was invented, the ICL wrote:

"The dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the conflicting political appetites it harbored, remained even after the bloody purges of the 1930s exterminated any remnant of the Bolshevik 'Old Guard.' But while resting on and deriving its privileges from proletarian property forms, the Stalinist bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to their defense. It could play no independent role in society. Under the impact of any sharp frontal assault, either from the revolutionary proletariat or the counterrevolution, the bureaucracy would shatter."

The article quoted from Trotsky's seminal work, "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933), which states: "A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution." Trotsky did not here identify the bureaucracy as such as "the active forces of the counterrevolution" in the workers state.

The 1992 *Workers Vanguard* article on the USSR emphasized: "The utter incapacity of the bureaucracy to play any independent role was forcefully demonstrated in the events of

August 1991." The article pointed out that behind the seeming incompetence of the coup plotters of the "Emergency State Committee" in August 1991, who didn't make a move to arrest Yeltsin or even to cut his phone lines to Washington, "lay the fact that these stodgy bureaucrats had no alternative to the program of restoration and their refusal to in any way antagonize the imperialist powers." The ICL clearly identified who was leading counterrevolution in the Soviet Union when in August 1991 it issued a leaflet (printed in 50,000 copies in Russian) titled: "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" This correct intervention would have been impossible if the ICL had been guided at the time by the false conception that the Stalinist bureaucracy as such was *leading* the counterrevolution.

And in East Germany what happened in reality was that in the face of the relentless drive for *Anschluss* (annexation) by the West German bourgeoisie and its Social Democratic instruments, the East German Stalinist bureaucracy collapsed and went along with reunification, selling out the DDR. The document of the second international conference of the ICL noted: "Lacking any viable perspective, the bureaucracy simply collapsed" ("For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!", *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 47-48, Winter 1992-93). This is far from the only place that the ICL stated this at the time. Today *WV* 663 claims that Norden "tried to amnesty the SED by claiming it had been 'paralyzed' in the face of counterrevolution. In the political struggle against this revisionism in our organization, we argued that far from being 'paralyzed,' the Stalinists had *led* the counterrevolution" (italics in original). But let's look at what the ICL said in 1989-90. The article in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 495, 9 February 1990) headlined "Gorbachev Yielding to a Fourth Reich: Stop the Sellout of East Germany!" stated:

"Meanwhile the Social Democracy (SPD) has seized the initiative as the spearhead of reunification...."

"Yet the response of the SED-PDS tops to this polarization is paralysis and collapse."

This came more than a month after the 3 January 1990 anti-fascist demonstration at Treptow, at a time when the German bourgeoisie's drive to capitalist reunification had gone into high gear.

Or again, the article commenting on the 18 March 1990 elections to the Volkskammer (the DDR parliament), which were won by the counterrevolutionary forces pushing for capitalist reunification, stated:

"PDS, VL, KPD and the rest of the opportunist left go along with the Greater German intoxication. But despite this paralysis and capitulation, there are plenty of people who don't want to see a capitalist Greater Germany."

— "Push to Fourth Reich Threatens All Working People," *WV* No. 499, 6 April 1990

The question of who led the counterrevolution is not an exercise in semantics or hairsplitting. During its intervention in the DDR in 1989-90, the ICL emphasized over and over that the Social Democrats were the Trojan Horse of counterrevolution, and that the Stalinists capitulated to and embraced capitalist reunification. As we wrote in our bulletin last July: "The Stalinist tops were paralyzed because they saw no way to maintain the deformed workers state they fed off of within the framework of

'socialism in one country'; hence they went over to counterrevolution, seeking to bargain for the best terms for themselves" (*From a Drift Toward Abstention...*).

We also pointed out in our bulletin that while the ICL documents of 1989-90 do not say that the Stalinist SED "led the counterrevolution," you can find precisely that claim in the publications of the Stalinophobes of the "Bolshevik Tendency" and David North's Workers League (now called the Socialist Equality Party). Thus the German BT group, at the time called the Gruppe IV Internationale, put out a leaflet in December 1989 under the headline, "No to the Modrow Regime—Main Danger to the DDR!" (Modrow was at the time the SED prime minister of the DDR.) The German Northites, meanwhile, published an article denouncing the ICL section in Germany: "The TLD [Trotskyist League of Germany] ignores the fact that today the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies from Gorbachev to Gysi are themselves the biggest supporters of capitalism and push its restoration" (from a leaflet titled, "The TLD—Provocative Defenders of Stalinism," *Neue Arbeiterpresse*, 15 December 1989).

Even more clearly, the election program of the Northite BSA for the March 1990 Volkskammer elections stated: "In the DDR, the Stalinist bureaucracy is the driving force for the carrying through of capitalist restoration." And when the ICL leadership today accuses the Internationalist Group of being "Pabloists of the second mobilization," they only echo this charge from the

BSA, whose election program described the TLD as "one of the most wretched by-products of Pabloism."

What has happened here is that, reflecting the defeatist conclusions it has drawn from the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the rest of East Europe, the ICL leadership is moving toward the analysis of capitalist restoration in Germany and the rest of the Soviet bloc put forward by the Northites and BT. These groups (and others with a similar line, such as the British Workers Power group and the Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira) claimed the Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution and accused the Spartacists of "defending Stalinism" because these Stalinophobes were in fact *covering for Social Democracy*, which really was, as the ICL said at the time, spearheading counterrevolution in the DDR. In contrast, the issue of *Spartakist* sold at the 3 January 1990 Treptow anti-fascist demonstration stressed that "the greatest danger facing the DDR today" was "Brandt/Lafontaine's SPD, which intends to export capitalism to the DDR 'democratically'" (reprinted in *WV* supplement of 12 January 1990).

In fact, the call for the Treptow demonstration issued by the German section of the ICL stated unambiguously that the Social Democrats of West and East Germany were leading the drive for capitalist reunification: "The SPD/SDP is the chief instrument to bring about such a Greater Germany." In her speech to the crowd of 250,000 at Treptow, Spartakist Renate Dahlhaus noted that the Stalinist SED's monopoly of power had been broken and called for a new workers party, stating: "Our economy is suffering from waste and obsolescence. The SED party dictatorship has shown that it is incompetent to fight this." She stressed: "The means for selling out the DDR is the Social Democracy—that had better be known to us all," noting, as even *WV* is now constrained to recall: "West German imperialism aided by the SPD—can turn this political revolution into a social counterrevolution." It was this crucial truth that brought howls of rage from the West German imperialists and their instruments in the East, stampeding the collapsing Stalinist bureaucracy into joining its voice to calls for reunification.

Willful Confusionism Over Kerensky and Kornilov

A correct understanding of these historic events continues to be essential for orienting Trotskyists today. Certainly, if the Stalinists had really been the leaders of the counterrevolution in the DDR, it would have been *essential* to say so at the time. Can there be any more basic question in fighting a counterrevolution than knowing who is leading it? This comes down to very concrete matters. In *The Internationalist* No. 1, we pointedly asked: if the Stalinists "led" the counterrevolution in the DDR, what was the ICL doing on the platform with them at Treptow? After all, the ICL approached the leadership of the SED proposing a united-front anti-fascist mobilization to protest the defacing of the Red Army war memorial there. Now *WV* readers are supposed to accept the grotesque idea that at Treptow the ICL proposed and carried out a *united front with the "leaders" of social counterrevolution in a deformed workers state!*

WV No. 494 (26 January 1990) reproduced announcement of Treptow anti-fascist mobilization from Neues Deutschland. Caption noted that ad listed ICL section as part of united front. Today ICL claims SED Stalinists "led" the counterrevolution. "United front" with leaders of counterrevolution?

The ICL's proposal to the SED tops of a united-front mobilization at Treptow was based on the Trotskyist understanding of the contradictory character of the Stalinist caste, that while the SED tops were capitulating to imperialism, elements of the SED (which was simultaneously the organ of the bureaucracy and a mass party) could be won to the fight against counterrevolution. Recall that the reason *why* the ICL leadership came up with its new anti-Trotskyist line was in order to argue that it was unprincipled to intervene to seek to break potential revolutionaries from the Communist Platform of the PDS, since the SED had "led" the counterrevolution. If that were true in 1994-95, then it would have been all the more so in 1989-90. The BT, which claimed the SED was the "main danger," denounced the ICL's role at Treptow as a "debacle" and criticized us for not inviting the Social Democrats to speak. We did not do so for a very simple reason: the Social Democrats really were the "Trojan horse of counterrevolution," as we repeatedly stated at the time. And Trotskyists do not make united fronts with those leading a counterrevolution, we use the tactic of united fronts in the fight to stop them.

WV No. 663 shows how the ICL leadership twists and turns in contortions to uphold its new revisionist line. We are told that Treptow was essentially the same thing as the Bolshevik policy towards the August 1917 Kornilov revolt under the capitalist Kerensky government in Russia. Their reasoning is that since the Kerensky government played a counterrevolutionary role, and since Lenin and Trotsky argued that it was necessary to make a military bloc with it, therefore by analogy it is all right to make a united front with the "leaders" of counterrevolution in the DDR. But let us see what Trotsky had to say about the Kornilov revolt:

"During the preceding months, the Bolsheviks tens and hundreds of times demanded that the Mensheviks join them in a common struggle against the mobilizing forces of the counterrevolution. Even on May 27, while Tseretelli was clamoring for repressions against Bolshevik sailors, Trotsky declared during the session of the Petrograd Soviet, 'When the time comes and the counterrevolutionary general will try to slip the noose around the neck of the revolution, the Cadets will be busy soaping the rope, but the sailors of Kronstadt will come to fight and die side by side with us.' These words were fully confirmed. In the midst of Kornilov's campaign, Kerensky appealed to the sailors of the cruiser *Aurora*, begging them to assume the defense of the Winter Palace. These sailors were, without exception, Bolsheviks. They hated Kerensky. Their hatred did not hinder them from vigilantly guarding the Winter Palace. Their representatives came to the Kresty Prison for an interview with Trotsky, who was jailed there, and they asked, 'Why not arrest Kerensky?' But they put the query half in jest: the sailors understood that it was necessary first to smash Kornilov and after that to attend to Kerensky. Thanks to a correct political leadership, the sailors of the *Aurora* understood more than Thaelmann's Central Committee." — "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat" (1932)

Thaelmann was the leader of the Stalinized German Com-

munist Party (KPD) who upheld the theory of "social fascism"—that the "main danger" in Germany in the early '30s was not Hitler's Nazis but the reformist Social Democrats, and therefore any united front with them to smash the Nazis was ruled out. His "proof" was that the SPD was counterrevolutionary just like the Nazis. Thus the KPD allowed Hitler to take power without a shot being fired. The same kind of reasoning that led to tragedy in Germany in 1933 reappears as farce in the mouths of the ICL leaders. If their misapplication of the analogy to Kerensky were to be taken seriously, and not as simply toying with words as a factional ploy, it would absurdly translate into calling for a "united front" *with the tsarist general Kornilov*, who was leading the counterrevolutionary assault on Petrograd in September 1917. Or it would mean a "united front" with Kerensky in July 1917, when he unleashed the assault on the Bolsheviks and arrested their leaders.

We have said throughout that the SED-PDS leadership played a counterrevolutionary role in 1989-90, that the Stalinist bureaucrats sold out the DDR and made a gift of the East German deformed workers state to German imperialism. But the ICL leaders simultaneously want to insist that the Stalinists *led* the counterrevolution and that it was correct to make a united front with them. When pushed to explain this contradiction, they sometimes suggest that the Stalinists "led" the counterrevolution only *after* the Treptow mobilization. But what did the ICL say about the SED-PDS *after* Treptow? We have already cited some quotations from this period, but here is another, from an article on the Spartakist campaign for the March 1990 Volkskammer election:

"The Manifesto warns, as we have repeatedly done, against the SPD Trojan horse which seeks to bring about capitalist reunification painted in social-democratic pink. It alerts the working people to the several parties, including the PDS, which say they want to fight the sellout but then capitulate in practice."

—"Gorbachev Caves In to a Fourth Reich: No to D-Mark Anschluss of East Germany!" WV No. 496, 23 February 1990

There are plenty more such quotations in the bound volumes of *Workers Vanguard* which any ICL supporter can (and should) check for themselves.

The ICL leadership may have come up with its new line primarily for factional reasons, but in digging in to defend it and extend it they not only revise the historical facts and implicitly renounce the line put forward by the ICL in Germany at this historical turning point, they also take a big step toward abandoning the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism.

The ICL leadership presents its Kornilov analogy in a twilight of confusionism in which all cats are grey and crucial distinctions are deliberately obscured. To put it another way: what we have here is a cynical attempt at obfuscation dressed up as "high Trotskyism." The *social counterrevolution* in the DDR was orchestrated by the powerful West German bourgeoisie, with the Social Democrats acting as its bloodhounds. In fighting against capitalist reunification, it was legitimate to propose occasional united-front actions to the Stalinists precisely because they were *not* leading the counterrevolution,

even though they were capitulating to it. Not coincidentally, it would be interesting to hear the ICL leaders explain how and why, if Stalinist leaders led the counterrevolution, they ended up in Moabit prison. Former DDR leader Erich Honecker got out on grounds of ill health, but the entire rest of the SED Politburo is still on trial before the “victors justice” of the German capitalist state.

The ICL leaders’ new line not only rewrites the past, it can only lead to terrible disorientation in the future.

The IG and the Revolutionary Tendency

Perhaps the strangest part of the latest *WV* polemic is the injunction that we must act in exactly the same manner as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), the forebear of the ICL, which as the article notes, “was bureaucratically expelled from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1963.” Like a number of other statements on the purge against us, this could be read as a tacit admission that we were, in fact, the objects of bureaucratic expulsion. Thus a 7 June 1996 letter from Jim Robertson (reprinted in the ICL bulletin on our expulsions) states:

“Comrades of the ICL, knowing these comrades so richly deserved to be thrown out, must be cautioned against the false syllogism that if you expel miscreants and that is a good thing and it is bureaucratic, then being bureaucratic is good.”

But historical experience shows that once the door is opened to suppressing Leninist norms of democratic centralism, it becomes the practice.

The first issue of *The Internationalist* stressed that we uphold the RT’s historic fight for the continuity of Trotskyism against the degeneration of the SWP, expressed centrally through the latter’s “embrace of Castroism, the existing black leadership (both liberal and nationalist), and the SWP’s reunification with Pablo/Mandel.” Yet we do not draw an exact parallel between our situation today and the situation of the RT in 1963. Instead, it is more as if the future founders of the RT had been expelled in 1960 in a pre-emptive strike at the point when key differences began to surface. By the time the expulsions occurred in 1963, the SWP leadership had amply demonstrated the centrist nature of its positions. At the same time, while on the formal programmatic level we are much closer to the ICL than the RT was to the SWP leadership in 1963, in Brazil in 1996 the ICL leadership committed an outright *betrayal* with consequences in the class struggle. This action, for which our expulsions paved the way,

charts a course towards centrism undertaken, but not completed, by the self-described “new I.S.” of the ICL. In fighting against this course, while supporting every positive action taken by the ICL, we are being true to the struggle begun by the RT over three decades ago, and to the worldwide struggle to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International.

While *WV* refers to the history of the RT, it talks about the ICL leadership having urged us to exercise our rights in the party. This is a sick joke: the “new I.S.” willfully and repeatedly *violated the party’s statutes* in its frenzy to purge us from the organization. The SL/U.S. statutes explicitly protect the confidentiality of communications not only “within a tendency or faction” but “between individuals” in the party, yet a witchhunt was carried out against Norden for talking on the phone to Negrete—both of whom were members of the ICL’s highest body, the International Executive Committee, until they were thrown off that body because of their political stands.

WV No. 663 says that the RT fight “burned into our consciousness the fact that minorities *can also be right*” (emphasis in the original). Yet in summing up the “Germany fight” against Norden, Albert St. John proclaimed: “You can’t be right against the whole party.” *WV* also repeats again the cynical claim that we supposedly refused to argue differences, allegedly proven because, crime of crimes, we would not be stampeded into forming a faction. The point of trying to drive us into forming a faction was to *limit* the circulation of our documents. And in any case measures were taken to drastically limit the number of pages written by us that would be circulated, as I.S. secretary Parks proclaimed: “No, we’re not going to circulate your documents.”

The method of spewing out one demonstrably false accusation after another, used in the *WV* “polemics” against us, was perfected during the “fights” over Germany, Mexico and Brazil. It is instructive to check the veracity of *WV*’s claims of solicitousness for our internal rights against some key episodes from the purge.

- When Negrete, the principal leader of the Grupo Espartaquista de México from its inception, objected to a series of inaccurate statements about work in Brazil, an international delegation was dispatched. At a 14 April 1996 meeting, he and Socorro were suddenly charged with supposed anti-internationalism in the Mexican section. When they put forward a motion calling for “systematic verification” of each of the accusations, it was voted down at the behest of the delegation.

- Three days later, the International Secretariat declared the discussion closed and put Negrete on “leave” against his will—in reality, a suspension. This “leave” was later renewed shortly after he moved to New York on the orders of the I.S. When he asked the national organization secretary of the SL/U.S. what he was allowed to do while on “leave,” the answer was: “*One thing you cannot do is organize an opposition.*” Negrete was on this forced “leave” for 37 out of the 53 days from the 17 April I.S. meeting to his expulsion on 8 June 1996!

- When Socorro wrote a detailed document on April 30 refuting the false accusations, the response the *next day*

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was to trump up charges that she had broken discipline on May Day. When she stated this was not true, she was put on trial. The party statutes guarantee that defendants in a party trial will be informed of the trial date at least seven days before that date, yet in the frame-up trial against Socorro she was given four days' notice of the date of the trial in New York, while she was at that time in Mexico City.

- The trial was based on outright fabrications, such as that Socorro had disobeyed a secret "signal" to leave a gathering point during the May Day march. Yet as two members of the Mexican section stated in a document that led to their expulsion last October: "With regard to the supposed 'signal'..., the truth is that there was never any such thing. Such a signal was never established, it was never used in the past and has never been used since" (Buenaventura and Teodorico, "Letter to ICL Comrades," 16 October 1996).

- When Norden gave his comments on a draft letter to the LQB, as requested by the I.S., the response was to purge him from his elected posts, including the I.S. and the Political Bureau of the SL/U.S., and as editor of *Workers Vanguard*, a position in which he had been for the previous 23 years. The immediate prelude to the expulsions of 8 June 1996 was the mounting of another frame-up trial against Norden and Stamberg.

That all this is presented as solicitous regard for inner-party discussion is utter cynicism. Moreover, the ICL leadership's smear that we are "for sale" is not the first time they have used such themes in their campaign of character assassination. The charges for the frame-up trial of Norden and Salzburg in June 1996 included invented "hefty suspicions" of "political collaboration with non-members" and slanderous speculations about an unnamed "outside source of political funding." Meanwhile, both in print and verbally, ICL leaders obsessively smear the Brazilian LQB as motivated by a desire for financing or being on the take—a smear

taken directly from the mouths of the anti-communist, pro-police provocateurs in Volta Redonda. As we wrote in *The Internationalist* No. 1:

"The harm to the ICL is being done by the current leadership. If it wished to reverse some of that damage it would rescind the bureaucratic expulsions and the disloyal split with the LQB, retract its unprincipled slanders and open up a wide-ranging party discussion on the source of the recent disastrous course. Instead it digs in deeper."

While contrasts and comparisons with the Revolutionary Tendency fight shed some light, another episode from the Spartacist tendency's history is instructive from a different angle. Following the American SWP's "reunification" with Pablo/Mandel in 1963, Gerry Healy continued the struggle of the International Committee against Pabloism, at least on paper. In 1966, Spartacist was bureaucratically expelled from the London conference of Healy's IC on trumped-up charges (refusing to agree to the charge of being "petty-bourgeois" because James Robertson did not attend a session). Healy's purge of Spartacist was a pre-emptive strike carried out a time when the formal program of Spartacist and the IC was essentially identical. The major programmatic divergences came later, beginning with Healy's support to the "Red Guards" in Mao's "Cultural Revolution" and his embrace of a classless "Arab Revolution." Without equating the new ICL leadership with Healy, the situation of the IG today has parallels to that of Spartacist in relation to Healy's IC following that expulsion.

It is almost eery to look back at the issues of *Spartacist* published after the 1966 London Conference. Having thrown Spartacist out, Healy's IC proceeded to describe this as Spartacist "breaking from the Fourth International." (Similarly, today *WV* repeatedly refers to the "Nordenites" as "defectors," whose "departure" was supposedly due to having "provoked their expulsion.") In an article titled "Revolution and Truth" (*Spartacist* No. 8, November-December 1966), the Spartacist

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

17 JULHO SETEMBRO 1996 ÓRGÃO INFORMATIVO DA LIGA QUARTA INTERNACIONALISTA DO BRASIL - PREÇO: R\$ 1,00

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil: quem somos e o que queremos



Trabalhadores em greve em Volta Redonda. O que queremos é a revolução proletária. Temos a consciência de que cada vez nos libertamos da dominação da burguesia ocidental, que tem preparado o caminho para o fortalecimento do fascismo e da burocracia sindical.

Polícia: tire as mãos do sindicato dos municípios de Volta Redonda!

No artigo "Os sindicatos na época da decadência imperialista" (1940) Leon Trotsky explicou que "a primeira política de 'ordem' dos quartos internacionais na luta contra os sindicatos é 'industrializar' o papel e internacionalizar os sindicatos em relação ao estado nacional. Isso significa lutar para fortalecer os sindicatos em oposição aos grandes massas exploradas e não da burocracia operária, a respeito da 'democracia sindical'. Esta palavra de ordem deveria ser ditada desde o princípio e prosseguir para que os sindicatos se independam total dos sindicatos em relação ao estado burguês."

No Brasil e milhões outros países, a burocracia sindical realizou a "industrialização" dos sindicatos, quando se tornou agência executora da repressão burguesa. Junto com a burocracia sindical, o estado, através de seus órgãos de repressão de sua repressão, em paralelo ao fortalecimento da burocracia sindical, realizou a "industrialização" dos sindicatos em relação ao estado burguês. Esta é uma das formas mais duras em que a burocracia sindical e os reformistas laborais se unem para reprimir a luta dos trabalhadores e "travar" o processo de libertação da classe dos trabalhadores. Temos a consciência de que cada vez nos libertamos da dominação da burocracia ocidental, que tem preparado o caminho para o fortalecimento do fascismo e da burocracia sindical.



Assistência das forças da polícia. Policiais e policiais, tirando as mãos do SPFAV. Luta proletária e classe da burocracia em Volta Redonda. Funcionários Pólvora do Município de Volta Redonda (SPFAV) realizou um greve em seu dia 26 de maio, barrando 3.500 derivados destinados pelo governo da Frente Popular de unidade Paulo Costa.

Leia e assinie

Vanguarda Operária

Órgão informativo da Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

R\$4,00 por 4 números

Endereço:
Caixa Postal 084027
CEP 27251-970
Volta Redonda, R.J.
Brasil

League denounced the willful distortion of its views, the blatant misrepresentation of quotations and the repeated use of lies by those who sought to justify the SL's expulsion. The article stated that the attempts by Healy's American followers to justify the purge "have driven these comrades into a truly appalling anti-Marxist direction: the conscious embracement of *calculated deception* as political methodology." Other articles charged Healy and his American hack Wohlforth with "fabricating a smokescreen of political accusations," the use of "straw men masquerading as our positions" and "the tactic of outright misrepresentation and lies." The article "Revolution and Truth" began a lengthy denunciation of the poison of calculated deception by stating:

"What is at stake is no less than whether the future Leninist vanguard—of which we today are the progenitors—will have the *capacity* to carry through the task of leading working people to revolutionary victory. But the proletariat's conscious understanding of its tasks, central to Marxism, is only nourished to the extent that the workers realize the clear and sober *truth*—including about ourselves and our opponents." [emphasis in original]

And how did Wohlforth respond? His diatribe *What Is Spartacist?* (1970) features a cover cartoon of SL leader Jim Robertson holding a scroll beginning "I agree with the International Committee *but...*". The pamphlet claims Spartacist defected from the IC because of what it sarcastically calls "Robertson's noble battle for honor, his unbending head"—that is, his refusal to denounce himself at Healy's command as a "petty-bourgeois" American chauvinist. One Harry Turner is quoted denouncing Jim Robertson as "an ego-centric petty-bourgeois refusing to subordinate his ego to the tactical requirements of an international struggle against Pabloist revisionism," while the pamphlet repeatedly denounces Spartacist for supposedly "breaking communist discipline."

In all of this, there is more than an echo of the lies, slander and character assassination that have been thrown at us by the ICL leadership. The technique is stunningly similar, going hand in hand with their inability to present a coherent political critique. As noted in the "Reply to a Frame-Up 'Trial'" (7 June 1996) by Norden and Stamberg: "In recent months, we have been called Stalinophilic, Castroite, Shachtmanite, Pabloite of the second mobilization, accused of running a Healyite regime, with a touch of Loganism, like the BT, like Hansen, and partly like Goldman-Morrow and Cochran-Clarke." Here the vituperation is a device to cover up the inability to answer us politically. We have charged that the ICL leadership committed a betrayal in Brazil, that its growing tendency to abstentionism led to desertion from a key class battle. The response of *Workers Vanguard* is to say...that the IG is "for sale." This is a political response?

We are compelled to ask: did the new *WV* crib from Wohlforth for its smear job against the Internationalist Group? Particularly when we compare the end of the *WV* No. 663 article with the peroration of Wohlforth's classic hack job, which claimed of Spartacist:

"Precisely because it is motivated by subjective consider-

ations and lives particularly on its deep hatred of the Trotskyist movement, its role is very much that of a gun for hire. Neither tradition nor any objective consideration places any limit on what this group can and will do."

What was *vile slander* from Wohlforth's pen is no less so when, in almost exactly the same language, the hobbled post-purge *WV* spews it out against us today. We are not identifying the ICL of today with Healy/Wohlforth of three decades ago. We are pointing out that political degeneration has its own logic. This is a hoary method: if you can't justify voting for imperialist war credits in World War I, accuse Lenin of taking German gold; if you can't answer Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist degeneration, accuse him of working for the Gestapo, the French Deuxième Bureau and the Mikado; if you can't answer revolutionary criticism, accuse the critic of being "for sale," or "a gun for hire."

The ICL is fond of responding to every point we have made by repeating "it's the party question." Yes, indeed, it is the question of what kind of a party must be built. Only a Leninist party that means what it says can carry the revolutionary program into the class struggle. ■

Mexico Militarization...

continued from page 32

drugs is just a pretext. Moreover, the idea that the United States government should sit in judgment on other countries' record on drug running and money laundering is particularly ludicrous as the U.S. protected and helped set up the biggest drug networks of all in waging the anti-Soviet Cold War. For half a century, the CIA has sponsored drug-trafficking mafias from Europe (via the French Connection of union-busting anti-Communist gangsters in Marseille), Southeast Asia (via General Van Pao's "secret army" and Air America), Afghanistan (via the drug-trafficking *mujahedin* holy warriors) and Nicaragua (via the Contra Connection). The real "narco-terrorists" are sitting in high offices in Washington.

All the pious official rhetoric about drugs and human rights are ploys to further U.S. imperialist interests. During the 1980s civil wars in Central America, the State Department regularly certified the human rights record of the death squad regime in El Salvador and vouched for the good behavior of Nicaraguan contra terrorists even as Washington's agents were distributing a how-to-do-it torture manual. Marxists and all class-conscious workers and opponents of imperialist terror must demand: U.S. hands off Mexico! DEA, CIA, all U.S. agents out! No to U.S. imperial "supersovereignty"! The phony "war on drugs" means war on the ghettos and barrios at home and imperialist terror abroad. We call on the working class to take the lead in opposing Yankee intervention in Latin America: rail, trucking and maritime transportation workers should expose and refuse to handle the massive shipments of deadly military hardware to Mexico. U.S. and Mexican workers must join hands across the border in common action against all imperialist encroachments and intervention. ■

Brazil: Context of a Betrayal

The attack on the first issue of *The Internationalist* published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 663 (7 March 1997) provides the latest version of the International Communist League leadership's official story on its flight from Brazil.

Our first issue reprinted a 13 September 1996 statement by the Internationalist Group, "The ICL Leaders' Cover Story: Smokescreen for a Betrayal." That statement spelled out how, after correctly encouraging the struggle of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) to remove police from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union (SFPMVR), the ICL leadership fled from this key class battle, cutting fraternal relations with the LQB one day before a crucial union meeting where the cops were to be ousted.

Despite the ICL leadership's backstabbing, and in the face of a repressive vendetta by the courts, cops and local authorities, the LQB carried out this battle, culminating in a 25 July 1996 union meeting which voted the expulsion of the cops from the SFPMVR. This fight is documented in the dossier published by the Internationalist Group in collaboration with our fraternal comrades of the LQB, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil—Cops, Courts Out of the Unions* (February 1997).

Our September 1996 statement denounced the fact that in his presentation at a 1 August 1996 Spartacist forum in New York (reprinted in *WV* No. 651, 13 September 1996), ICL speaker Jon Brule claimed the Brazilian comrades believe "any unprincipled shortcut or deal is possible. And that's what LM did—and kept on doing—at the top of this municipal workers union, until the police themselves broke the deal." We wrote: "What 'deal' with the cops? This is a filthy smear!"

After *WV* published Brule's allegation, the LQB wrote a 17 October 1996 letter to the ICL (which they requested be published in *Workers Vanguard*) stating: "There was no 'deal' with the police, and this dirty slander is an attempt to hide the reality of our class-struggle fight to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* [police] from the SFPMVR. This attempt to make reality disappear will not succeed!" Their letter defied the ICL leadership: "We demand and we challenge you to show the proof of what you say and publish." No proofs were forthcoming. Their letter was not printed in *WV* or answered by the ICL.

Meanwhile, two members of the Mexican section of the ICL formally asked for an explanation of the charge of a "deal"



Luta Metalúrgica and Municipal Workers Union initiated united-front protest in Volta Redonda, August 1995, demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, radical black journalist on death row in Pennsylvania.

with the cops. When their request was met with stony silence from the ICL leadership, they undertook their own intensive investigation of documents. This led them to the conclusion that not only was the "deal" allegation a smear, but the break with the LQB "was an unprincipled act which goes against internationalism" (Buenaventura and Teodorico, "Letter to ICL Comrades," 16 October 1996). Denouncing the abandonment of the class battle in Brazil and the purge of leading ICL members last summer, these comrades solidarized with the Internationalist Group (IG) and were expelled three days after submitting their document.

Six months later, the ICL leadership has still not responded to the demand to substantiate or withdraw its slander about a "deal" with the cops. Instead they engage in more mud-slinging. At a February 28 New York Spartacist League forum, SL spokesman Alison Spencer repeated the smear, while characterizing our dossier on the struggle in Volta Redonda as "slime"—adding, "next time you should print it on puke." This gives an idea of the level of "argument" by ICL leaders as they attempt to justify their unprincipled course by heaping filth on the LQB.

WV 663 attempts to trivialize the import of the ICL leaders' actions in Brazil by claiming we have engaged in "chicken baiting." On the contrary, what we charge the International Secretariat (I.S.) of the ICL with is worse than cowardice: the I.S. committed a *betrayal* by abandoning a fight that it had encouraged, leaving the Brazilian comrades to take the heat.

In encouraging the fight to oust the cops, the ICL leadership *took on responsibilities in the class struggle*. Anyone who does not understand what this means has no business in revolutionary politics. The ICL fled from those responsibilities at the high point of the struggle, and then it tried to cover its tracks with *fabrications and slanders* against those who refused to join in this betrayal.

WV: Now vs. Then

The WV No. 663 article attacks LQB leader Cerezo as having been "an unelected 'adviser'" to the SFPMMVR. In fact, this was one of the themes in a witchhunt against the LQB and union president Geraldo Ribeiro because of Ribeiro's election on a program against the popular front. This anti-red campaign was fanned by the bourgeois press over a year ago, and then escalated by one Artur Fernandes, a pro-police provocateur in Volta Redonda. Among many other smears, Fernandes claimed that Cerezo had sought to receive a union salary equal to ten times the minimum wage. At the 28 February 1997 New York forum, SL spokesman Spencer went even further and called him a "paid adviser" to the union. Yet as the ICL leadership knows full well, published affidavits by the union treasurer and president state that Cerezo never sought, let alone received, any payment from the union!

This kind of smear campaign against "outside reds" is not new—the same sort of charges were hurled at U.S. Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon when he was "advising" his comrades in the leadership of the Minneapolis Teamsters in the 1930s. What is most striking here is how the ICL leadership has picked up these anti-communist themes for its own purposes. These are, after all, the same charges which *Workers Vanguard* emphatically denounced a year ago. When this McCarthyite campaign began, WV published an "ICL Statement of Solidarity with Luta Metalúrgica" (LM) that denounced the "unholy alliance" that is "frantically seeking to drive revolutionaries out of the union" (WV No. 639, 16 February 1996). We urge ICL members and sympathizers to reread that statement, which denounced attempts to brand LQB/LM spokesman Cerezo an outsider.

The WV 633 polemic refers to discussions at the January 1996 ICL International Executive Committee meeting on the need for LM to transform itself into a Trotskyist vanguard nucleus, including the publication of a newspaper. It presents the false picture that the LQB refused to carry out concrete steps to do this. We have already noted how LM adopted the name Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil to show its determination to build a Trotskyist party. They were already well underway in the publication of their paper, *Vanguarda Operária*, when the ICL broke off fraternal relations, and the first issue was published less than a month after the break. Significantly, WV has never referred to the LQB's newspaper, because its very existence gives the lie to their whole construct.

Now the ICL's International Secretariat has published an *International Bulletin* (No. 41, April 1997) under the title, "The Fight for a Trotskyist Party in Brazil," a compilation of the correspondence between the ICL and the LQB from January 1996 through the ICL's break in fraternal relations with the Brazilian comrades in late June. The thick bulletin conveniently

omits the LQB's 4 July 1996 letter to the I.S. protesting the ICL's unprincipled break. As in the case of the LQB's October 1996 letter to WV, this letter was never answered.

The introduction to the ICL's new bulletin notes that immediately following the January 1996 IEC meeting, the I.S. sent a representative to Brazil for several months. However, it laments:

"As soon as we got a representative in place in Brazil, the reality of Luta Metalúrgica's ingrained trade-union opportunism and opposition to the tasks necessary to forge a Trotskyist vanguard party were uncovered. After an attempt to fight out our differences, as documented in these letters, we broke off fraternal relations because we did not, in fact, have agreement on a revolutionary Marxist perspective."

In fact, the correspondence in the bulletin *disproves* the ICL leadership's version of the events preceding its flight from Brazil.

In a 3 April 1996 letter, LQB leader Cerezo put forward a series of proposals, including to "put out a national journal," extend political work to Brazil's most important industrial centers, continue work for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, defend the Municipal Workers Union against the witchhunt, and seek to recruit contacts made at leading Brazilian universities. Here is what the ICL leadership wrote then, in a 7 April response by Parks for the International Secretariat:

"Our comrades strongly concur with your proposals. Your projections are fully in accordance with discussions at the London IEC meeting and with proposals raised by the ICL in written correspondence with LM/LQB to move fraternal relations forward.

"The campaign waged by Luta Metalúrgica and the ICL against the police provocation in the Volta Redonda municipal workers union has drawn our organizations closer together in struggle, and helped clarify agreement on the fundamental question of the state. Surely there is no organized political tendency apart from the ICL that fights against the presence of cops in the labor movement and in Brazil, it has been you comrades who have withstood the pressures and dangers by waging a hard and principled fight on this question."

While noting the need for "further discussion, education and debate" on areas of ambiguity or disagreement, the letter stated: "We hope to culminate a period of common work such as you have outlined...in a fusion between our organizations."

A subsequent letter, dated 25 April 1996, quoted an IEC motion that referred in part to: "recent forward advancement of fraternal relations as evidenced in the collaboration between our organizations in the campaign against the incursion of the capitalist state in the union movement, as well as in the perspectives advanced to us by comrade Cerezo for party propaganda, cadre education, and extending the organization to a major metropolitan center..." These two letters were written *two months and two and a half months after the ICL representative was sent to Brazil*. So where was the "ingrained trade-union opportunism" on the part of the LQB and its alleged "opposition to the tasks necessary to forge a Trotskyist vanguard party" that he supposedly immediately uncovered?

The I.S.' own selective documentation reveals that its claims are a fraud.

“Context”

Unfortunately for the “new I.S.,” documentation exists of what actually happened. The *WV* 633 polemic against the Internationalist Group states that we criticize the ICL leadership “for supposedly ‘claiming that association with the LQB/LM in this work posed ‘unacceptable risks for the vanguard’.” In response, *WV* uses sleight of hand, quoting a 17 June 1996 letter to the LQB. Any reader would draw the conclusion that the ICL used the cited phrase only “supposedly”—but not in reality. Yet on 5 June 1996 the International Secretariat passed a motion stating: “Due to ominous provocations and threats of state repression, prominent public association of the ICL with LM’s only present public work—the leadership of the municipal workers union—poses unacceptable risks to the vanguard, to our fraternal comrades and indeed to the union as a whole.”

As we have pointed out, it was the Brazilian comrades who were directly under attack by the bourgeoisie’s repressive forces, and they could not abandon the struggle they had started without forever condemning themselves as unserious elements. They held fast while the ICL “leadership” pulled out, thereby condemning itself.

Repeatedly, the I.S. has tried to *blame the LQB* for the bourgeois repression unleashed against it. Thus an 11 June 1996 I.S. letter, partially cited in *WV* No. 663, smears the Brazilian comrades as “subordinating the question of principle to the quotidian struggle for influence in the union’s leadership [which] can only lead to continued provocations by the police, the political forces who run the police and the ‘leftists’ who do their bidding....” The 17 June 1996 I.S. letter breaking relations arrogantly denounces the LQB for “fatuous light-mindedness toward the bourgeois state,” adding: “Indeed, the provocations have continued and have now escalated to a campaign of dirty tricks and violence which threaten not only the perspectives for a Trotskyist vanguard, but the physical safety, possible arrest, and imprisonment (or worse) of LM/LQB comrades, as well as ICL representatives, and also threaten the very existence of the union itself.”

But who has actually been physically threatened or arrested over the struggle in Brazil? The LQB comrades have—and the ICL leadership outrageously blames the victims for the repression!

Exposing *WV*’s cover-up story about breaking relations with the LQB over supposed “trade-union opportunism,” in our July 1996 bulletin, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, we quoted an ICL representative at meetings with the LQB on 15 and 16 June 1996. The ICL envoy said there that the LQB, with its forces, “cannot, at this time, stand up to this whole offensive of bourgeois reaction, which is trying to destroy the union and which is trying to wait for the best moment to destroy our organization in Brazil.... We are telling you: let’s pull our hands out of that boiling water and dedicate our attention and time to building a revolutionary party.” We commented: “What a grotesque perversion of Leninism—‘building a revolutionary party’ by pulling one’s hands out of the boiling water of the class struggle!” In response, *WV* 663 charges us with “quoting half-sentences out of context, which when quoted in full are the opposite” of what we claim.

Context? We’ve got plenty of context. As *WV* notes, we have a tape of the 16 June 1996 meeting and “know what was actually said.” We also have written reports of the I.S. secretary on those meetings, so we know as well what the I.S. told the rest of the ICL leadership. So let’s see what was said as the I.S. was preparing to break relations and leave Brazil. The reader can judge who has told the truth.

To begin with, *WV* quotes from the above statement:

“The bourgeois state, Artur [Fernandes], the LBI [Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista, in league with Fernandes] and all these organizations want to put us in a cauldron of boiling water. That is the situation now...and we are telling you, let’s take our hands out of this boiling water and dedicate our attention, our time to building a revolutionary party!”

This confirms the accuracy of what we cited.

WV then continues the quote from the ICL representative, proposing that “we work toward a conscious transformation of the Brazilian organization into a Trotskyist party,” including giving priority to the publication of a newspaper, recruiting young workers, doing work in an industrial city and getting in touch with youth. This is presented as if it were contrary to the intentions of the LQB. However, the Brazilian comrades all stressed that they agreed with those points; they did not agree with abandoning the struggle to oust the cops.

Subsequent to the break in fraternal relations, the LQB immediately put out its newspaper, it has recruited among young workers and students, and has moved some comrades to Rio de Janeiro. As Engels was fond of saying, in a basic statement of materialism, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

But let us return to the call to “pull our hands out of the boiling water.” The ICL representatives made numerous statements in this vein in the 15/16 June 1996 discussions with the LQB. For example, here is what a second ICL spokesman said:

“There was a struggle to throw the police out of the union. But the reality is that right now the police are using all their power to smash you and the municipal workers union.... Perhaps it is very demoralizing for the ranks of the municipal workers union to endure the activities in the union as they are now. But the reality is that it would be even more demoralizing for them to see one of their leaders dead in the street. That is the point. The point has to do directly with the power of the bourgeois state.”

In his final summary, the main ICL speaker stated that “what we want is to get rid of the most prominent question of this situation of danger.... So what we are stating to you is that in this question in particular of the leadership of the union, we have to formally leave the most prominent issue where the bourgeoisie is identifying us at this time, and use our forces to build the party.”

That is what was said, over and over, and the ICL leadership knows it full well. In a June 15 report on these discussions based on phone calls from Brazil, I.S. Secretary Parks wrote that at the meeting with the LQB that day, an ICL representative had “presented our view that they should publically disassociate themselves from the municipal workers union leadership” and “also raised the idea of getting out of town now” before there was more repression, which was described in graphic terms. Moreover, Parks reported on June 16 *not* that the LQB was refusing to put out a newspaper, but quite the contrary: “Cerezo, J. and R.

are planning on returning to work with the delegation on the newspaper on Monday afternoon.... Well, it's not going to be our paper or even one we are fraternally allied with." So all the talk about the Brazilians refusing to give priority to a newspaper was a smokescreen. Parks' reports prove once again the I.S. is lying.

These materials make clear that the ICL's real concern was not "ingrained trade-union opportunism" or "unprincipled trade-union maneuvers," but that in the I.S.' view "the power of the bourgeois state" was making the *principled* struggle to remove cops from the unions too hot to handle. It is necessary always for revolutionaries to gauge seriously the intentions and capacity of repression by the class enemy. But those who lose confidence in the revolutionary capacity and power of the proletariat often justify an opportunist orientation of seeking to elude the class struggle with references to an all-powerful bourgeois state. In this case, the references were intended to excuse desertion when the struggle had reached the boiling point.

As part of the context for the statements we have quoted from the ICL representatives, let's also hear some of what the LQB said in response. At the June 16 meeting, comrade I. said: "Together with the ICL, we touched off an international campaign against cops in the unions. This is where the controversy comes in. If we launch an international campaign against cops in the union, and the campaign is becoming a success from the standpoint of the world Trotskyist program as well as in terms of the work within the union, what reason is there for us to leave the union at this time? ... Now we are on brink of expelling the police from the union, an objective of both the ICL and the LQB...."

In a later report on the talks (which was sent to the ICL), LQB spokesman Cerezo wrote that at the June 15 meeting:

"I stated that I was personally opposed to abandoning the union; there was going to be a meeting on the 19th which would be a decisive meeting and that after fighting so much together with the union comrades and urging them to throw the cops out of the SFPMMVR, to abandon them at the moment when they called a meeting would be to abandon the workers and I was personally against this. I thought that the position of maintaining support to the union, throwing out the *guardas*, putting out the newspaper, continuing with fraternal relations, going to the big cities, building the party were tasks that went together and were not counterposed."

"We Want the Unity of Words and Deeds"

The *WV* article then quotes the ICL representative delivering what is supposed to be the knock-out blow, saying "Lenin decided to leave Russia in his youth, go to England and from England put out a newspaper, *Iskra*...." The operational word here is *leave*, which—as Parks reported—was just what the ICL was urging the LQB to do. One can imagine Lenin's response to the statement that he just "decided to leave Russia"! In 1896 he was put in prison (where he wrote the classic "On Strikes"). In 1898 he was exiled to the remote Yenissei province in Siberia, 300 miles from the nearest railway station. On his release after three years in Siberian exile, he was forbidden to live in any large city, industrial center or university town, and was soon re-arrested. After this, he managed to get to West Europe. Lenin left

since he had no choice then but to direct revolutionary struggles inside Russia from exile. And he certainly did not direct his party to pick up and leave. The idea that Lenin's exile was like the I.S. telling the LQB to "get out of town," to publicly dissociate itself from the union and "pull our hands out of the boiling water" in the middle of a key battle, is as ludicrous as it is grotesque.

The ICL leadership has sought to brush away members' questions by writing that the idea the "the ICL ran away from the final conflict with the cops in the municipal workers union" is a "fiction" and an "absurd invention." An I.S. member wrote in a letter to an ICL member that the issue "was only raised after the fact as a red herring." Not at all. The issue of the fight to oust the police from the union was discussed *extensively* in the meetings between ICL representatives and the LQB on June 15 and 16. Just prior to this, on June 13, a union conference voted a resolution to remove the police from the SFPMMVR. On June 17 and June 18, LQB supporters in the SFPMMVR published bulletins building for the June 19 union assembly at which this was on the agenda to be voted by the membership.

Because the LQB refused to drop this fight, "disassociate" themselves from the union leadership and even "get out of town," the I.S. broke fraternal relations with the LQB on June 18, handing them a letter in a sealed envelope and departing without a word of discussion or explanation. The next day the Volta Redonda mayor sent police to carry out a court order banning the key union meeting, surrounding it and shutting it down. The day after that, as LQB member and SFPMMVR activist Maria do Carmo wrote in a report sent to the ICL, *one of the ICL representatives called her to ask what had happened with the cops at the union meeting*. So much for the phony claim that the ICL did not know what was going on.

Despite the repressive vendetta and the ICL leadership's backstabbing, the LQB went on to carry through the struggle to throw the cops out of the municipal workers union. They do not suffer from "fatuous light-mindedness toward the bourgeois state," as the ICL arrogantly claimed, nor have they been "smashed," as the ICL predicted. Instead, they are making strides forward in propaganda, recruitment and extension of the LQB in the fight to build the nucleus of a genuine Trotskyist party.

The *WV* No. 663 polemic against the Internationalist Group and LQB correctly notes that "fraternal relations are a testing process." Yes they are, and not just for the Brazilian comrades. The tragedy is that by abandoning this key struggle which the ICL initially encouraged, the ICL leadership *failed* this test. As the LQB said in its 4 July 1996 letter to the I.S. protesting the breaking of relations: "We want the unity of words and deeds. But in reality, you comrades are saying one thing and doing another."

The course signaled by the ICL leadership's betrayal there, and by the unprincipled purge in the ICL, is contrary to the struggle for a genuine world party of socialist revolution. Those who want to fight for the program of Trotskyism must face this reality squarely, and face up to its implications, in order to go forward. This is essential in the struggle to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International on the basis of the crucial programmatic conquests defended for three decades by the Spartacist tendency. ■

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

New Evidence of Jamal's Innocence As Court Decision Looms

Around the world, the case of radical black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to symbolize the fight against the racist death penalty in the United States. Jamal has been an eloquent fighter for black freedom from his days as Minister of Information of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party in the 1960s and his courageous defense of the Philly MOVE organization beginning in the 1970s. That is why for the past 15 years Mumia has sat on Pennsylvania's Death Row.

In recent weeks, new evidence has continued to accumulate of Jamal's innocence. Last fall, Veronica Jones came forward to reveal how police had strongarmed her into changing her testimony in the original 1982 trial in order to frame Mumia. On March 10, Pamela Jenkins announced that police had also tried to pressure her to lie on the stand against Mumia. Jenkins is a central witness in the recent investigation of police corruption in Philadelphia's 39th precinct. More recently, Philadelphia district attorney Lynne Abrams, in an election ploy against an opponent, released a video showing that city prosecutors systematically sought to exclude blacks from juries. This also occurred in Jamal's trial.

Despite this dramatic evidence, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court gives every evidence that it intends to uphold the frame up conviction of Jamal. The court has refused to hear oral arguments in the case, and allowed prosecutors to file additional papers while denying this right to Jamal's lawyers. Opponents of the racist death penalty must have no illusions in the capitalist courts, which are part of a system of racist injustice extending from the killer cops on the streets to the courts, Congress and the White House. Mumia has been railroaded from the start.

In 1995, mass mobilizations around the world stayed the executioner's hand. Opponents of the racist death penalty must be alert for calls to mobilize to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

In December 1996, Jamal's lawyers submitted a motion to overturn Sabo's latest ruling. They cited the decision of a federal judge in Pittsburgh who ruled that Pennsylvania prison authorities had violated Mumia's constitutional rights, in particular his right to confidential communication with his attorney. In response to this and the publication of Jamal's second book, *Death Blossoms*, his jailers stepped up the vendetta against him. The following letter was sent by the Internationalist Group to Pennsylvania commissioner of corrections Martin Horn and the acting superintendent of the state prison at Greene.

March 3, 1997
Sirs:

We vigorously protest the escalating series of attacks on the rights of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal

and his defenders. These ominous new attacks come as the Pennsylvania Supreme Court appears to be nearing a decision in Jamal's appeal of his 1982 frame-up conviction.

These actions are the revenge of the prison authorities in response to a ruling last December by a federal judge in Pittsburgh that prison officials had violated Jamal's constitutional rights by opening and reading the mail from his attorneys--at the very moment the Pennsylvania governor was preparing to sign the death warrant against him. Jamal had brought the 1995 civil suit against a "gag rule" under which prison authorities blocked his access to media interviews after the publication of his book *Live from Death Row*, and obstructed his access to legal counsel.

But now this is happening again. Recently, prison authorities at SCI Greene handed Mumia a letter on legal matters from his attorney, Leonard Weinglass, with the envelope torn open and the words "cop killer" written across the front. Meanwhile, Pittsburgh attorney Jere Krakoff, who handled the successful 1995 civil suit against the prison system, was barred from visiting Jamal. Once again, the actions come as Jamal has released a new book, *Death Blossoms*, published by Plough Publishing House of the Bruderhof community. Recently, Chris Zimmerman, a member of the Bruderhof community and the Pennsylvania Prison Society, was seized and thrown out of the prison following a visit, and has now been permanently barred from the Pennsylvania Prison System.

In another incident, Mumia Abu-Jamal was ordered by prison authorities to cut his hair and given ten days to comply. Jamal has every right to wear his hair in "dreadlocks" for religious reasons, just as other prisoners wear religious hair coverings. The government has long tried to intimidate Jamal in this manner. In 1985, after the bombing of the MOVE house in Philadelphia, Mumia and imprisoned MOVE members were ordered to cut their hair. They refused and Mumia was thrown into solitary confinement until 1992.

These actions come as the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on February 3 refused to accept Jamal's "Supplementary Reply Brief" refuting the government's lies and fabrications about Veronica Jones' testimony in court last October. This key eyewitness came forward to reaffirm her original statements to the police, which prove that Mumia could not have committed the murder for which he is being framed. Jones also exposed how the police had coerced her to change her testimony in order to frame Mumia.

It is clear that at this crucial moment, prison authorities are again attempting to attempt to seal off Jamal's access to his legal team, the media, and those engaged in the fight against

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Mumia Abu-Jamal...

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the racist death penalty around the world. We demand in the strongest terms that these sinister measures against Jamal be immediately stopped, that he be granted immediate and full access to his legal team and his defenders.

Pennsylvania prison authorities evidently think that they can get away with anything in the darkness of their dungeons. But the eyes of the world are on you. Millions around the world have denounced your barbaric actions. We join in demanding: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty!

Internationalist Group

We urge readers to send contributions for Mumia's legal defense, payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation, earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense," to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

Bisbee Deportation...

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Fort Leavenworth federal penitentiary in Kansas. The effect was to decapitate the Wobblies. With the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917, the anti-"red" hysteria led to a wholesale round-up of communists, syndicalists and radical immigrants. These were the so-called Palmer Raids, named after Wilson's attorney general, beginning in 1919. That year a "Red Special" railway train traversed the country from Seattle to Ellis Island, New York, making stops along the way to load manacled deportees.

The Wobblies' class-struggle militancy wrote a heroic chapter in the history of the American working class. Their proletarian internationalism, in particular their efforts to organize the foreign-born who were shunned by the labor aristocrats, were an expression of this. Their courage led the bosses to resort to the most extreme measures, such as the Bisbee deportation. However, the IWW program of revolutionary syndicalism (from the French word *syndicat*, or union) was inadequate to lead a socialist revolution through to victory. The Wobblies thought that the key to eliminating social oppression was forming One Big Union that would organize the "army of production...not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown" (preamble to the IWW constitution).

The syndicalists failed to understand the need for a party of professional revolutionaries to lead the struggle of the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed. The need for a political party of the revolutionary vanguard reflects the fact that revolutionary consciousness must be brought to the working class from the outside. This was elaborated by V.I. Lenin in the early years of this century and realized by the Russian Bolsheviks. Nor did the syndicalists see the necessity of a consciously organized revolution to sweep away the capitalist state, and for a workers state (the dicta-

torship of the proletariat) to suppress counterrevolutionary resistance and organize a society based on production to satisfy the needs of the working masses rather than the profits of the exploiters. The Bolsheviks' understanding of these key issues made it possible for them to lead the October Revolution of 1917.

After 1917, the IWW ceased to be a factor in history. Many of the best fighters among the Wobblies were inspired by the Bolsheviks and won to the early Communist Party, before it was gutted of its revolutionary purpose by Stalinism. Eighty years ago, the Bisbee deportation showed the lengths to which the bourgeoisie will go to secure its profits. The Russian October Revolution five months later, led by Lenin and Trotsky, showed the political program and organization needed to put an end to the capitalist system in which immigrants are perpetual scapegoats. ■

Executioner Fujimori...

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ters, those who seek to fight oppression are not even human. Fujimori pointedly said he regretted the "loss of three human lives," those of a supreme court judge and two soldiers. The Tupac Amaru militants received the same fate as their namesake, who was treacherously murdered by the Spanish conquistadores.

Following severe setbacks in their guerrilla struggles, the MRTA was trying to follow the example of other Latin American guerrilla groups which, following the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, have negotiated a reentry into bourgeois politics as popular-frontist opposition parties on the basis of their reformist program. They disavowed any calls for socialism or even opposition to privatization. But the Peruvian bourgeoisie was not interested in a deal.

We salute the heroism and sacrifice of the MRTA fighters who gave their lives in the struggle to free their imprisoned comrades. At the same time, we must draw the lesson of this latest defeat of the guerrilla "strategy." Peasant-based guerrilla struggle is not the road to a revolution that liberates all the oppressed and opens the way to a socialist future of equality. The only road to liberation from class exploitation, national and racial oppression is through building a Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat, which draws behind it the masses of impoverished peasants and all the oppressed in a fight for workers revolution. This is the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, for the defeat and expropriation of the bloodthirsty capitalist rulers and the extension of revolution to the heartland of Yankee imperialism.

Down with the executioner Fujimori! Immediate freedom for all leftist prisoners in Fujimori's dungeons! For class-struggle mobilizations against the capitalist rulers and their imperialist masters on Wall Street, in the White House and the Pentagon! Workers of the world unite!

Internationalist Group

23 April 1997

U.S. Imperialism Behind Bloody Massacre in Peru

Down with the Executioner Fujimori!

Freedom for All Leftist Prisoners in Peru's Dungeons

The following statement was issued by the Internationalist Group on April 23.

¡Fujimori asesino! Fujimori is a murderer! Throughout the world, the workers movement and enemies of oppression must protest in outrage against the premeditated mass murder of leftist guerrillas carried out in Lima yesterday by Peru's dictator Alberto Fujimori. Backed by the White House and advised by the Pentagon, the assassin Fujimori sent in a 150-man extermination squad of the Peruvian Army to carry out an act of *state terrorism*. This was the meaning of the April 22 army storming of the Japanese ambassador's residence and the killing of all the members of the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA) who had occupied it since last December. The military assault was intended to send a message of terror against the working people and all those, throughout Latin America, who seek to struggle against the starvation and repression dictated by the imperialist bankers' International Monetary Fund and enforced by the region's capitalist governments.

Celebrating the murder of every one of the 14 guerrillas—who were surprised while playing soccer—Fujimori staged a fascist death rally at the site of the attack. The rhythmic chants from the mob of professional killers surrounding him sounded strikingly like "*Sieg Heil!*" The Peruvian bourgeoisie and its army are covered with the blood of thousands of peasants and workers. They have carried out one massacre after another against leftists and entire villages, while conditions in its prisons are inhuman. When jailed supporters of the Maoist Peruvian Communist Party-Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) rebelled in one prison hellhole, government troops went in and killed more than 400 of them. For all the imperialists' talk of democracy and human rights, their man Fujimori solidified his rule with a "self-coup" that dispersed the elected congress in 1990, and has been nothing but a veneer for military rule ever since.

This massacre was also "made in U.S.A." News reports

indicate that the U.S. supplied equipment for remote monitoring of conversations inside the residence, and this is certainly only the tip of the iceberg. The Israeli government, meanwhile, reportedly provided technical support in preparation for yesterday's army attack. Washington has been pushing for a hard line against the guerrillas because it wants to embolden capitalist rulers elsewhere in Latin America to crush opposition to the imperialist-sponsored austerity and repression.

The MRTA militants had occupied the residence during a party last December attended by the Peruvian elite, which revels in grinding the country's mainly Indian working people into the dirt. Representatives of U.S. and Japanese imperialism, as well as of the region's neocolonial governments, were in attendance as well. The dramatic MRTA action was a desperate attempt to win freedom for hundreds of Tupac Amaru members buried alive in the regime's dungeons and torture cells. Thousands of members of Sendero Luminoso are also imprisoned. We Trotskyists condemn the policies of Sendero Luminoso which has murdered many leftists and trade unionists. Its policies have more in common with Pol Pot than with Marx and Lenin. Nevertheless, class-conscious workers must demand immediate freedom for all leftist prisoners, including Sendero and MRTA members, from the class justice of the bourgeoisie.

Led by former textile union leader Néstor Cerpa, the MRTA guerrillas went out of their way to show consideration for their hostages. They even released some who were notorious Peruvian and U.S. secret police agents. They evidently believed that a demonstration of good will might be reciprocated by the Fujimori regime, which broke one pledge after another, talking of a peaceful solution while it was preparing for its murderous assault. While calling for armed struggle, the MRTA tragically overestimated their oppressors' humanity—always a fatal mistake for revolutionaries. For Peru's rulers and their imperialist mas-

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**For Workers Revolution In the Name of
All Victims of the Bloody Rulers**