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Africa

For Permanent Revolution



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CONGO

**From Mobutu to Kabila:
Neo-Colonialism Made in U.S.A.**

Debate in the South African Left
In Defense of
the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

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Front page photo: South African workers march for right to strike during battle over Labor Relations Act, 1995.

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

ICL Leaders' Frenzied Slanders

Over the past several months, the leadership of the International Communist League has waged a vicious campaign of slander against the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Internationalist Group. This issue of *The Internationalist* includes statements from the LQB (page 52) and the IG (page 59) unmasking the ICL leaders' smear campaign. We also publish letters to the ICL from LQB militants Marcello and Ronaldo (page 68), and an open letter by the IG (page 48) on the ICL's denial that there is a popular front in Mexico at the very moment the Cardenista popular front was voted into office in Mexico City. For reasons of space, this issue does not include the July 25 Internationalist Group Statement, "WV's Frenzied Slanders Can't Hide ICL Leaders' Brazil Betrayal," and a postscript issued by the IG on September 1, "ICL Takes Slander Campaign to Brazilian Labor Congress." These are being mailed to our subscribers and will be published in the next issue of *The Internationalist*. They are also available on our web site (www.internationalist.org), or can be obtained by writing to the Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008.

FLASH! More repression against Brazilian Trotskyists. As we go to press, the courts in Volta Redonda, Brazil have launched another attempt to silence our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. On September 5, an injunction was issued ordering the seizure of a leaflet by the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Caucus, initiated by the LQB) denouncing an attack on workers' pension funds. In the eighth legal action against the anti-racist union militants in the last two years, the court order threatens to use police force to seize the belongings of the CLC and of comrade Geraldo Ribelro, the elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union. A call by the LQB for solidarity from all opponents of capitalist repression is available on our web site or by writing to the Internationalist Group.

Visit the Internationalist Group on the Internet

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Now available on our site are:

- Founding Statement of the Internationalist Group
- Updates from the IG and LQB
- Articles from *Vanguarda Operária*
- Articles from *The Internationalist* No. 1 and 2
- Geronimo Is Out! Now Free Mumial
- Marxist readings

The Internationalist



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for the Reforging of the Fourth International

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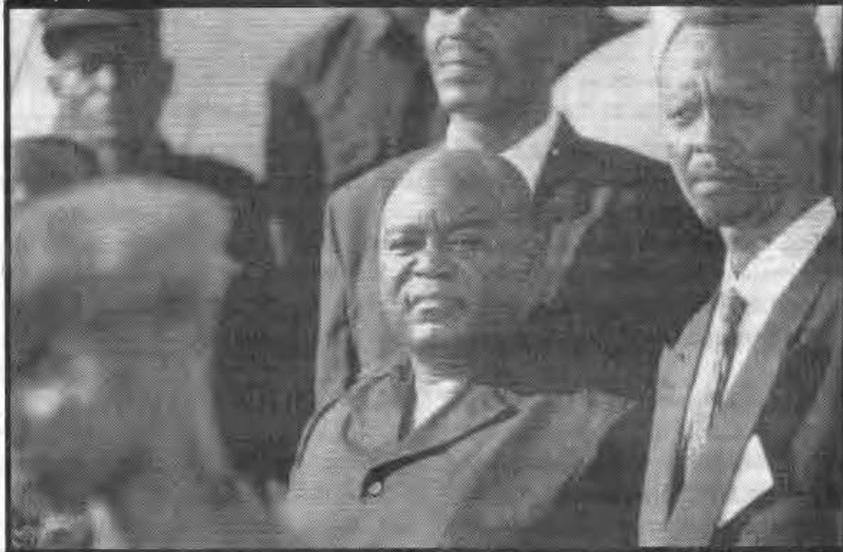
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From Mobutu to Kabila

Congo: Neo-Colonialism Made in U.S.A.



Congo president Laurent Kabila and his ministers.

Nanzer/SIPA

In the middle of May, the forces of Laurent Kabila overthrew the decrepit regime of Mobutu Sese Seko (who died September 7) in Zaire, now again named Democratic Republic of Congo. The fall of the dictator who for more than three decades acted as the linchpin for the African intrigues of the imperialist powers marks the end of an epoch. He was one of the last of the "Big Men" installed by imperialism to safeguard its interests after the end of direct colonial rule at the beginning of the 1960s. Mobutu was a former police informer and sergeant in the Belgian colonial militia, the Force Publique, who following "independence" was named head of the army of the Congo-Kinshasa. As Washington's man, he played a key role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the radical nationalist leader who gave the chills to the Western capitals. With the aid of the CIA, Mobutu took over in a coup d'état in 1965. His authoritarian regime stayed in power through a combination of ferocious repression against any leftist opposition, and systematic corruption of a docile elite, the Zairean *kleptocracy*.

During the Cold War, Mobutu served Washington and Paris as their gendarme for the vast Central African region, propping up other puppet dictators like Bokassa in the Central African Republic and Idi Amin in Uganda while he was harassing regimes aligned with the Soviet Union, such as Angola. He served as a base and rearguard for the Angolan marionettes of apartheid South Africa and the CIA: Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. In exchange for these services rendered, he accumulated a fortune of billions of dollars raked off the considerable "aid" from the imperialist masters to their Third World satraps. But as a result of the counterrevolution that swept through East Europe and the USSR during 1989-92, Mobutu ceased to fill a vital function in a U.S.-dominated "New World Order." Washington eliminated its subsidies to Mobutu in 1991, and the already run-down Zairean economy plunged into an abyss. All that was needed was a push to bring down the decrepit dictatorship. Kabila was the man picked for the job.

Picked by whom?

For Workers Revolution in Africa!

The bourgeois press presents the image of the guerrilla vs. the president for life. Kabila was supposedly the man who came out of nowhere, the Guevarist guerrilla who went into the rain forest in the middle of the 1960s and didn't reappear until the mid-'90s. The *Economist* (17 May), the spokesman for the London bankers, wrote (with its usual sarcasm): "A failed Marxist revolutionary from a bygone rebellion, he was plucked from the footnotes of post-colonial history by the leaders of Rwanda and Uganda when they needed someone to lead the Tutsi uprising in eastern Zaire." When Kabila rejected the insistent requests from Washington to negotiate the departure of Mobutu and form a coalition with the "moderate" opposition around Étienne Tshisekedi, there was a rash of alarmist articles from the unofficial mouthpieces for the Western foreign ministries demanding that the new ruler of Congo-Kinshasa hold "democratic elections" soon. In a knee-jerk reaction, much of the left praised the self-proclaimed president Kabila and his "Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo" (AFDL).

However, contrary to right-wing sectors of the bourgeois press and a large part of the left, Kabila did not lead a leftist guerrilla movement but rather offered himself as a new neo-colonial bourgeois ruler, less corrupt and more effective than his predecessor Mobutu, in order to better serve the interests of imperialism. His troops are not peasants rebels but instead consist largely of units detached from the regular armies of Rwanda and Uganda. They are commanded by their officers, some of whom were trained in U.S. military academies. Kabila signed fat contracts with U.S. mining companies, for which he received millions in cash, as well as vital logistical aid. After conquering the capital of Kinshasa, he immediately outlawed all political activity by forces other than his AFDL and unleashed repression against any outbreak of popular protest. In short, one pro-imperialist dictator has been replaced by another.

Kabila's troops have carried out numerous massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees, whom they chased out of the refugee camps. In the tiny Central African countries of Rwanda and Burundi, to the east of the Congo-Zaire, ethnic categories and caste divisions overlap, leading to a particularly explosive social situation amid economic decline. The traditional domination of the Tutsis, historically portrayed as herders and warriors, over the typically peasant Hutus was intensified under Belgian colonialism. At the time of independence, in 1959-61, there was a Hutu uprising in Rwanda, driving several hundred thousand Tutsis into exile. Three decades later, a Tutsi exile army reconquered the country. The defeated regime, dominated by the most reactionary bourgeois Hutu chauvin-



Troops of the AFDL arrest civilian in Kinshasa.

Reuters

ists, unleashed a genocide in 1994 that killed over half a million Tutsis and "moderate" Hutus before fleeing the country. Now the new rulers of Rwanda are establishing a Tutsi ascendancy in the region. In revenge for the 1994 genocide, they unleashed an offensive against the refugee camps in Zaire, killing not only former soldiers and militia members connected with the previous regime, but also indiscriminately slaughtering any Hutus they found. One genocide was followed by another, which is still underway.

In the fighting between Kabila's Rwandan/Ugandan-supplied army and Mobutu's disintegrating praetorian guard, proletarian revolutionaries would have given no support, political or military, to either side. Both represented neo-colonial bourgeois forces. Against the recently installed capitalist regime of "democratic" Congo-Zaire, the principal task must be to work for the formation of a revolutionary workers party, based on the Trotskyist program of *permanent revolution* and closely tied to the powerful proletariat of South Africa. Black workers played the key role in the struggle against apartheid slavery, but their hopes of social liberation were betrayed by the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) under Nelson Mandela. At first allied with former apartheid president F.W. De Klerk, today Mandela's ANC governs alone thanks to the nationalist popular front with the COSATU union federation and the South African Communist Party (SACP), which subjugates the workers to their exploiters.

Both in South Africa and in the Congo, the absence of a revolutionary leadership has led to one defeat after another. Whether it is Mobutu or Kabila who is in charge in Kinshasa, the bourgeois rulers are loyal servants of international big capital. In order to overthrow not only the current dictator but the whole system of imperialist domination an internationalist struggle will be necessary, extending to the south to the mines and factories of the South African Witwatersrand, to the rest of the African continent and to the imperialist centers of Europe, the U.S. and Japan. It is necessary to expropriate the real masters of the Congo



Wojazer/AP Boomerang

Former Zaire dictator Mobutu, South African president Mandela and new Congo strongman Laurent Kabila meet as U.S. attempts to dictate "negotiated settlement" fail.

and its fabulous wealth: the diamond kings, the copper conglomerates, the mining magnates who control the uranium, zinc and strategic metals like titanium and cobalt, which are indispensable for the imperialist war industries. Thus revolutionary struggle in the Congo must be an integral part of the fight for a world party of socialist revolution.

From Colonialism to Semi-Colonialism

When Africa was divided among the various European powers in the Berlin Conference (1884-85), Belgium grabbed the juicy prize of the Congo. At first its colonial rule was carried out under the cynical name of the Congo Free State, which was administered as a private fiefdom by Leopold II, king of the Belgians. The only freedom that existed in that realm of brutal oppression was that enjoyed by the big capitalist monopolies, above all the Americans Guggenheim, Morgan and Rockefeller, who penetrated the Congo in search of rubber, palm oil and other tropical products. The agents of King Leopold regimented the indigenous population into what amounted to a vast concentration camp, imposing labor conscription and massacring those who put up even minimal resistance. It was a system of state slavery, and over the space of 20 years it reduced the population of the Congo from some 25 million human beings to 15 million. Under the name of Europe's "civilizing mission" one of the greatest genocides of history was carried out.

At the beginning of the century, this personal rule was turned into a more typical colony, in which mercantile interests dominated. After World War I, the Belgian monopolies introduced mass production in extractive industries, organizing huge plantations and opening mines in the areas of Katanga (copper) and Kasai (diamonds). As a result, a working class was formed: the number of wage workers rose to over 500,000 in 1941. By the 1950s, the Belgian Congo had the second largest proletariat on the continent after South Africa. In order to control the enormous African territories, many times the size of tiny Belgium, the colonial administrators imposed rigid controls. While enrolling 60 percent of children in primary

school, Belgian authorities severely limited secondary education, and by the end of the 1950s there were only 100 Congolese university students. In contrast with the British empire, which carefully prepared an indigenous elite to administer its interests when the time came, in the Congo independence came amid tumultuous unrest and the sudden collapse of the colonial regime in 1960.

However, the first nationalist movements had already begun to form. In 1956, the head of the Association of the Lower Congo (Abako), Joseph Kasavubu, came out for independence, and the next year he was elected burgomestre (mayor) of Leopoldville, now Kinshasa. The Congolese National Movement (MNC) was founded, led by a former postal clerk from Stanleyville (now Kisangani), Patrice Lumumba. But at the time of independence the country exploded in a conflict between federalists, grouped around the president, Kasavubu, and

partisans of a more centralized state, led by the prime minister, Lumumba. As a result of his fiery anti-colonial speeches, Lumumba was hated by the imperialists. Boycotted by the West, he turned to the Soviet Union, from which he received some limited aid. Patrice Lumumba was no revolutionary but a petty-bourgeois nationalist like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, or Sékou Touré in French Guinea. Nevertheless, fearing that a mass anti-colonial movement could quickly radicalize and seeing the Congo as key to the anti-Soviet Cold War in Africa, Washington decided to eliminate Lumumba.

At that point, the United Nations intervened, acting as an instrument of U.S. policy. Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba, who was placed under UN "protection" while the CIA elaborated its plans to assassinate him. At the end of 1960, Mobutu (who had been named army chief by Lumumba) carried out a coup d'état at the head of the colonial Force Publique, whose Belgian commanders were still in place. His troops captured Lumumba, who was turned over to the Katanga separatists under Moïse Tshombé to be shot. In this "Congo crisis" fabricated by the imperialist powers, the country was dismembered by regional civil wars while peasant guerrilla struggles spread, such as the uprising led by Pierre Mulele (pro-China) in the Kasai. But they were defeated by Mobutu, using European and South African mercenaries, and with copious aid from the U.S. (including USAF planes to transport troops into Kisangani). In 1965, General Mobutu promoted himself to president and established his regime that lasted until May 1997.

From the colonial "Free State" to semi-colonial "independence," Congo-Zaire has remained under the boot of the capitalist empires. During the Cold War, the U.S. and European imperialists saw Zaire (which borders on ten countries) as the pivot for their control of Africa, and for a quarter century political life was frozen under the dead hand of Mobutu. Following the destruction of the Soviet Union, the "Supreme Guide" lost his geostrategic value. Now a new bourgeois ruler has appeared, Kabila, offering his services to the imperialist masters. Under the new regime, a revolutionary proletarian vanguard warn against

any illusions in or political support for either Kabila's AFDL or the "moderate" bourgeois opposition of ex-Mobutuists.

Various centrist pseudo-Trotskyist groups talk of immediately organizing general strikes and even soviets in Kinshasa and the copper mines. This is cynical play-acting rather than a serious effort to provide a revolutionary program. The fact is that the once sizeable Congolese working class has been devastated, reduced to a small fraction of its former strength, in the economic disaster of Mobutu's last

years. The remaining enterprises, such as the state-owned Gecamines mining company (36,000 workers) and Onatra rail and harbor company, are barely functioning. Copper production has plummeted from 506,000 tons in 1988 to 38,000 tons in 1996. Cobalt production is down from 10,000 tons in '88 to 4,000 tons last year. Total exports fell from \$1.3 billion in 1990 to \$176 million in 1994 (*Africa Confidential*, 25 April). Under these conditions, it is urgent to defend the miners and rail workers unions and other organizations of the exploited masses against attempts by the new government to subjugate them.

As throughout Africa, the Congolese working masses will be able to get rid of imperialist oppression and the legacy of colonialism only through international socialist revolution. The working class must rely only on its own forces, rejecting the programs of class collaboration put forward by the various opportunist leftists, and fighting to assume leadership of the peasant masses and all the oppressed. It is necessary to begin the construction of the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard, based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, of international workers revolution. As we denounce the murderers of Lumumba and the likes of Kabila who today use his name to cloak their neo-colonialist submission to imperialism, Trotskyists wage a political struggle against petty-bourgeois nationalism and for proletarian internationalism. The fight for workers revolution in the Congo and throughout central Africa is only possible in the closest collaboration with the South African proletariat and its vanguard.

Kabila's American Connection

As Kabila's forces were approaching Kinshasa, the rulers in Washington who imagine themselves the masters of a "New World Order" tried to push the new ruler of the Congo-Zaire into a coalition with tried and tested flunkies of U.S. imperialism. Suddenly there was a spate of articles on the so-called moderate op-



Patrice Lumumba (right) being held by his captors before execution, Stanleyville (Kisangani), December 1960.

AFP

position led by Étienne Tshisekedi and his Democratic Union for Social Progress (UDPS). Tshisekedi was described as a "longtime rival to Mobutu," although in reality he was one of the kept politicians who would occasionally be brought in to clean up the regime's image when things got hot.

When Kabila turned down the calls for a coalition "transition regime," the *New York Times* (17 May) lamented, "U.S. Influence Over Zaire Appears Limited." The next day, the *Times* headlined, "Zairean Rebel Chief and

His Plans Are Puzzle to West." This feigned lack of influence in the post-Mobutu Congo is a charade. The United States has been intimately involved in Kabila's "rebellion" from last year on. While the fact that the "AFDL" military forces were actually led by Rwandan and Ugandan officers was occasionally delicately referred to, and finally confirmed in July by Rwandan strong man Paul Kagame, U.S. ties to Kabila have generally been hushed up. In particular, they have been disappeared by opportunist leftists who supported Kabila. So let us fill in some of the "blank spaces" in the history of Kabila's conquest.

To begin with, there are the economic ties. As soon as the AFDL forces took Kisangani, North American mining interests rushed to pay court to Kabila. A marriage of convenience was quickly arranged. One company involved was the Canadian-owned Tenke Mining Corp. which in early May won a contract to develop "what may be the world's largest copper and cobalt deposits" (*Wall Street Journal*). In exchange, Tenke transferred \$50 million to the Zairean state-owned Gecamines, which in turn started pumping millions of dollars into Kabila's war effort. Another major player in this rush to line up with the new master of the Congo was America Mineral Fields, which signed a \$1 billion contract with the AFDL. Although it is headed by a Briton from Mauritius, Jean-Raymond Boule, AMF is headquartered in Hope, Arkansas, a tiny burg whose main claim to fame is that it is Bill Clinton's home town.

Boule of America Mineral Fields said, "We are always looking for the jackpot. At the moment, it's in the Congo." When the AFDL was running low on cash in January, Boule says, "we went to Kisangani to buy diamonds—to the tune of \$100,000 a day—to help the local population" (*L'Express*, 22 May). "We have never given money to Mr. Kabila," he piously intones. "He simply has the right to use our plane." And while the rebel leader was using the AMF Learjet, his military leaders were being ferried around the Congo in planes

leased from American, Russian and South African "private" charter companies.

Then there are Kabila's ministers. Even as the fighting was going on east of Kinshasa, his minister of finance, Mawampanga Mwana, was holding a seminar for 30 businessmen at a hotel in the copper capital of Lubumbashi, Katanga (formerly Shaba). According to the *Wall Street Journal* (13 May), Mwana "worked a room full of international investors like a free-market virtuoso." Telling his appreciative audience what they wanted to hear, the former adjunct professor of agricultural economics at the University of Kentucky declared, "What we want to do is make sure investors make a profit." In attendance were representatives of Goldman Sachs, the First Bank of Boston, Morgan Grenfell and other fund managers from Canada, New York, Europe and South Africa. Before that, the *Journal* (14 April) reported that "planeloads of foreigners have been landing at Goma," Kabila's earlier headquarters, in "a scramble that recalls the grab for wealth 120 years ago in this vast land."

Mwana is not the only U.S.-trained top official in the new regime. The justice minister, Mwenze Kongolo, is a lawyer who was a graduate student at Temple University and then worked for the Philadelphia district attorney's office. "A guy who processed bail applications in Philadelphia in December will now supervise the police, immigration service, elections, and provincial government in Africa's third-largest country," crowed the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (26 May) in a burst of hometown pride. And how will Kongolo supervise them? Look at his background. Under top prosecutor Lynne Abrams, the Philadelphia D.A.'s office has been notorious for requesting more death sentences, overwhelmingly against black and Latino prisoners, than any other city in the United States. Foremost among those who have been targeted by this in-grown machine of state murder is Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and radical journalist who is the most prominent death row political prisoner in the United States today. Now Kabila's minister will get to practice "justice, Philly style" on the Congo.

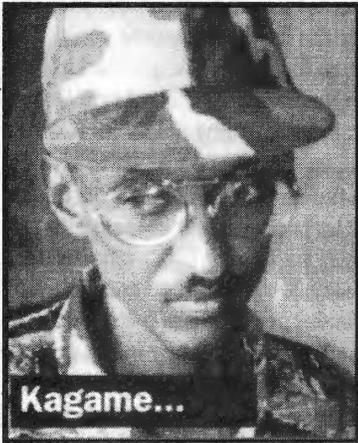
But supplying the money and the ministers for the new regime is far from the only U.S. contribution to Kabila's

cause. Buried deep in an article lamenting Washington's purported lack of influence over the new government was the laconic statement: "An American diplomat, Dennis Hankins, the political officer in Kinshasa, had already been at rebel headquarters for more than a month, establishing links with Kabila's main aides." And Hankins wasn't the first emissary to visit the rebels. Sources report from the eastern Congo that during the period when the AFDL had its headquarters in Goma, in November-December of last year, the deputy U.S. ambassador in Kigali (Rwanda), Peter Whaley, had "unlimited and frequent" access to Kabila. This was in the period when the rebels were deciding to expand from a regional insurgency into a drive to topple Mobutu. The American diplomat's comings and goings at Kabila's HQ were so constant that the revolt became known locally as "Whaley's War," these sources said.

The State Department personnel were not operating on their own account, obviously. In his interview with the *Washington Post* (9 July) admitting that Rwandan military officers led the "AFDL" army, Rwandan vice president and defense minister Paul Kagame also revealed that he had gotten the green light from Washington for the campaign. "Kagame...said that months before war erupted, he warned the United States that Rwanda would take military action against Mobutu's regime and the refugee camps in eastern Congo," the *Post* reported. Kagame "commended the United States for 'taking the right decisions to let it proceed'." In August 1996, the Rwandan leader travelled to New York and Washington where he met with State Department officials and "other people in the Clinton administration," to inform them of Rwanda's plans.

As the fighting was progressing, American military officials praised the strategy of Kabila's campaign, comparing whoever designed it to General Eisenhower in World War II. In fact, the rebel campaign was strikingly similar to Eisenhower's drive on Nazi Germany, when he first systematically occupied key industrial regions before heading for the capital, Berlin. In the Congo-Zaire, the "rebels" first seized the gold mining areas of the northeast, the diamond center of Muji Mbayi and the copper capital of Lubumbashi, and only then proceeded on to the capital. The similarity to Eisenhower's strategy is no accident, for the per-





son who initiated and made all the key decisions in the military campaign that overthrew Mobutu, namely Paul Kagamé, was trained at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. At the time (1990), he was head of military intelligence for the Ugandan army, but he was shortly to become the leader of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front in its successful campaign to oust the Hutu regime in Rwanda.

From the time the RPF launched its invasion of Rwanda in 1990, Kagamé and his Tutsi exiles have enjoyed the tacit and often active support of the U.S. government. In trying to dispel the "old rumour, namely that 'the RPF has been trained by the Americans,'" Gérard Prunier argued in his book.

The Rwanda Crisis: His-

tory of a Genocide (Columbia University Press, 1994), that Kagamé's stay at Fort Leavenworth was not so special, there were actually "about nine or ten" Rwandan exile officers from the Ugandan army who went to the United States for training. And this training did not stop then. In response to a question at a March 12 hearing of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a Pentagon spokesman provided a list of 43 Rwandan military officers and non-coms who had received training in the U.S. or participated in training courses given in Rwanda by the American Navy (Rwanda is landlocked!).

Moreover, a July 16 report by the Boston-based organization Physicians for Human Rights on a fact-finding investigation in eastern Congo and western Rwanda stated:

"the U.S. government has failed to disclose fully its role in supporting the Rwandan government in its conduct of the war. Based on interviews with U.S. officials and military personnel, as well as first-hand observations and public information...PHR is aware that U.S. Army Special Forces have been training Rwandan military in Rwanda since at least early 1996. The number of these U.S. military personnel has varied in witness accounts from 12 to more than 100 present in Rwanda at any given time.... PHR is particularly concerned that this U.S. military training has included counter-insurgency operations and cross-border surgical strikes."

In his *Washington Post* interview, Kagamé said that Rwandan "mid-level commanders" led the AFDL military forces

throughout the fighting in the Congo-Zaire. Kathi Austin, an arms specialist who traveled with the PHR team, told *The Internationalist* that it was highly likely that the Rwandan officers trained by the U.S. Special Forces were among those dispatched to command Kabila's forces—in fact, it would be surprising if they weren't.

Pseudo-Socialists Support Bourgeois Nationalists

The evidence is overwhelming: the new Kabila regime was "made in U.S.A.," just as was the Mobutu regime it overthrew. One neo-colonial puppet ruler has been replaced by another. Yet much of the left internationally has praised Kabila and his forces as liberators. Stalinists around the world have saluted the victory of the AFDL over Mobutu. Thus the formerly pro-Moscow American Communist Party (CPUSA) applauds "the revolutionary war, led by Laurent Kabila" (*People's Weekly World*, 24 May). The South African Communist Party (SACP), in turn, awarded a prize of two red stars "to the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire for sweeping away the corrupt and dictatorial Mobutu regime and producing a sense of unity among the suffering people of Zaire" (*Umsebenzi*, May 1997).

Some of the formerly pro-Moscow Stalinists have been having some afterthoughts about their support for Kabila as evidence of his U.S. backing accumulated. Thus in the CPUSA's *People's Weekly World* (24 May), William Pomeroy reported on the AFDL's juicy deals with American mining companies, saying that "they bear the marks of understandings that had been arrived at well in advance," and that this "has not been the common experience of liberation movements." But in the same issue, Victor Perlo justified the fat contracts, saying that "dealing with capitalist corporations in order to obtain funds and technology for development" is "in accord with anti-imperialist, progressive governments in today's world."

In South Africa, the SACP's Jeremy Cronin declared: "It is no secret that Laurent Kabila's forces have been heavily backed and assisted by the US.... From the South African side, we need to be careful that, in our support for democracy and for a minimisation of conflict in Zaire, we do not play into someone else's agenda." Yet the month before, SACPer Dale McKinley had hailed Kabila's Party of the Popular Revolution for forming a paper alliance with other imaginary groups in a "national democratic alliance" whose purpose was "to create a democratic state that breaks with the entrenched system of corruption and neo-colonialism" (*Umsebenzi*, April 1997).

The very concept of a "democratic" capitalist state in Asia, Africa or Latin America breaking with neo-colonialism is a Stalinist-reformist myth. In this epoch of capitalist decay, breaking the stranglehold of imperialism can only be accomplished through workers revolution, establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasantry, led by an internationalist communist party and extending the revolution to centers of world imperialism. This is the heart of the Trotskyist program and perspective of *permanent revolution*. It holds not only for the Congo but in particular for South Africa, with its powerful black proletariat that is key to revolution throughout the continent. The

SACP's contortions over Kabila reflect its efforts to defend its own treacherous role in propping up the new black bourgeois rulers of South Africa under Nelson Mandela.

But the chorus of hosannas for the new rulers of the Congo doesn't only come from the Stalinists. The United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel, which claims the title of the Fourth International while it constantly betrays the Trotskyist program, declared in a January 30 statement its "solidarity with the anti-Mobutu and anti-imperialist opposition in its struggle to put an end to the dictatorship." Following the victory of the rebels, the USec has continued to apologize for Kabila, declaring "we can only approve" of the aid by the Ugandan and Rwandan governments to Kabila, and arguing that "The Alliance is by no means a puppet of the United States" (*International Viewpoint*, June 1997).

In the interests of building "a democratic and sovereign Congo," the USec offered advice to Kabila on how to govern the country. Its main demand? For a "monetary reform," such as the one implemented by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1985, to stop inflation and seize illicit fortunes of Mobutu cronies. A curious recipe, since the FSLN's monetary policies contributed to its ouster in 1989 elections when the Nicaraguan masses, exhausted by the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas' austerity and the Yankee imperialists' economic boycott, voted for an open representative of the bourgeoisie. In calling for "a democratic and pluralist Congo" under Kabila (!), the Mandelites utter not a word about the struggle for workers revolution and socialism.

While the USec is blatantly calling for support to a *capitalist* regime in the guise of fighting for "democracy," a hallmark of reformism, a number of centrist pseudo-Trotskyists first hailed Kabila and his AFDL only to later try to cover their tracks when the evidence of U.S. imperialism's backing became undeniable. Among these was Workers Power in Britain and its international supporters in the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). Last December, WP called Kabila "progressive" and declared the insurgency "a legitimate struggle against the pro-imperialist Mobutu dictatorship." By this spring, WP discovered that Kabila was "clearly not hostile to imperialism's role in the region per se," that his opposition to French imperialism was only due to the latter's support for Mobutu, and thus his aim "coincides with that of the US administration." Nevertheless, it declared, "Despite the petit-bourgeois leadership of the movement, revolutionaries participate in the struggle of the ADLFCZ to overthrow the rotten Mobutu regime" (LRCI statement, 27 March).

There is a common thread linking the support to Kabila by several varieties of Stalinists and a number of groups which falsely claim to be Trotskyist. While at some level making ref-

erence to the heritage of the Russian October Revolution, *all* of these tendencies have abandoned the program of world socialist revolution which inspired that revolution and which was codified by the early Communist International. In the case of Stalin, the rejection of the Bolsheviks' internationalist program was codified in the nationalist slogan of building "socialism in one country." This anti-Marxist conception reflected the outlook of a conservative bureaucratic layer sitting atop the economic foundations of the Soviet workers state and seeking some kind of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, whether called by that name or not. This was true not only of the Kremlin Stalinist rulers and their supporters in pro-Moscow CPs around the world, but also of the Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese and North Korean Stalinists. Instead of fighting for workers revolution internationally, all varieties of Stalinists have looked for alliances with and given support to various petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist forces.

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky founded the Fourth International to uphold the program of the early Comintern against

its abandonment by Stalin. However, in the absence of new workers revolutions, over time many groups identifying with Trotskyism have abandoned the program of permanent revolution and instead have brought in Stalinist contraband dressed up in Marxist-sounding phrases, like an "anti-imperialist united front" with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists. Over the years, the pseudo-Trotskyists gave political support to the Angolan MPLA, the Mozambican FRELIMO and Nelson



Clinton targets Africa, June 1997.

Reuters

Mandela's ANC, all of which once had something of a leftist allure. Today many of those falsely claiming to be Trotskyists have abandoned any vestige of socialist rhetoric and talk only of "democratic" revolution in the neocolonies—while embracing Laurent Kabila, who openly supports "free market" capitalism and is anything but democratic. In fact, Kabila has presided over *genocidal mass murder*.

Where authentic Trotskyism fights for the class independence of the proletariat, the Stalinists and pseudo-Trotskyists stand for class collaboration, tying the workers and oppressed to the very bourgeois forces who massacre them.

Smash Imperialism Through International Workers Revolution!

To create the image of the ex-Marxist revolutionary Kabila, the bourgeois press recalls that in the 1960s he participated in a guerrilla struggle in the southeast of the Congo, together with the legendary leader of the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara. However, what Guevara himself wrote about his ally shows that after a series of encounters, he concluded Kabila was a fraud. Extracts from Guevara's manuscript about the failed guerrilla struggle in

1965 in the Congo were published in the book by Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Froilán Escobar and Félix Guerra, *El año que estuvimos en ninguna parte: La guerrilla africana de Ernesto Ché Guevara* (1994). The Argentine guerrilla commented: "The dissention between Kabila and Soumaliot [another leader of Lumumba's MNC] are increasingly serious, and they use them as a pretext to keep on handing over cities without fighting. I know Kabila enough not to have illusions in him...." Kabila, as the leader of the MNC in the southeast, arranged matters so that he was never at the front, spending all his time in Tanzania, supposedly obtaining arms which never arrived.

It was not just Kabila, but all of the surviving leaders of the Congolese National Movement, Guevara complained, and they saw the fight only in African terms. Yet the Pan-Africanism of the MNC differed little from the Bolivarian Latin American nationalism promoted by Guevara, all of which come down to a perspective of seeking a bloc with supposed "patriotic" elements of the bourgeoisie. Nationalism is the common outlook of all sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, from peasants to shopkeepers and professionals. "African socialism," such as propounded by Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, or Nkrumah's talk of "class struggle in Africa" (*after* he was overthrown in a 1966 military coup) are nothing but leftist window-dressing for the appetites of those who would be a new capitalist ruling class. The episodic "socialist" rhetoric of some of the nationalist leaders expressed their need to use the state as a machine for the primary accumulation of the capital needed to form a bourgeoisie. The only social basis for a genuine fight against the imperialist system and not just the dictator of the day is the *proletariat*, whose class interests are international in scope.

After his mid-1960s guerrilla struggle faded, Kabila maintained his influence in southeastern Zaire for years as an isolated "warlord." Kabila himself says, accurately, "I was never a Marxist-Leninist." In the '80s, far from waging guerrilla war against Mobutu, Kabila dedicated himself to selling gold and ivory from his fiefdom, while living in Dar es Salaam, where he used to tool around town in his Mercedes-Benz. In 1988, Kabila visited Mobutu in the Zairean dictator's jungle palace of Gbadolite to plead for aid to the Southern Sudanese rebels led by John Garang, whose other benefactors included Uganda and the United States.

Taken all together, it is clear that Kabila is no leftist guerrilla, not even a sold-out former leftist, but a direct agent of U.S. interests. So are his godfathers Kagamé in Rwanda and Museveni in Uganda. Last April, Uganda was the first country in Africa to benefit from a special International Monetary Fund program sharply reducing the foreign debt in exchange for carrying out IMF-dictated economic policies. The U.S.' behind-the-scenes support to Kabila and his Rwandan and Ugandan sponsors reflects the growing U.S. intervention in Africa in recent years, whose purposes include undermining the influence of France. The international edition of *Time* (14 April) ran an article on "Shaking Up Africa." The article summed up: "With Museveni as its godfather, this realignment of Africa's old order tends to be Anglophone in its international voice, pro-American in its diplo-

macy and obeisant to Adam Smith in its economics. As the old-style Big Men are being pushed aside, so is the influence of France."

The bloody conflicts in Central Africa in recent years reflect the growing inter-imperialist rivalries in the period following the destruction of the Soviet Union. Although for three decades during the Cold War Mobutu was Washington's man in central Africa, following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the U.S. cut off the dollars to the corrupt dictator of Zaire. France, whose zone of influence in west and central Africa consists of a bunch of petty tyrants of the same ilk, supported Mobutu up to the end, as it also supported the Hutu extremist regime in Rwanda when the U.S. was backing the Tutsi-dominated RPF. Now the scenario has been repeated in Congo-Zaire. An article in *Newsweek* (2 December 1996) began: "Welcome to Rwanda, a Central Africa friend so close to Washington that French diplomats mutter darkly about a plot to create an anglophone empire from Cape Town to Cairo."

Even though the new French government under "Socialist" Lionel Jospin is closing its army bases in Africa and talks of abandoning past policies of unconditional support to petty dictators, the inter-imperialist rivalry is growing. In close cooperation with Mandela's South Africa, Washington has been on an offensive to expand its economic clout in Africa. The late U.S. secretary of commerce Ron Brown declared in a message to Congress that "from now on the U.S. is not going to give way on African markets to the old colonial powers." In June, Clinton announced an "Afro-American Partnership for Growth." Henceforth, Washington wants to host a regular "African-American Economic Forum" to gather U.S. clients on the continent in the way that France has summits of French-speaking African countries.

In this inter-imperialist squabble, the opportunist left has lined up with American imperialism, adopting its hypocritical propaganda about human rights. The leftist apologists for Kabila pretend that the AFDL is a petty-bourgeois mass movement like the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, and they seek to push it to the left. Yet Kabila's regime came to power not through a peasant guerrilla struggle but on the bayonets of Rwandan and Ugandan army units. The arguments used by phony leftists today to justify their support to Kabila are the same that they used to support Khomeini in Iran in 1979. At that time, they put forward all sorts of "anti-imperialist" slogans to justify their support to a "revolution" which was soon stoning women who didn't wrap themselves in the suffocating *chador* (veil covering the entire body), hanging homosexuals and shooting communists, while unleashing a bloodbath against national minorities such as the Kurds and Azeris. Today, Kabila's troops have been enforcing a dress code by ripping the clothes off women they consider "immodest."

While the Congolese workers movement has been gravely weakened in recent years, the new regime is far from strong. Internationalist revolutionaries must defend the unions and other workers organizations against attempts by the AFDL government to regiment them. Opportunities may arise to impose *workers control of production* in the mines and other sec-

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After 1994 Genocide of Tutsis

Kabila Army's Genocidal Mass Murder of Rwandan Hutu Refugees

As the rebel forces of Laurent Kabila moved rapidly across Zaire, conquering in seven months a huge country the size of West Europe or the United States east of the Mississippi, the army of the dictator Mobutu melted before them. There was little actual fighting, as government troops concentrated on looting before fleeing. But there was a lot of killing, not of combatants but of *tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees*. A number of leftist groups have tried to deny, justify or ignore this fact, some because of their support for Kabila, others because they are suspicious of the way that the imperialists have used the question of Rwandan refugees to try to pressure the new Congo regime. The Congolese government has accused UN special investigator Roberto Garreton of bias in his February 1997 report of mass killings by the AFDL forces. But there is irrefutable documented evidence that a *genocidal massacre* has been under way. *Conservative* estimates of the numbers of refugees who were murdered outright or were driven into the jungle to die range from 150,000 to 230,000. As Western governments mouth platitudes about human rights, it is in fact the imperialists who are at the origin of this barbarism.

When the first rebel units appeared in October 1996, their first act was to disperse and kill Rwandan refugees from camps in South Kivu province west of the city of Uvira on Lake Tanganyika. The South African *Mail & Guardian* (21 July) reported after visiting the area:

"Among the main killing fields is Shabunda, where there are eye-witness accounts of Rwandan-led squads carrying out summary executions of Hutu men. A Rwandan officer, known to UN officials as Commander Jackson, identifies himself as 'The Exterminator.'...

"Credible witnesses report at least three mass graves in the Shabunda area, thought to contain the corpses of thousands of people, including children and babies.

"Aid agencies say they were duped into laying a trap for refugees around Shabunda by encouraging them to come out of the forest for food."

Also in South Kivu, hundreds of refugees were killed, mostly



Christophe Simon/AFP

Rwandan refugees in Tingi-Tingi camp south of Kisangani in January.

women and children, in a machine-gun attack on a camp in the village of Kasese. A bulldozer was used to bury the victims. Near Minova, South Kivu, a container was found stuffed with Hutus who were locked inside and suffocated.

In North Kivu province, outside Bukavu, several hundred Hutu refugees were killed at the Chimanga camp. At least eleven mass graves have been identified in the area. In some cases, local people were later press-ganged into digging up the bodies to be burned in order to destroy evidence. Around the city of Goma, at least 20 mass graves have been found. A local association charged with removing corpses along the main roads collected 6,537 cadavers in December 1996. The UN High Commission for Refugees reported 1,515 bodies collected at Kibumba camp and another 300 bodies at Katala camp in the same area.

On 15-17 November 1996, the "rebels" launched a pincer attack on the huge refugee camp of Mugunga, which at the time held an estimated 500,000, many of them having fled from camps to the south. As a result of the slaughter, a huge mass of hundreds of thousands fled to the east, reentering Rwanda. U.S. spokesmen declared that this put an end to the refugee problem in eastern Zaire and numbered the returnees at over 700,000. However, aid workers on the spot who attempted to count the crowd put the number at no more than 450,000 (*Goma/Bukavu: Temoignage Direct*, January 1997).

Of the 1.1 million Hutu refugees in camps before the at-

tacks, this left perhaps 650,000 who did not go back to Rwanda. Eventually approximately 200,000 to 250,000 arrived at camps to the west, notably Tingi-Tingi on the road to Kisangani. In March and April, these makeshift camps were then brutally "cleared" of their hapless inhabitants. At Kasese, villagers whipped up by the rebel army tore into the Hutu refugees with spears and pangas (machetes), hacking and stabbing hundreds to death. By early May several thousand Rwandan Hutus made it west to the Congo River at Mbandaka across from the Congo Republic. But there the AFDL forces caught up with them. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (5 June) reported: "Moments after the rebels arrived on May 13 to the cheers of grateful townsfolk, the troops horrified the residents by systematically exterminating Rwandan Hutu refugees.... The troops shot and beat to death at least 550 Hutu men, women and children who were attempting to escape on a barge by the river...."

The accounts could be continued indefinitely. In a follow-up report in July, UN investigator Garreton listed 134 sites where mass killings of Hutu refugees took place. Only in a very few cases is *any* armed resistance reported. So when the Communist Party U.S.A., for example, sneers about "the 'plight' of Rwandan refugees" (*People's Weekly World*, 15 May), they are apologizing for *death squads*. This was not a matter of random casualties, or a few rebel units running amok, it was a deliberate, systematic policy carried out by the AFDL forces. Those refugees they didn't kill were bundled onto planes and sent to Rwanda where as many as 200,000 Hutu men are stuffed into jails that are bursting at the seams, charged with participation in genocide although in fact no judicial action or even investigation is underway. They are being held there to die.

Like the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis, the present genocidal mass murder of Hutu refugees is a horrendous crime. It is important for communists to explain *why* such monstrous events have taken place. The slaughter in the eastern Congo was a spillover resulting from the war in Rwanda in 1994, in which the previous Hutu chauvinist regime was defeated by the Tutsi-dominated RPF forces. As they were going down to defeat, the reactionary Hutu chauvinists unleashed a massive genocide of Tutsis living inside Rwanda. Estimates of the number of Tutsis killed range from 500,000 to 800,000. The remnants of the old regime maintained an armed presence in the refugee camps in Zaire, from which they launched periodic raids into Rwanda during 1995-96. In response, and in revenge, the RPF regime in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, decided to disperse the camps and wipe out the Hutu refugees. There is no doubt that this was done as a conscious policy, and where individual AFDL commanders who ordered the killings are known, a remarkable number of them have English names (Colonel Wilson, Colonel Richard). It is thus likely that they are Tutsi refugees who grew up in English-speaking Uganda and who are the hard core of the RPF regime. They are disciplined, professional, and ruthless *mass murderers*.

The genocide against the Tutsi population of Rwanda was the result of a whole course of history, which it is important to understand. The relation of Tutsis and Hutus was one of domination and subjugation before the European colonizers arrived, and

this was greatly intensified during the colonial period. Lately, particularly following the 1994 genocide, it has been fashionable to treat the two groups as *ethnic* groups, similar to tribal divisions in other parts of Africa. This suggests a *vertical* division between two peoples living in close proximity. There are ethnic elements to the differences between these two social groups, and according to historic tradition, the Tutsi herders migrated from the north to settle in the upland area of the Great Lakes where there was a settled agriculturalist population of Bantu origin, the Hutus. There are prototypical differences in physical appearance between Tutsi and Hutu, although as a result of inter-marriage such differences are far from uniform. But the fundamental social fact is that Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda and Burundi were part of the same people. They speak the same closely related languages (Kinyarwanda and Kirundi), have a common culture, are part of a common political economy in a common territory and were ruled over by the same political systems.

The tendency of the media and current bourgeois academics to reduce most social divisions to ethnicity only serves to obscure and confuse the origins of the violent Hutu-Tutsi clashes in recent years. It is more accurate to refer to the Hutus and Tutsis, as was done in earlier studies, as *castes*, albeit ones which are not as rigidly separated or laden with religious significance as the Hindu Indian origin of this term. Socially, economically and politically, the Tutsi population was a dominant caste in the pre-colonial period. Between individual Hutus and Tutsis there was generally a relation based on the institution of *ubuhake* (clientship) traditionally sealed by the lending of cattle by the Tutsi patron to the Hutu client. This led to descriptions of the Tutsi-Hutu relation as one of "feudality," or an early stage of feudalism. There are important regional variations, but the fundamental division of society in Rwanda and Burundi is into *horizontal* layers, that is, between a dominant Tutsi layer (about 15 percent of the population in both countries) living in part off of surplus product from the subordinate Hutu majority (roughly 85 percent).

Much of the ambiguity surrounding Hutu-Tutsi relations is a result of the fact that they were part of social formations in the process of consolidation at the time colonial rule was imposed early in this century. Unlike much of Africa, states have existed in the Rwanda/Burundi region for centuries. Out of numerous small "kingdoms" presided over by Tutsi rulers of different lineages, a single kingdom was gradually formed in Rwanda headed by the *mwami* (king), with outlying areas ruled over by what amounted to princes. The extension of rule by the Tutsi monarchy over Hutu principalities was continuing when the European colonizers arrived. The colonial rulers, briefly Germany and then Belgian, opted to rule exclusively through the Tutsi, setting up a system of chiefs. By 1959 on the eve of independence, some 43 out of 45 chiefs in Rwanda were Tutsi, as were 549 out of 559 subchiefs. The power of the chiefs was increased, Tutsi economic exactions were intensified, and the colonial authorities introduced onerous forced labor on state projects (e.g., building roads) and forced cultivation of cash crops such as coffee. On top of this, the colonial rulers promoted the Tutsis as a "superior race."

The result of this sharply increasing oppression was ulti-

ings of Hutus. This is also true of the Tutsi rulers in neighboring Burundi, who butchered an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Hutus in 1972, and tens of thousands more in 1993. Gérard Prunier, whose 1994 book on the Rwandan genocide was quite positive toward the RPF, has written a postscript to a second edition stating that there is a high likelihood that the numbers of Hutu killed by the RPF victors could be "up to 100,000." A report by a UN consultant that 30,000 Hutus had been killed in northwestern Rwanda was suppressed, even though the personnel who compiled the report thought its estimates were low. In April 1995, RPF military men gunned down over 4,000 Hutus in the Kibeho refugee camp inside Rwanda in full view of foreign aid workers, but there was hardly a ripple of protest from the regime's international backers, notably the U.S.

Prunier comments that the RPF massacres were "less ambitious and seem to have been much more tactically oriented." Others have argued that it is *impossible* for the Tutsi rulers to carry out a genocide against Hutu because they are vastly outnumbered. There is a difference, but it is this: The fascist Hutu chauvinists tried to wipe out the Tutsis as a whole, while in the rural areas they were joined by envious peasants trying to grab Tutsi-held lands. The Tutsi bourgeois rulers, on the other hand, as a dominant minority have attempted to exterminate the Hutu military, political and professional cadres, so that the bulk of the Hutu population will be a leaderless mass available for brutal *exploitation*. On top of this "tactically oriented" mass murder, they have now undertaken a deliberate campaign to liquidate the remaining Hutu refugees, on the grounds they will necessarily be enemies for life.

Up to 800,000 Tutsis indiscriminately slaughtered by Hutu reactionaries in Rwanda; 100,000 Hutus murdered by the Tutsi rulers in Rwanda, and another 100,000-200,000 by the Tutsi regime in Burundi; and now something on the order of 200,000 Hutu refugees exterminated by the Tutsi army supplied to Kabila in Congo-Zaire—what we have here is mutual genocide. It comes to a head in a place like Rwanda/Burundi, where the social and economic pressures are the greatest: with a population density of 270 people per square kilometer in 1989, Rwanda has one of the highest rural concentrations of population in the world. Add to this the dramatic impact of the fall in coffee prices in the 1980s and '90s, affecting what was once Rwanda's sole major export, and this is a recipe for a social explosion. However, in the absence of revolutionary leadership and a strong proletariat, what has taken place is not a struggle for social progress but an outbreak of the virulent social pathology of decaying capitalism.

The genocide in central Africa is usually blamed on "ancestral tribal hatreds," although in fact, the Hutus and Tutsis are not tribes at all. It has been compared to ethnic mass murder in Yugoslavia. In that case, the blame has been placed on the Stalinist regimes, in addition to supposed age-old Balkan animosities. In reality, less than a century ago there was relatively united struggle by the south Slavic peoples against the Habsburg and Ottoman empires which divided and ruled over them. The Stalinist regimes managed to keep a lid on overt nationalist hostilities, but because they were nationalists claim-

ing to build "socialism is one country," they could not *supersede* the nation. That required advancing toward socialism, a classless society based on the highest development of productive forces instead of persistent scarcity.

Today we witness the revolting spectacle of supposed socialists apologizing for genocidal mass murderers in the Congo—in the name of "human rights," no less—because these reformists accept the national limits inherent in capitalism. In the advanced capitalist countries reformism ultimately leads to support for imperialist war, as the assorted social democrats did in voting war credits to "their" bourgeoisie in World War I and social democrats and Stalinists did in backing the "democratic" Allies (the ones who nuked Hiroshima and Nagasaki and firebombed Dresden) in World War II. In the countries dominated by imperialism, the reformists end up supporting colonialism (as they did in Vietnam and Algeria, for example) and apologizing for ethnic slaughter and genocide, as the Stalinists did over Biafra in the mid-1960s and as is the case with a host of pseudo-socialists over the Congo today. Those who support capitalism—in the name of "reforming" it, of course—end up supporting the slaughter of the exploited and oppressed. ■

Congo: Neo-Colonialism...

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tors, and for working-class-led mobilizations against the "free market" policies of the new capitalist rulers. In the face of Kabila's attempt to erect a new bonapartist dictatorship, proletarian revolutionaries must raise the demand for a *revolutionary constituent assembly* and the perspective of workers and peasants councils to form the basis for a *workers and peasants government*, the dictatorship of the proletariat, to expropriate capitalism and undertake socialist measures. The fight for a Congolese workers revolution would quickly spill over national boundaries, extending immediately to the Zambian copper belt, and must be intimately connected to the powerful South African proletariat and closely linked to the struggle for socialist revolution in the imperialist centers.

Already the downfall of Mobutu has shaken up governments across the continent. In Kenya, the heavy-handed authoritarian regime of Daniel arap Moi is tottering. Uganda's Museveni fancies himself "Bismarck on the Nile," and backed up by allies in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda and now Congo, his supporters talk of a United States of Africa to undo the legacy of the European colonialists' 1885 Berlin Conference. But there will be no "African unity" under capitalism, for even though production is increasingly internationalized, capitalism cannot transcend national boundaries, neither in the imperialist West nor in the neocolonies. From the Cape to Cairo, from Mogadishu to Dakar, the fight must be for a *socialist united states of Africa*. The fight for workers revolution in Africa requires the unmasking of the false socialists who today would have the working masses bow before their new exploiters, and the construction of Trotskyist parties built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International as a genuine world party of socialist revolution. ■

Debate in the South African Left

In Defense of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

It has been almost three and a half years since the 1994 South African elections that were overwhelmingly won by Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress. After 27 years as a political prisoner on Robben Island, Mandela was the symbol of the fight against the hated system of *apartheid* (Afrikaans for "separateness"), that is, of white supremacy enforced through rigid segregation. His election as South African president and the installation of an ANC-dominated government led to celebration in the impoverished black townships. Many saw the formal end of apartheid as signaling the dawn of freedom, of social liberation. They were to be deeply disappointed. While the elaborate *legal* structure of grand and petty apartheid has been dismantled—passbooks, the Group Areas Act which bannished millions to barren "bantustans" and townships, the ban on mixed marriages, etc.—the underlying economic structure remains. *White supremacy is vital to South African capitalism, and can only be eliminated through socialist revolution.*

In the course of decades of bitter struggle against this hated system, many black, coloured (mixed race), Indian and white opponents of racist oppression came to identify the fight against apartheid slavery with the fight for a socialist society of equality. Most of the unions of the overwhelmingly black working class formally committed themselves to "socialism." The South African Communist Party (SACP) played a leading role in the underground struggle of the ANC, and after being legalized in 1990 expanded its ranks to 50,000 members. The SACP dominated the top leadership and middle-level cadres of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the main labor federation. When SACP general secretary Chris Hani was gunned down by right-wing anti-communists in league with South African intelligence services in 1994, many thousands took to the streets in anger and mourning. Young "comrades" in the townships flew the red flag with the hammer and sickle, the symbol of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, as the banner

of their own struggle.

But the politics of the SACP were not those of the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, who led the October Revolution under the watchword of world socialist revolution. Rather, the party of Hani and longtime SACP leader Joe Slovo was wedded to the program of Stalinism, of nationalist class collaboration. While Stalin falsely claimed to be building "socialism in one country" in the Soviet Union—the justification for the Kremlin bureaucracy's opposition to fighting for international communism—elsewhere the Stalinized Communist International called for "popular fronts" with sections of the capitalist rulers and "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists. This program betrayed the Bolshevik revolutionary heritage and led to bloody defeats in one country after another, from Spain in the 1930s to Indonesia in 1965 and Chile in 1973. Stalinism undermined the defense of the Soviet Union and, under the relentless pressure of imperialism, ultimately paved the way for its counterrevolutionary destruction in 1989-92.

In South Africa, the Stalinist SACP had tied its supporters so closely to the ANC for so many decades that they were virtually inseparable. When the combative black unions arose



Impact Visuals

Anti-apartheid fighters looked to the Russian Revolution, but ANC/SACP/COSATU nationalist popular front chains masses to bourgeoisie.

in the 1970s and '80s, quickly emerging as the motor force in the anti-apartheid struggle, the Communist Party intervened to bind those unions tightly to a "triple alliance" of the ANC, SACP and COSATU. Following the Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution," the ANC's liberal Freedom Charter was proclaimed the program of South Africa's "national democratic revolution" (NDR). What that meant in practical terms was "later (i.e., never) for socialism."

Immediately following the 27 April 1994 election, what the "NDR" meant was an alliance with former president and National Party leader F.W. De Klerk and with the former regime's black front man, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and his reactionary Inkatha movement. Many ANC, COSATU and SACP members found it hard to stomach this treacherous alliance with some of the most bloodsoaked killers of the apartheid regime. The organizers of the death squads would now sit in cabinet meetings and parliament with their targets. The Nats left the coalition last year, while Buthelezi continues. But even without their presence, the ANC is vigilantly defending the interests of the South African bourgeoisie against the vast non-white masses who are its victims. From being a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement, Mandela's African National Congress has become a bourgeois-nationalist party, representing the black front men for white capital.

The giant South African corporations like the Anglo American mining conglomerate have produced a layer of dependent black capitalists, creating instant millionaires out of those considered to be "reliable" elements, with at least paper control of various companies. Cyril Ramaphosa, was first installed as head of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) by the head of the Anglo American mining conglomerate, Harry Oppenheimer, then became secretary general of the ANC. Last year Ramaphosa was bankrolled by Nicholas Oppenheimer in a US\$900 million deal to acquire a controlling share of Anglo American's industrial holding company Johnnic, which owns big stakes in South African Breweries, Toyota, Times Media and other leading corporations. A key partner of Ramaphosa in the National Empowerment Consortium which "purchased" Johnnic is Nthato Motlana, head of New Africa Investments Ltd. (NAIL). In the name of "black empowerment," selected blacks are becoming part of the interlocking directorates of South African capital.

Meanwhile, the South African working class gets shafted. A big part of the capital of NAIL in fact comes from union pension funds, which are now being milked to enrich this nascent black bourgeoisie. On the eve of the ANC coming to office, COSATU leaders drew up a Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) calling for social projects like construction of 1 million new houses, providing electricity and basic social services in the townships and expanding education. Yet in the upshot, housing construction has stagnated, in good part because the black working class is too poor to be able to pay bank loans; instead of

providing running water for the poor, control of water supplies is being sold to multinational corporations; and schools are being closed for lack of budgetary funds.

A favorite obfuscating tactic of the bureaucrats and plutocrats is to endlessly create new acronyms. Instead of the "social market capitalism" of the RDP, since last year the Mandela government has been pushing the "neo-liberal" GEAR (for Growth, Employment and Redistribution) plan. GEAR projected the generation of 300,000 jobs a year through privatization, "flexibilizing the workplace," and similar devices. But instead South Africa lost 71,000 jobs last year. As a result of layoffs and plant shut-downs, unions have been losing members for several years. The National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), for example, has fallen from 280,000 in 1991 to 232,000 last year. According to Reserve bank economists, "the recession from 1989 to 1993 was worse in terms of job losses than that in the 1930s," made worse by the Bank's policy of keeping interest rates high (*Mail & Guardian*, 27 June). At the same time, the Bank allowed the Gencor mining conglomerate to move its entire 25 billion rand (\$5 billion) in assets out of the country, despite currency controls.

Currently, COSATU has been demanding a 40-hour workweek and six months paid maternity leave in a Basic Conditions of Employment (BCOE) bill now before parliament. The ANC government and business interests are dead opposed. This has led to a series of nationwide union pro-

tests in recent months. On June 2, some tens of thousands of workers marched in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria demanding changes in the BCOE. When this was to no avail, the federation repeated the exercise in mid-August, with rotating stay-away strikes and marches in different regions of the country. The stay-aways were effective, with 60-90 percent absent in most industries, but the marches less so. The increasing rightward turn of the government has led to disenchantment and general discontent. Unions have been generally weakened, and to the extent there have been splits they have tended toward the right, toward unconditional acceptance of the dictates of capital and its government.

Even the top levels of union officialdom have begun to grumble. Thus James Motlasti, president of the NUM, remarked at a COSATU conference in July:

"Although racial discrimination is now officially abolished and a few blacks have infiltrated the top of the triangles, the vast majority still feel discrimination is real.... Some of us are now having to confront black employers and black managers. We are finding they are no different from white ones. This can only be explained by the fact that capitalism is the source of the problems."

—*Business Report*, 9 August

At the Metalworkers' national congress in September 1996, union president Mtutuzeli Tom complained: "The key problem facing NUMSA and COSATU today is the high rising

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.
—Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875)

degree of hopelessness, confusion and fear of our members, the emerging gap between shop stewards and members." But "hopelessness, confusion and fear" in the ranks of labor are a direct result of the policy of the leadership of chaining the workers to their class enemy.

The paralysis of the reformist union leadership and its submission to the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance will be played out at COSATU's national congress this month (September). In anticipation, the labor federation's leadership appointed a commission led by Connie September to come up with a "political programme for transformation." But while press leaks hint that "Cosatu May Launch Left-Wing Party" (*Mail & Guardian*, 8 August), this is empty pressure politics. The September Commission calls instead for "revitalising the Tripartite Alliance," for "an ANC-led alliance" with a "working-class bias" (*Shopsteward*, August/September 1997). In other words, the COSATU tops want Mandela, Mbeki & Co. to make some concessions so they can again bring out the vote for the black bourgeois nationalists in next year's elections.

What is necessary is to break with the ANC/SACP/COSATU nationalist popular front and build a revolutionary workers party on the program of authentic Bolshevism. Such a party, rather than "empowering" a handful of junior black partners for Anglo American and the Jo'burg Stock Exchange, would instead fight for state power in the hands of the working class, for the *dictatorship of the proletariat* to expropriate the capitalists, extend workers revolution internationally and open the road to socialism on the only basis possible, not in one country, but on an international scale. This concerns the entire continent, for South Africa, with its millions-strong industrial and mining proletariat, is the key to workers revolution and social liberation throughout Africa.

SACP Debate on Stalinist Terrain

The need for a revolutionary party and program is felt acutely among the most conscious elements of the South African working class, including inside the South African Communist Party itself. The SACP has from the beginning been the linchpin for the "tripartite alliance" subordinating the working class to bourgeois nationalism. Over the last decade, the SACP has gradually abandoned almost every vestigial reference to Leninism, grossly deformed by the party's real politics of Stalinism, in order to become a West European-style social-democratic party. This was led off by Joe Slovo in his suggestively titled 1990 pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed?* It is only a matter of time before the right-wing leadership around deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin dumps the name Communist altogether. As a result of the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, the Stalinists embrace the bourgeois lie of the supposed "death of communism."

But as the SACP acts as the loyal labor lieutenants of South African capital, there have been indications of internal discontent. This has been reflected, although in a distorted way, in a debate over the dictatorship of the proletariat in the pages of the party's journal. In his 1990 pamphlet, Slovo opined that the concept was "dealt with rather thinly by Marx," and that "upon reflection" the term dictatorship was a poor choice of

words! Like bourgeois ideologues and the Stalinist he always was, Slovo equated the scientific description of the rule of the working class used by Marx and Lenin with Stalin's bureaucratic regime. Nevertheless, a few years later, the *African Communist* (4th quarter 1993) published a letter of resignation from the SACP by the secretary of the Cape Town branch, Theo Molaba, accusing the party of "abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles" and demanding to know: "What has happened to the DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT?" A letter to the *African Communist* (3rd quarter 1994) by a comrade of the Tshiawelo branch asked the party to discuss the question. This was then taken up by Dale McKinley, presently chairman of the Greater Johannesburg SACP, in an article titled "Reclaiming the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (*African Communist*, 3rd quarter 1995), with a reply by Cronin in the next issue (1st quarter 1996), and a reply to the reply by McKinley (3rd quarter 1996).

The central fact of this discussion is that *all the participants accept the Stalinist framework*, which fundamentally distorts the concepts of Lenin and Marx theoretically just as it betrayed them in practice. Cronin titles his essay "Parliamentary Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and it isn't hard to guess which one he is for. Cronin says, "If debates were decided on by who could find the best Lenin quotations, it is clear that the proponents of the DoP would win hands down each time." So he sets out to prove that Lenin was wrong, and not just in the choice of words. He writes that, "quite quickly the old Bolshevik slogan 'all power to the soviets,' started to mean 'all power to the party'."

Cronin's proof? Since he abjures quotes from Lenin on the grounds that he will only lose, his clincher is...a quote from one J. Stalin. In *Problems of Leninism*, Stalin wrote that since under his regime "not a single important political or organization question is decided by our Soviet and other mass organizations without guiding directions from the Party," therefore: "In this sense it could be said that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in essence the 'dictatorship' of its vanguard, the 'dictatorship of its Party'." Surprise of surprises, the bureaucrat in chief equated the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship of the "party," namely himself.

Of course, Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly emphasized the need for the revolutionary leadership of the Communist Party. In Soviet Russia, during and after the Civil War when all other parties had gone over to the bourgeois counterrevolution, after the Left Social Revolutionaries left the government and tried to stage a putsch, the dictatorship of the proletariat necessarily meant the Bolshevik Party ruling alone. But Stalin, in order to mask his bureaucratic rule, elevated one-party rule to a "principle" while strangling the Bolshevik Party itself, as well as the soviets and every trace of workers democracy.

SACP leader Jeremy Cronin calls to "abandon the concept of the DoP" in favor of bourgeois parliamentarism. He is swearing his loyalty to the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*, through its parliamentary façade. He defends the "DoB" against the "DoP." But what of the opposition to Cronin?

Dale McKinley wants to "reclaim" the dictatorship of the

proletariat, although he doesn't say from what. His initial (1995) article is a review of a book by John Ehrenberg, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat: Marxism's Theory of Socialist Democracy* (Routledge, 1992). Ehrenberg does remark that the concept has "become an embarrassment to the very groupings whose claims still lead them to Marx, Engels, and Lenin for ritualistic theoretical support," and even that "its bureaucratized incarnation has become the principle internal obstacle to the development of the very socialism which it is supposed to embody." But what was that bureaucratized incarnation? It is striking that nowhere in McKinley's article, and in the 200 pages of Ehrenberg's book is a key word mentioned: Stalin. The reason is that both seek to identify with Marx, Engels and Lenin *without dealing with the fundamental issue of Stalinism.*

In his book *The State and Revolution*, written in August-September 1917 as part of the preparation for the Bolsheviks taking power in October in the first successful workers revolution in history, Lenin insisted:

"It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie.... Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested."

Yet it is impossible to "reclaim" the dictatorship of the proletariat without coming to grips with the perversion of that revolutionary concept by the bureaucratic gravedigger of the revolution, Stalin, in his battle against the Left Opposition led by Trotsky. In seeking to avoid this unavoidable question, *McKinley and Ehrenberg end up seeking to give to the dictatorship of the proletariat a social-democratic-i.e., bourgeois-democratic-content.*

Lenin emphasized in *The State and Revolution* that a dictatorship of the proletariat, that is the untrammelled revolutionary rule of a workers state, was necessary to smash the bourgeois state, crush the resistance of the counterrevolutionaries and carry out the expropriation of the capitalists. Yet because it represents the rule not of a tiny minority of exploiters but of the exploited who constitute the vast majority of the population, such a dictatorship would be a transient form of a state which, in opening the road to socialism, would from the outset begin to wither away. Stalin pretended that the October Revolution did *not* establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to justify his class-collaborationist program for a bourgeois-democratic "stage" of the revolution, while simultaneously equating the dictatorship of the proletariat with socialism, that is, the first stage of a classless society, in order to justify the monstrous hypertrophy of the state apparatus under his bureaucratic rule.

Ehrenberg repeatedly refers to the dictatorship of the proletariat as representing for the founders of modern communism "their understanding of democracy" in general, without specifying that for them this dictatorship represented *workers*

democracy. Going back to Marx and Engels' reckoning with Hegel, he argues that this led them to a view of a "radical democracy whose power rested on its commitment to democratize both state and society." They were fighting, he says, "for a social democracy understood as a classless society." In discussing the Paris Commune, Ehrenberg writes:

"Democracy and dictatorship had a qualitatively different meaning and had qualitatively different effects when organized by the productive majority than when they had been weapons of capital."

He repeatedly cites the phrase from the *Communist Manifesto* that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to "win the battle of democracy."

The use of the term democracy without specifying its class nature is a hallmark of the social democrats, who attempt to ignore the need for a fundamentally different kind of state, a workers state, to replace that which served the bourgeois rulers. McKinley talks of "the commitment to the overthrow of capitalism in the name of political and social democracy," saying that "when socialists talk about 'democratizing' society and the state" this is fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet the goal of Marxists is not to "democratize" bourgeois society, but to carry out the overthrow of capitalism in the name of *proletarian democracy*, of soviet power. This is no abstract, hair-splitting debate, for behind the distortion of the Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the program of a "two-stage revolution," whose first "stage" is supposedly "winning the battle for democracy."

This is made clear when Ehrenberg writes of the October Revolution. After quoting Lenin's statement to the Petrograd Soviet, "We must now set about building a proletarian socialist state in Russia," Ehrenberg cautions: "The workers and poor peasants had won 'the battle of democracy' for the moment, but a proletarian state was not yet in place and the social revolution had not yet begun." On the contrary, with the Bolshevik seizure of power the dictatorship of the proletariat was in place and the social revolution had begun. In *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* published in October 1917, Lenin calls for "the workers' control of the *workers' state*," saying that "this is what can be easily carried out in Russia by the Soviets, by the proletarian dictatorship...." And in his October 1919 article on "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," Lenin writes:

"We accomplished instantly, at one revolutionary blow, all that can, in general, be accomplished instantly; on the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for instance, on October 26 (November 8), 1917, the private ownership of land was abolished without compensation for the big landowners—the big landowners were expropriated."

Ehrenberg and McKinley refer to the dictatorship of the proletariat in terms of *classless* democracy because they want to argue for a *bourgeois-democratic* program. Thus McKinley claims that, for Lenin, "the arguments for a 'dictatorship' did not rest on the assumption that it would bring about socialism or immediately be able to institute socialist measures. But rather, that it was the only feasible strategy and path towards deepening democracy." Behind this reformist perspective is

the SACP's program of a "national democratic revolution," i.e., *not* a socialist revolution. In South Africa, this means supporting Mandela's bourgeois ANC regime; in Congo-Zaire, McKinley calls for support to Kabila in the name of a "national-democratic alliance" to "create a democratic state that breaks with the entrenched system of corruption and neo-colonialism" (*Umsebenzi*, April 1997).

To buttress their arguments, both Ehrenberg and McKinley pretend that in October 1917 Lenin was fighting for the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." This claim is an old standby of Stalinism. The slogan of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was an algebraic formula that Lenin raised before and during the 1905 Russian Revolution. By April 1917, the Bolshevik leader was arguing to abandon this slogan, saying that those (such as Stalin and Kamenev) who put this forward after the February Revolution had "gone over to the petty bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle," that what was necessary now was "the transfer of state power to the proletariat" supported by the peasantry (from Lenin's "Letters on Tactics" and "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," collectively known as the April Theses).

When Stalin later put his formula forward in China in the mid-late 1920s, it was a cynical attempt to claim Lenin's authority for an "alliance" not with the peasantry but with bourgeois nationalists like Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang. In South Africa today, this means supporting Nelson Mandela's ANC.

For Permanent Revolution!

As Leon Trotsky pointed out in upholding Lenin's writings on the dictatorship of the proletariat, the degeneration of the revolution under Stalin was necessarily accompanied by a degeneration of theory in the service of opportunism. Against the Stalinists' support for the bourgeoisie, Trotsky emphasized in his program and perspective of permanent revolution, summing up the experience of the three Russian Revolutions (1905, February and October 1917), that in order to solve even the democratic tasks of agrarian revolution, national independence and democratic rights for the masses, it was necessary for the proletariat to take power, supported by the peasantry, and that this proletarian state would necessarily undertake socialist tasks as it sought to extend the revolution internationally. For this it would require the leadership of the communist party of the proletarian vanguard, which would rule through the organs of revolutionary workers democracy—in Russia, the soviets.

Trotsky's perspective is the genuinely communist program for South Africa today, a program not for support to Mandela's bourgeois-nationalist ANC as it "empowers" black capitalists, but for the formation of workers councils to carry out the proletarian revolution that can finally sweep away the capitalist underpinnings of white supremacy and thus offer the prospect of genuine equality for the vast non-white majority of the working people.

It is telling that a party that in the mid-1980s explicitly abandoned and attacked Trotskyism, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the U.S. led by Jack Barnes, simultaneously denounced permanent revolution, called for support to the

ANC's liberal Freedom Charter, called for a "national, democratic revolution" and justified this by dredging up and distorting Lenin's 1905 slogan of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. In other words, these ex- and now anti-Trotskyists embraced the whole ideological structure of the Stalinist SACP. In doing so, Barnes declared that the SWP "recognizes that the African National Congress is the vanguard of the democratic revolution in South Africa" (in "The Coming Revolution in South Africa," *New Internationalist*, Fall 1985). So like the SACP, the SWP would tell South African workers today that they must continue to be yoked to the cart of the bourgeois nationalists.

Behind the debate over the dictatorship of the proletariat in the SACP is the discontent within the South African working class over the direction the country has gone in the last three and a half years. But because it is carried out exclusively on the terrain of Stalinist and social-democratic politics of class collaboration, the "discussion" can only serve to confuse anyone looking for a genuinely Leninist policy.

Dale McKinley, in his rejoinder to Cronin's reply, cited earlier, writes of the "Strategic Necessity of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." But what he is concretely arguing is that "it is one thing to be in a political Alliance with the ANC," and quite another to be in an alliance that is "organisationally institutionalised to the extent that the SACP's own specific and/or organisational/parliamentary presence is practically enveloped." McKinley laments that party members are "being forced to perform the function of managers of capitalist social and economic relations," "negotiating with public sector workers as managers (bosses) over the very struggles that workers are waging as members of the Communist Party!" Yet this is exactly what the Stalinist-reformist policy of the popular front is all about, that is exactly what the "NDR" means in practice. Does McKinley propose to junk this policy, to break with the nationalist popular front? Not at all. In the guise of talking about the dictatorship of the proletariat, he is only asking to reclaim "much of what was correct in our Party's earlier theoretical and programmatic approach to revolutionary struggle." In reality, the SACP's earlier approach was only the "theoretical and programmatic" preparation for the blatantly counter-revolutionary role it is playing.

It is worth going back to the 1993 letter of resignation by Theo Molaba, the SACP's Cape Town secretary, that kicked off the "discussion" in the *African Communist*. The writer said he had decided to quit as a result of the experience of the assassination of Communist Party leader Chris Hani and the aftermath. He criticized the party's "abandonment of a PROLETARIAN ATTITUDE" in a host of different spheres, including the alliance with the ANC. "I think that our leadership has degenerated into a petty bourgeoisie aspiring to get into a bourgeois parliament at all cost," he writes, accurately enough, except for the claim that this represented a degeneration. He then asks: "What has happened to the DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT? What have we learned from the fall of Allende in Chile and the Paris Commune with regard to counter revolution?" The

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Mark Twain and the Onset of the Imperialist Epoch

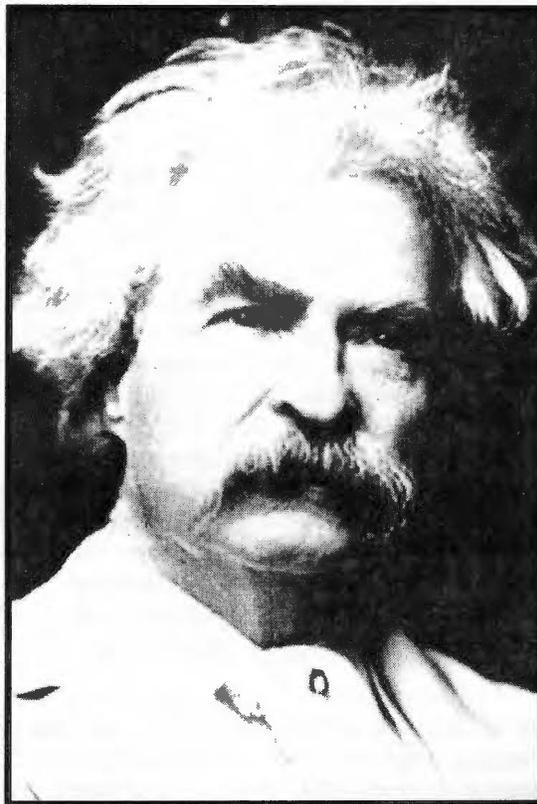
By R. Titta

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens, 1835-1910) came to anti-imperialism by way of a prior understanding of race. The author of *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and *Pudd'n'head Wilson* (1894) had from an early age begun to understand racism in the United States in a way that few of his Anglo-American contemporaries did. As a young newspaper reporter in San Francisco during the Civil War, Mark Twain wrote often about the brutalities visited upon the Chinese population of that city by the police. In 1865 he startled fashionable San Franciscans, including those of more pronounced Northern and abolitionist sympathies, by strolling arm-in-arm along Montgomery Street with the editor of the *Elevator*, the city's newly established African-American newspaper. His early acts of egalitarianism and solidarity with the victims of race hate were unusual enough. In his mature writing life, however, Mark Twain began to lay bare truths about racial oppression with a particular vigor, using a new and democratic literary language that would forever change American prose.

Mark Twain faced the onset of European and American imperialism at the end of the 19th century with an acute understanding that white racism denied the very humanity of people of darker skin. He was aware that vile theories were then either being generated or revived by the educated hirelings of the European and American ruling classes, to justify their piratical conquests in Africa and Asia. These depraved bourgeois scientists posited that the single human race was actually comprised of several different "races," and that these "races" could be ranked in a hierarchy based upon intelligence and culture. Not surprisingly, they placed their own "race"—the "white race"—at the top of the hierarchy and therefore deserving of world domination.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) typified the view of the British ruling classes in that he not only embraced the racial hierarchy wholeheartedly, but believed the Anglo-Saxon imperialists were at the pinnacle of the white race. Kipling admitted the American ruling class, descended from British settlers, into his racial *sanctum sanctorum*. He sought an Anglo-American alliance dedicated to world conquest, and penned his infamous bit of doggerel, "The White Man's Burden" (1899), in the service of this alliance. Subtitled "The United States and the Philippine Islands," the poem instructed the Filipinos to enslave themselves voluntarily to their new American masters. And in 1899, just after the Spanish-American War, the United States was indeed determined to become conqueror of the Philippines.

When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, Mark Twain was living in Austria, and was only able to summon a fuzzy picture of its causes. He was painfully aware of the im-



Mark Twain

Archive Photos

perialism of the European powers, which were just then engaging in a frenzy of world conquest. Since sentiment in Austrian ruling circles ran in favor of Spain, Mark Twain initially supported the United States, which he thought might bring democracy to Cuba and the Philippines. However, he soon changed his views, as events revealed the true aims of the American rulers.

The war provoked by the McKinley administration was a one-sided slaughter designed to make the United States a world imperial power. The U.S. rulers found immediate cause for the war they wanted in the suspicious explosion of the U.S. warship *Maine* in Havana harbor on 15 February. Two hundred sixty-two sailors were killed, but while the navy's own commission of inquiry found no evidence that Spain was culpable for the disaster, the jingoist newspapers, with William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* in the lead, took up the battle-cry, "Remember the *Maine!* To Hell with Spain!" McKinley presented a list of demands to Spain, which quickly acceded to every one. The U.S. imperialists declared war anyway, and in a few short months destroyed Spain's decrepit navy and seized much of its tottering empire, occupying Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Manila in the Philippines.

The U.S. now had an empire—almost. In anticipation, Senator Albert Beveridge triumphantly declared:

“The Philippines are ours forever.... And just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world.”

—quoted in Jim Zwick, *Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War* (Syracuse University Press, 1992)

The Philippines were clearly the most important of U.S. imperialism’s new conquests, owing to their strategic location in Asia. But the American forces there had still to reckon with the native Filipino independence movement, which had spread across the islands in several diverse groups during the twilight of Spanish occupation. Just before and during the Spanish-American War, the most prominent Filipino insurgency, the Katipunan organization of Tagalog resistance led by Emilio Aguinaldo, had defeated Spain in several important battles, taken thousands of Spanish prisoners, and effectively controlled large areas of the islands.

Katipunan made a fatal alliance with the United States, however, taking as good coin American lies about supporting democracy and Filipino independence. Aguinaldo wrote an American-style declaration of independence and a Filipino revolutionary congress proclaimed the islands a free republic. Then in 1899, after Spain’s surrender to the U.S., the Americans, who paid Spain \$20 million for the Philippines, opened direct hostilities against the Filipinos, beginning a brutal war of conquest which would last well beyond 1902, the year the U.S. declared it over.

Mark Twain arrived in New York in October 1900, and at once announced his anti-imperialism in several newspaper interviews, which were widely reprinted.

“I have read carefully the treaty of Paris [between the United States and Spain], and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem.... And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.”

—New York *Herald*, 15 October 1900

The author’s powerful statements at once came to the attention of the “Anti-Imperialist League” (1898-1920), a politically heterogeneous organization founded in Boston to oppose the American seizure of Spain’s empire. Its officers included former abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson; Mark Twain’s best friend, novelist and self-described socialist William Dean Howells; reformist labor leader Samuel Gompers, and capitalist Andrew Carnegie. The league’s liberal founders sought to use the names of prominent Americans to influence the foreign policy of the McKinley administration; however, the organization soon burgeoned into a nationwide mass movement with a half-million members, and its literature included articles by socialists as well as African-American leaders such as Frederick Douglass Jr. and Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois.

The League invited Mark Twain to become a vice-president

in 1901; he accepted, and would hold this office for the remainder of his life. He consistently opposed any compromise with imperialism, an attitude not shared by many of the league’s leaders. Furthermore, he had been disgusted with the choice of candidates in the 1900 election—the openly imperialist Republican McKinley-Roosevelt ticket was opposed by Democrat William Jennings Bryan, who occasionally mouthed anti-imperialist rhetoric, but had supported the Treaty of Paris with Spain, under which the U.S. formally annexed the Philippines. The Anti-Imperialist League, after a stormy convention in which the founding of an anti-imperialist third party was seriously considered, narrowly voted to support Bryan (who lost by 800,000 votes out of 13.5 million cast—African-Americans, many foreign-born workers, and all women were barred from voting).

Mark Twain’s Anti-Imperialist Writings

In the February 1901 *North American Review*, Mark Twain published “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” perhaps his most popular and influential anti-imperialist essay. It was an acid indictment of the brutalities the British, French, German, Russian and American capitalist governments were committing all over the world. The “Person Sitting in Darkness” is Mark Twain’s ironic term, borrowed from the Gospel According to Matthew and used by the Christian missionaries when referring to the “savage,” “heathen,” “uncivilized” populations of the lands the imperialists were conquering. The author condemned the casual atrocities of Lord Kitchener’s British troops in South Africa, who routinely bayoneted unarmed surrendering Boers, as well as those committed by the American forces in the Philippines, which did the same to the Filipinos. He also pointed out that the Americans had openly proclaimed they were adopting “Kitchener’s Plan”—concentration camps—for their opponents. (Tens of thousands of Boer women and children and black Africans had perished in these camps.)

At the same time, Mark Twain denounced the multinational plundering and dismemberment of China, which had provoked the Boxer Rebellion—the mismatched attempt of the Chinese people to drive the imperialist murderers, who introduced mass opium production and trafficking, out of their country. (In a November 1900 speech he had already proclaimed “I am a Boxer.”) The author charged the American Board of Foreign Missions with looting pauper peasants in China, and condemned the missionaries as part of the “Blessings-of-Civilization-Trust,” that deals in “Glass Beads and Theology, and Maxim guns and Hymn Books, and Trade Gin and Torches of Progress and Enlightenment (patent adjustable ones, good to fire villages with, upon occasion).” At the end of his essay, Mark Twain proposes a flag for the United States’ new “Philippine Province”: “we can just have our usual flag, with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones.”

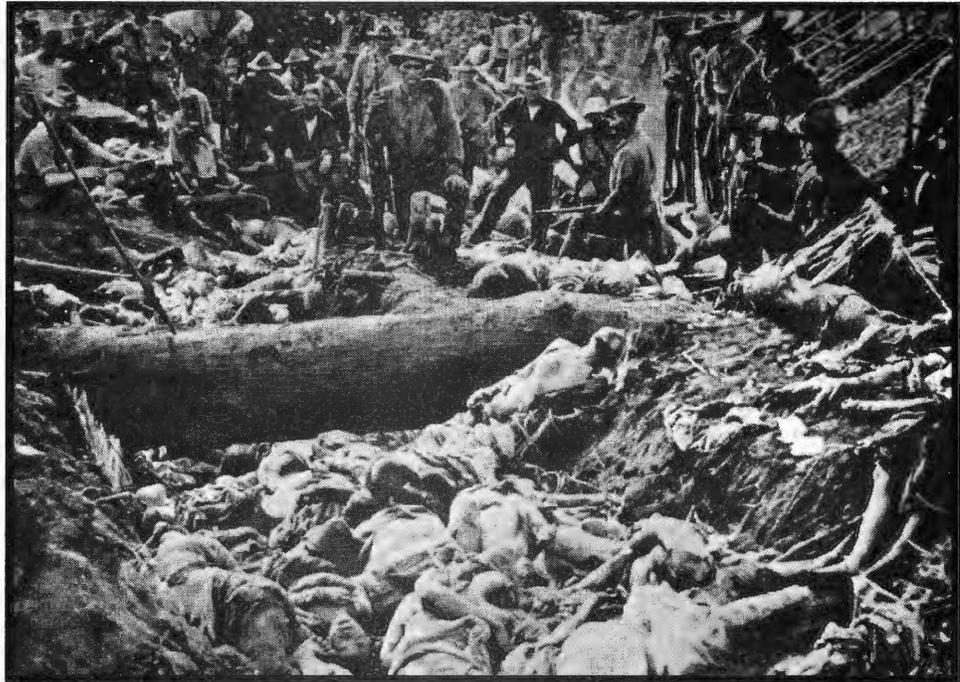
“To the Person Sitting in Darkness” attracted a good deal of attention, and eventually set off a storm of controversy. Even within the Anti-Imperialist League, reaction to Mark Twain’s essay was mixed. Though the League reprinted it as a pamphlet—it had the widest circulation of any League publication—League censors excised significant passages, included the author’s quo-

tation from the New York *Sun* on the prevailing squalor in the slums of Manhattan's Lower East Side, as well as his bitter condemnation of the activities of Christian missionaries in China.

The reaction among the missionaries, generals and politicians of imperialism was swift and predictable—they charged the author with treason. However, Mark Twain had considerable popular support, and he did not budge from his positions, but forthrightly defended them in speeches and articles over the next several years. In 1902, General Frederick Funston spoke at the Lotos club in New York, charging that the American anti-imperialists were encouraging Filipino resistance. He also leveled a deadly threat: "I would rather see any one of these men hanged—hanged for treason, hanged for giving aid and comfort to the enemy—than see the humblest soldier in the United States army lying dead on the field of battle" (quoted in *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire*).

Mark Twain's answer to Funston came in the form of another *North American Review* essay, called "A Defense of General Funston" (May 1902). He exposed Funston's vain lies about his battlefield exploits, cataloguing some of the most recent brutalities committed by Funston and his cohorts in the Philippines. These included the capture of Filipino leader Aguinaldo by treachery and deceit, the torture and execution of Filipino prisoners, including the beating of wounded men and the use of water torture (pouring salt water down prisoners' throats), and most chillingly, the wholesale massacres of Filipino men, women and children, of the kind ordered by General Jacob Smith and carried out by his soldiers. Mark Twain quoted Smith's command: "Kill and burn—this is no time to take prisoners—the more you kill and burn, the better—Kill all above the age of ten—make Samar a howling wilderness!"

Uncounted thousands of Filipino civilians were butchered by the American imperialists as a result of this order, carried out in retaliation for a Filipino attack on the U.S. garrison at Balangiga, on the large island of Samar in the central Philippines. Theodore Roosevelt, who had become president upon McKinley's assassination in 1901, and was now organizer-in-chief of this brutal war of extermination, felt pressured enough by the outcry against the Samar massacre to order an investigation into it. A few years later, in 1906, Mark Twain spoke at Princeton University, thundering his denunciation of the outrageous slaughter by the American Army of nearly a thousand Filipino Moros, Muslims living on the remote southern island of Jolo.



On 9 March 1906, American soldiers led by General Leonard Wood massacred 900 men, women and children of the Philippine Moros in the crater of Mount Dajo on Jolo Island. According to the *Johnstown, Pennsylvania Weekly Democrat*, which published this photograph the following year, Wood went to the photographer and destroyed the negative, unaware that prints had already been circulated (see *Mark Twain Journal* No. 32, Spring 1994).

Mark Twain remained a "traitor" to imperialism for the rest of his life, raising his voice and his pen to oppose American and European savagery frequently and with unwavering resolve. He was an open advocate of the overthrow of the Tsar in Russia, and took heart at Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. In the aftermath of "Bloody Sunday" in January 1905—the protest in which the Tsar's troops massacred perhaps 500 peaceful demonstrators in St. Petersburg—the author published "The Tsar's Soliloquy," a powerful condemnation of the fatuous brutality of the regime of Nikolai II. The article was translated into Russian at once and distributed in pamphlet form by the Russian Social Revolutionary party.

A few months later Mark Twain wrote "King Leopold's Soliloquy" expressly to raise money for the Congo Reform Association. The essay exposes the depraved crimes of the Belgian imperialists in Africa; it was published as a pamphlet illustrated with photographs of some of the shackled and mutilated Congolese victims of European racist barbarity.

Mark Twain struggled against powerful opponents on behalf of humanity and justice, as he understood them. He was not entirely consistent in the views he expressed—he remained mainly insensitive to the oppression of American Indians throughout his life and occasionally expressed discomfort at the rising tide of immigrant workers. Though his criticisms of American capitalism were often astute, he never seriously examined socialism. Nevertheless, in his regard for the hu-

manity of the millions upon millions of Asians and Africans who were just then being victimized by imperialism, he eclipsed even most socialists of his day, owing in part to his profound understanding of racism in America. The brutal realities of colonial subjugation inevitably recalled for him the legacy of slavery in the United States.

Bankruptcy of Liberal/Reformist "Anti-Imperialism"

By way of comparison, it is instructive to look at the evolution of the leaders of the socialist and labor movements on the question of imperialism. In 1898, the convention of the American Federation of Labor urged workers to "call upon their representatives with no uncertain voice to save them from the dangers...of imperialism." It was on the basis of this stand that AFL president Samuel Gompers was invited to become a vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League. Earlier in the year, Gompers had declared, "All the socialism and humanizing influences that have been at work for twenty-five years will have been in vain if war is declared." Yet as happened again later over U.S. military intervention against the Mexican Revolution and in World War I, as soon as the war drums started rolling the reformists quickly dropped their "anti-imperialist" and "antiwar" stands. After McKinley declared war on Spain, Gompers suddenly discovered that the war was "a glorious and righteous one" for the U.S. And by the next year, he was already moving away from active collaboration in the Anti-Imperialist League.

Gompers' rapid evolution was a reflection of the pressures of the ruling class, and these pressures determined the fate of the League as a whole. It was founded on the "anti-imperialism" of bourgeois liberal (and some not so liberal) elements who yearned for a non-imperialist democratic capitalism. But this backward-looking perspective was out of step with the rapid growth of American industrial monopolies, symbolized by Carnegie himself, and was quickly swept away. In any case, these bourgeois and reformist "anti-imperialists" were only opposed to direct colonial annexation, often using racist language (Gompers referred to the "semi-savage population" of the Philippines). They were quite content with U.S. imperialism's conquest of markets through neocolonial mechanisms. Even many left-wing socialists failed to fight imperialism, as they failed to fight racism at home. When Eugene Debs ran as the Socialist Party candidate for president in 1904, he argued that "imperialism and anti-imperialism...mean capitalist rule and wage slavery" (quoted in Philip S. Foner, *U.S. Labor Movement and Latin America* (1988)).

After briefly brandishing some "anti-imperialist" rhetoric at the turn of the century, most American socialists and labor leaders were silent on the burning issue of imperialism. The Anti-Imperialist League broke apart in 1904, a result of the political subterfuges of the moderates in its leading bodies. These moderates formed a separate organization intent on compromise with imperialism, and many of the more prominent officers in the league defected or

joined both organizations. (Mark Twain, however, allowed his name to be used only by the original league, which reconstituted itself in 1905.) The reformist labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie dutifully followed the lead of these bourgeois liberals, their shameful silence on the rape of the Philippines and genocide in the Congo signifying acceptance of the rule of the bourgeoisie. This led either to pacifistic paralysis or, worse yet, to criminal embrace of "their own" capitalist rulers in the wanton slaughter of the first imperialist world war of 1914-1918.

It was the proletarian internationalism of the Bolsheviks that provided the basis for a consistent opposition to imperialism, through the fight for world socialist revolution. ■

South African Left...

continued from page 18

rank answer is, "nothing." But even he accepts the framework of the "NDR," merely arguing the "NDR does not mean we must cease to be COMMUNISTS." Yet this stagist program means precisely that members of the class-collaborationist alliance cannot act as Leninist revolutionary communists but only as Stalinist or social-democratic reformists.

The reality that shook Molaba up has not changed. The spectre of the murder of Salvador Allende is ever present. In recent weeks, South Africa has seen the grisly spectacle of Chris Hani's assassins, the Conservative Party politician Clive Derby-Lewis and the Polish anti-communist trigger man Janusz Walus, explaining how they methodically set out to assassinate the SACP leader, in hopes of thereby gaining amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission! Phony reconciliation with the apartheid murders and collaboration with the apartheid capitalists and politicians will only continue the oppression of the South African black workers. The Communist Party with its reformist, nationalist, popular-frontist program is in fact the biggest obstacle to socialist revolution.

Upholding the revolutionary conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a fight for workers revolution, in direct opposition to the class-collaborationist acronym of the day (NDR, RDP, GEAR). This requires the forging of an authentically communist party on the program of permanent revolution, the program of the Bolshevik-led October Revolution and the early Communist International. Such a party must be multiracial and internationalist to the core. It requires a full reckoning with the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalinism that the participants in the SACP discussion have assiduously tried to avoid. To reclaim the dictatorship of the proletariat it is necessary to return to the authentic program of Leninism, which was carried in the struggle of Trotsky's Fourth International.

The fight for workers revolution in South Africa is key to the social liberation of the entire African continent, and it can only be secured by extending the revolution to the imperialist centers. Only by undertaking such a course can the road be cleared to move forward to socialism and put apartheid slavery in the dustbin of history forever. For a Trotskyist party in South Africa! Reforge the Fourth International! ■

U.S. Was Godfather of Colonial Enslavement of the Congo

Today, Washington lectures the new bonapartist rulers of the Congo (formerly Zaïre) on the need for "democracy" (defined as U.S.-supervised elections) and "human rights," cynically professing concern for the fate of Rwandan Hutu refugees being slaughtered by the new regime's forces. Yet for three decades, U.S. imperialism backed the dictator Mobutu, installed with the aid of the CIA, who trampled on the human rights of all the peoples of the Congo as he and his cronies plundered the wealth produced by toilers of the mines and plantations. This pattern is nothing new. The United States has always traded on its undeserved "anti-colonial" reputation due to the fact that unlike its European imperialist allies and rivals, the U.S. did not have direct colonies in Africa. Of course, Liberia, set up in the early 1800s by former slaves "repatriated" to the west coast of Africa by the American Colonization Society, was a U.S. colony in all but name. And in the 1880s support from the United States was instrumental in establishing the rule of Belgian King Leopold on the Congo, the bloodiest colonial tyranny in the continent, all in the name of fostering "free trade" and eliminating slavery!

In 1876, as the European powers were avidly slicing up Africa among themselves, the Belgian king founded the International African Association, professing scientific and humanitarian concerns, "to open to civilization the only part of the globe where it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness shrouding entire populations," what he termed "a crusade worthy of this century of progress." The Anglo-American explorer H.M. Stanley was dispatched to the Congo to sign treaties with the African tribal rulers to open the way for occupation. But as the British were relentlessly pushing to extend their control from the Cape to Cairo and the French were racing from West Africa to establish a foothold on the north bank of the Congo River, the late-comers to colonial carve-up (Germany, Belgium and the United States) joined to demand a share of the spoils in the Berlin conference of 1884-85. The U.S. favored the Belgian claims by recognizing King Leopold's IAA, a private company, as a sovereign state. The former American ambassador to Belgium joined the board of Leopold's enterprise.

The host of the Berlin Conference, German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, declared:

"All the Governments invited here share the desire to associate the natives of Africa with civilization, by opening up the interior of that continent to commerce, by furnishing the natives with the means of instruction, by encouraging missions and enterprises so that useful

knowledge may be disseminated, and by paving the way to the suppression of slavery, and especially of the slave trade among the blacks."

The American delegate to the conference, John Kasson, justified the U.S. interest by calling up the dangers of a scramble for the Congo:

"It was evident that very soon that country would be exposed to the dangerous rivalries of conflicting nationalities. There was even danger of its being so appropriated as to exclude it from free intercourse with a large part of the civilized world. It was the earnest desire of the Government of the United States that these discoveries should be utilized for the civilization of the native races, and for the abolition of the slave trade and that early action should be taken to avoid international conflicts likely to arise from national rivalry in the acquisition of special privileges in the vast region so suddenly exposed to commercial enterprises. If that country could be neutralized against aggression, with equal privileges for all, such an arrangement ought, in the opinion of my Government, to secure general satisfaction."

Thus under the banner of freedom of commerce and anti-slavery, an entire continent was enslaved! And just as U.S. rulers called for an "open door" in China in order to compete with the European colonial empires which had arrived earlier, in Africa they demanded their share of the spoils by championing "equal privileges for all." All the budding imperialist powers should have a chance to rake in fabulous profits from the superexploitation of African labor.

Out of the Berlin Conference came the Congo Free State, one of the most oppressive regimes in the history of mankind, under its sovereign, the King of the Belgians, Leopold II. American president Grover Cleveland wrote to the king of the "lively interest" of the U.S. in "the vast region now committed to your Majesty's wise care," and boasted that the U.S. was "the first among the Powers to recognize the flag" of the new state. Far from abolishing slavery, the leading Arab slaver in the eastern Congo was added to the board of Leopold's Congo Association. Soon forced labor was introduced on a massive scale in order to secure ivory, palm oil and rubber for export. And having gained equal access to this booty via the Berlin Conference, an American Congo Company was formed, headed by Guggenheim, Morgan and Rockefeller interests, securing "general satisfaction" in the high spheres of finance capital by producing general calamity for the African population, their victims.

185,000 Strikers Hang Tough, Bosses Buckle

In the early morning hours of August 19, after 15 days of a strike that sent shock waves through the entire U.S. economy, the management of United Parcel Service decided they had had enough. It was the most important labor battle since the early 1980s, and the striking Teamsters' ranks held solid. The string of more than two decades of union defeats was broken.

But to reverse years of takeback contracts, of two-tier wages, of vicious union-busting and scabherding, of racist discrimination, of millions of workers forced to survive on part-time jobs with no health insurance and over 6 million receiving no more than the minimum wage—it will take far

more than one strike that wins limited gains.

The companies that have been raking in billions in profits, the Wall Street speculators who have sent the Dow Jones average soaring while real wages continue to fall, are not about to roll over. Far from it. What's posed is sharp class battles. Recall what it took to organize the industrial unions in the 1930s: sit-down strikes in auto, pitched battles in steel, general strikes in San Francisco, Minneapolis and Toledo. It will take all that and more—for no union gain will be secure in a system where capital rules while labor produces the wealth.

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**Clinton, Democrats, Republicans—Enemies of Labor!
Don't Bow to Government Strikebreaking!**

Teamsters Strike Against UPS: All Out to Win This Fight!

**Elect Strike
Committees!
Organize to
Defend Picket
Lines!**

**Break with the
Bosses' Parties —
For a Workers
Party!**

AUGUST 4—At 12:01 this morning, 185,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, one of the largest and historically most powerful unions in the U.S., struck against the United Parcel Service, the company which ships 80 percent of all packages in the country. It is the first nationwide strike in the 90-year history of UPS, and involves more workers than any strike in this decade. "It's Our Contract, We'll Fight for It" say Teamster



Internationalist Photo

Striking Teamsters on Day One of the UPS strike outside Manhattan South facility in NYC.

Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win!

signs. It's more than just a contract dispute, and what's needed is a fight to *win* this key labor battle. "We're striking for every worker in America," said a picketing UPS driver in Atlanta. He's right, and then some. All working people, minorities, immigrants and every other oppressed sector in this country have a stake in this struggle. We must prepare *now* to come out and defend the UPS strikers against the blows that the bosses and their government are already preparing.

A 21-year UPS driver picketing outside the UPS Metro facility at 43rd Street in Manhattan told *The Internationalist*: "this is a standoff between labor and management—here it's UPS, but it's almost everywhere. The management at UPS looks at us with contempt." Deep-seated resentment against the highhanded UPS bosses and the sheer power of the unionized work force make this a chance to turn the tide of the more than two decades of defeats that the unions have suffered. It began before PATCO, when Ronald Reagan fired all 14,000 air controllers who struck against the government. Already under Democrat Jimmy Carter, coal miners and Detroit auto workers saw their union gains ripped up and jobs destroyed. Since then, any conscious unionist can recite the list of labor battles lost: Greyhound, Phelps Dodge, Hormel, Caterpillar, Staley, Firestone, Detroit News. And as wages were driven down, by more than 20 percent over the last 25 years, the limited gains of the civil rights movement were also rolled back, along with an assault on women's rights and anti-immigrant hysteria.

Now, with one of the giants of American labor, the still-powerful Teamsters, locked in battle with hard-nosed bosses at UPS, there is an opportunity to turn this disastrous experience around. Delivering 12 million packages a day, representing more than 5 percent of the entire gross national product of the United States, United Parcel Service cannot simply be replaced by its competitors. And with all their threats to use so-called "replacement workers," it will be difficult for management at Big Brown to bring in 185,000 scabs at once. The strikers have a potentially strong position. They need a leadership with the program and determination to use it to the hilt. For if the strike is frittered away to defeat, we all lose.

UPS workers badly need to win this one. Key to the strike is UPS' use of "part-time" workers, who make up fully *two-thirds* of all the company's unionized work force (125,000 out of 185,000). And it's increasing: of the 46,000 UPS jobs added in the last four years, over 38,000 were part-time. The starting wage is still \$8 an hour, and hasn't been raised since 1982! At average wages of \$9 after two years, no one can make ends meet with three to four hours a night. Yet not only do many "part-timers" have to work a second job, more than 10,000 of them put in over 35 hours a week *at UPS*. After sorting hundreds of boxes on the 3 a.m. shift, many then deliver the overnight packages in the morning. They are in fact full-time workers at half the pay, and with far less benefits.

UPS' part-timing practices have little to do with "flexibility" to "meet the competition" and everything to do with profit-gouging by nickel-and-diming the workers. Even the hubs, which work round the clock, are run with part-timers. The union is calling for 30,000 full-time jobs to be opened for part-timers, but

spread out over several years—and even that will be bargained way down. The Teamster ranks should demand that *from the minute you enter the door, every UPS worker must be guaranteed the right to eight hours pay at full union scale, with full benefits*. And the company can certainly afford it. With \$1.15 billion in reported profits last year (on \$22 billion in revenue) and \$4 billion over the last four years, coming while they are rapidly expanding overseas operations, UPS' pleas of inability to meet competition are hogwash. They're making billions while new hires go home with \$24 a night, before taxes!

The union's answer to the management ploy should be to *use this strike to organize Federal Express and other non-union carriers!* Everyone knows that there are organizing efforts underway at FedEx, and many workers there would flock to the union if there was an all-out effort to use the Teamsters' muscle. During the New York City janitors' strike last year, FedEx workers refused to cross picket lines and dropped their boxes on the sidewalk. Now is the time to send out flying squads of Teamster pickets to shut down FedEx operations as well and sign up the workers on the spot, particularly in key cities. That's the way you go about a real organizing drive, not begging to the "National Labor Relations Board" of the bosses' government. You have the power, use it!

But that will bring down the government on us for violating labor laws, the IBT bureaucracy will reply. Under Ron Carey, the Teamsters have switched allegiances back to the Democrats and heavily contributed to the Clinton campaign in '96, with time and manpower. Now they expect a payoff, and Clinton says today that he doesn't see a need to intervene. But as soon as this strike begins to bite—which it will, and soon—he'll suddenly see a need. And when that time comes, the government in Washington will carry out the orders from Wall Street, and Carey will take his orders from the White House.

Class-conscious Teamster militants must prepare now to resist attempts to break the strike. *Elect strike committees* in every local and location to take control of the strike and prevent a sellout! Build picket lines that *nobody* dares cross—no management scabs go in or out! Against court injunctions, strikebreaking bills or attempts to run scabs, workers should *occupy the loading and sorting facilities!* *Flying squads of pickets* can bring out other Teamster freight haulers, and help organize FedEx and other non-union carriers. Unions in Europe are talking of demonstrating in solidarity—the labor movement here better show its support *in action*. After first delaying the strike by three days, Carey announced that last night was a "drop-dead deadline." What UPS workers need is a *drop-dead strike* that will stop the Brown Machine cold.

History shows that the law reflects the balance of class forces: the only illegal strike is a losing strike. Hold solid, defend and enforce the picket lines, spread the strike and Teamster strikers have the power to jam the gears of U.S. business. But that poses a sharp *political* confrontation with the bosses and their government, which will make crystal clear that the leadership of the Teamsters, both the "reformer" Carey and the corruption-ridden old guard, are on the side of capital against the workers.



AP

Strikers were at UPS Somerville, Massachusetts depot August 5 as management scabs tried to drive van across picket lines.

At the outset of the Reagan years, PATCO was a test for the American labor movement. Instead of standing by the striking air controllers, the AFL-CIO stabbed them in the back by refusing to shut down the airports by bringing out Teamster fuel truck drivers and the Machinists, who were key to keeping the planes flying. For years afterwards, all labor paid the price of this betrayal. Today, the AFL-CIO leadership under John Sweeney claims to be a “new voice” for labor. But it’s just the same old bureaucracy with another face. The federation has multiplied the money spent on organizing, yet it still regularly loses representation elections. Many workers frankly don’t think the unions under the present leadership will fight and deliver.

Even some of Carey’s biggest boosters on the left admit that he hasn’t been able to “deliver the goods” that reform promised” (*Against the Current*, March-April 1997). That’s why a labor lawyer front man for the old guard like James Hoffa Jr. could get almost half the vote in the last IBT election just by trading on his father’s name. Since the “reform” forces came in through government-supervised elections in 1991, they have presided over a continued erosion of what was once the strongest union in the U.S. Another 40,000 Teamster members were lost in this period. The 1994 Master Freight strike ended in defeat, as Carey bowed to “mediation” by the Clinton administration, agreeing to the introduction of lower-wage “casuals” on the loading docks. The February 1994 UPS walk-out collapsed after one day in the face of a court injunction, as old guard local leaders scabbed on the strike.

Every single time the government has stepped in with

“mediation” or injunctions or overseers’ orders, Carey has folded. What else could you expect of a union leader who was installed by a government-ordered election and is under the thumb of a federal “review board”? Old guard and new guard are all beholden to the capitalist state. The company-dictated sweetheart deals have been replaced by government-dictated deals under the “reformers.” Either way, UPS workers and all Teamster truckers, dock and warehouse workers pay the tab with dangerous working conditions, “two-tier” wages, racist discrimination and all-round weakening of the union.

As a result of more than *doubling* package weight limits to 150 pounds and the killer pace that management has always enforced, UPS workers suffer 60,000 injuries a year, filing more OSHA complaints than against any other company in the United States. UPS pays almost \$1 million *a day* in workman’s comp. For management’s speed-up engineers, injuries that can destroy workers’ lives are just another business expense to be factored in. Now UPS bargainers are demanding a company takeover of union pension funds so they can loot them, while they increase the use of subcontractors for package car delivery. The steady deterioration of union gains at UPS over the last two decades and the collapse of the one-day walkout in ’94 whetted management’s appetites. Stop them now, beat back the company’s takeback offensive, or the future of the union is at risk—and with it the livelihood of every single UPS worker.

Defeat the Capitalist Offensive

This fight is not just about a profit-hungry management at one company. What’s been happening to UPS workers is the same as what has happened to workers around the country and around the world over the last couple of decades. UPS’ use of part-timers is in the forefront of a national trend, as 18 percent of all workers are classified as part-time. That figure doesn’t even include tens of thousands of UPS “part-timers” who work more than 30 hours a week in the company or at more than one job. In fact, because of falling real wages (after taking inflation into account), U.S. workers are working *longer* hours for lower pay. Meanwhile, by “outsourcing” production to non-union shops, massively using scabs to break strikes, increasing sweatshop exploitation of immigrant workers without legal rights and relocating production to low-wage countries, as well as bringing back chain gangs of prison labor and replacing union workers with “workfare” slavery, the capitalists are ratcheting up the rate of exploitation. As their wage costs fall, company profits have soared, producing the current stock market boom. But after the boom comes the bust, when working people will suffer even more.

The assault on labor is part of a generalized wave of social reaction that has heightened since the destruction of the Soviet Union and the rest of the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe. Ever since then, the capitalist rulers (and those of the U.S. in particular) have been going after the workers movement at home with a vengeance. No longer feeling the need to compete against a “communist menace,” all across West Europe, capitalist governments are gutting the already run-down “welfare state.” Pensions are cut back, health care is slashed. Under Tony Blair’s “New Labour”

government in Britain, the social democrats are doing the dirty work begun by Margaret Thatcher. And in the U.S., Clinton's "New Democrats" together with Gingrich Republicans in Congress are continuing the Reaganite assault. The welfare "reform," cutting off benefits from millions of mothers, children and immigrants, is the perfect example of this racist capitalist offensive against their victims. Before the French Revolution, Marie-Antoinette's haughty answer to bread riots in Paris was "let them eat cake." Today, "Republicrats" in the U.S. say "let them starve" as they cut off food stamps.

These defeats have been inflicted by the bosses and their parties, Democrats and Republicans alike, *with the aid of the union bureaucrats*, the misleaders of labor whose loyalties are to the companies and the capitalist system rather than to the workers they claim to represent. The current pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy originated in a "red purge" in the unions at the beginning of the anti-Soviet Cold War. This anti-labor offensive, the precursor to McCarthyism, was spearheaded by liberal Democrats, and the Teamsters were always a main target. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 (passed under phony "friend of labor" Democrat Truman) made it illegal for communists to be union officials at the same time as it outlawed "secondary boycotts," the refusal to handle struck goods which was key to Teamster organizing of over-the-road truckers.

The Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959, likewise, was not about union "corruption"—it was aimed at breaking the power of the Teamsters under Jimmy Hoffa. The year before, Hoffa had sought to form an alliance of all transport unions, including trucking, rail, airlines and maritime. Democratic senator McClellan declared in 1958: "All of our lives are too intricately interwoven with this union to sit passively by and allow the Teamsters under Mr. Hoffa's leadership to create such a superpower in this country." So the McClellan Committee hearings went after Teamster leader Dave Beck for mob ties, and Bobby Kennedy as chief government counsel tried to "get

Hoffa" on a variety of charges from bribery to wiretapping. The resulting Landrum-Griffin law strengthened Taft-Hartley's provisions against "hot cargoing," and as a result of Kennedy's vendetta Hoffa eventually went to jail. But out of that battle came the Master Freight Agreement, a single national trucking contract which the bosses still want to get rid of.

This history is important to know in order to understand that it was the liberal Democrats who led the government assault on the Teamsters and labor gains. This led Hoffa and his successors to embrace the reactionary Republicans, just as United Mine Workers leader John L. Lewis did when Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt outlawed miners' strikes in World War II. Now under Ron Carey, the Teamsters are back in the Democrats' pockets, and the federal government is "supervising" the union from top to bottom, running national elections, indicting local officers, controlling the pension funds. While the strike fund is depleted, and the union treasury is near broke, government overseers and lawyers are getting paid top dollar from the Teamsters' union dues. Either way, with Democrats or Republicans in office, the workers lose. The answer to government strikebreaking and the assault on labor by both capitalist parties is to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for socialist revolution, in this country and internationally.

Build a Revolutionary Workers Party

The experience of the "new Teamsters" under Carey is living proof of the disaster brought about by union "reform" under government control. ("Old guard" officials may moan and groan about government controls, but they were the ones who under indictment signed the 1989 "consent degree" that turned the union over to the feds.) And the stark fact is that the takeover of the Teamsters by the capitalist state was engineered by a bunch of fakers pretending to be socialists. Teamsters for a Democratic Union was braintrusted by social democrats coming out of the International Socialists of the late 1960s and early '70s. Today

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these social democrats are organized in the International Socialist Organization (ISO, publishers of the *Socialist Worker*), Solidarity (which publishes *Against the Current*) and the *Labor Notes* crowd. In the mid-'70s, the TDU reformists were oppositionists; today, having hitched their wagon to Carey, they are part and parcel of the Teamster bureaucracy.

What put them there was the United States Government. These fake "socialists" acted as finks for the feds. A recent UPS special handout of the *Socialist Worker* quotes Pete Camarata (a TDU leader and ISO supporter) saying, "TDU was opposed to government control of unions." This is a lie. Even before the announcement of the 1987 federal suit against the Teamsters under the RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) law, a TDU leader (Ken Paff) sent a letter to the Justice Department asking it to "seek reorganization of the IBT under section 1964(a) of the RICO Act" (quoted in Dan La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion* [1990]). TDU served as witnesses for the prosecution in the 1989 Senate investigation of the Teamsters, and argued in a brief to the court (ostensibly on the union's side) in the RICO suit that its plan for "democratic elections" run by the Labor Department and the courts would be more effective than a straight government takeover. And that is in fact what happened.

At the heart of the fight for genuine union democracy and class independence is the fundamental question of *the state*. Social democrats of every brand and flavor treat the state as if it were neutral between the classes, and potentially an ally of the workers to "clean up" corrupt officialdom. Many union militants understand that the government and the bosses go hand and hand. But it's more than that. Marxists understand that the state is everywhere and always the instrument of enforcement of the ruling class—in this case, the capitalists. In his 1940 essay on "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," left on his desk at the time he was murdered by a Stalinist assassin in Mexico, the Russian Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote that "*trade union democracy...presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.*" Trotsky stressed that in this epoch of decaying capitalism, there was no room for reformist unionism because it could achieve no serious and lasting reforms:

"The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

That is why, he wrote, "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."

These are not abstract principles, they go right to the core of struggle of the UPS workers, of all Teamsters and unionists everywhere. In another *Socialist Worker* flyer (25 July), the ISO claims that the company-spread rumor that Clinton would outlaw a UPS strike like he did at American Airlines in February is "a lie," and that "Clinton could ban that strike only because pilots are covered by a labor law for airlines and railroads." What fatuous faith in Democrat Clinton and the "democracy" of the

capitalist state! The bourgeoisie can easily invent all sorts of "legal" excuses to enforce its class interests. Courts could resuscitate the old claim that the strike is an illegal restraint to interstate commerce, or rule that it threatens national security, or health and safety. Congress could pass a special law ordering strikers back to work. Already, the NLRB considers FedEx an "airline" in order to make it harder to unionize. Also, Clinton can do some heavy duty arm-twisting behind the scenes. *Every striker had better know that the government can move to shut down their strike, and they must prepare now to defend it.*

Over and over, the issues raised by this and every other major strike keep coming back to the question of the state. Thus, the Teamsters leadership organizes cop "unions," recently making a bid for federal police in Washington. The ISO supports the "unionization" of the cops, and even of prison guards, such as the notoriously brutal thugs at NYC's Rikers Island jail. Yet the police are professional strikebreakers, as they amply demonstrated in busting strikers in the 1994 national freight strike, as well as racist killers of blacks and Latinos, as shown by everyday experience in the ghettos and barrios. Marxists and every class-conscious worker must demand "cops and courts out of the unions!" A fight for this basic principle of class independence has been waged over the last two years by our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) and its members elected to the leadership of the Municipal Workers Union of the industrial city of Volta Redonda, site of the largest steel mill in Latin America.

Every major class battle also necessarily involves broader issues of social oppression. At UPS, in particular, there is the history of racist discrimination by management that goes back decades. Last April, a group of UPS workers filed a class-action suit against the company for a pattern of vicious discrimination. In Oakland, California black UPS drivers were systematically restricted to minority areas while white drivers were assigned to the predominantly white Oakland Hills. Meanwhile, in San Bernardino, "Several black United Parcel Service employees who have found 'KKK' scrawlings at their workplace say their company is more likely to promote white employees" (San Bernardino County *Press Enterprise*, 27 March). The suit was sponsored by the NAACP, which has focused on issues such as promotion of black managers, and it could be turned against the union. But the real answer to how to fight the deeply ingrained racism at UPS is to mobilize the power of the union to wage a broad class struggle against every instance of oppression.

Yet nowhere in the Teamsters' contract demands is there a mention of discrimination, nor does the TDU touch this issue. In every way, the program of simple trade unionism boils down to acceptance of the rule of capital and the oppression it produces. This was demonstrated again last year when the Teamsters bureaucracy mobilized a national chauvinist, *racist* campaign against Mexican truckers in the U.S., successfully appealing to the Clinton government to ban them. What is needed is an *internationalist* opposition to NAFTA, in support of Mexican workers often fighting against U.S.-owned "multinationals," as well as their own U.S.-backed government and its imperialist masters in Washington.

Carey is not the first government-installed "reformer" in recent U.S. labor history. In 1972, Arnold Miller was elected president of the United Mine Workers in a Labor Department supervised election, ousting a corrupt and murderous old guard. TDU in the Teamsters was in fact modeled on the opposition group which backed Miller, Miners for Democracy. Once in office, Miller predictably did the bidding of his Labor Department masters, and tried to shove one concession contract after another down the miners' throats. This led to a series of wild-cat strikes that swept through the Appalachian coal fields in 1974-76, and ultimately to the great coal strike of 1977-78. Insurgent miners burned effigies of Miller and torched his sell-out contracts, twice voting them down. But that powerful potential went down to defeat for one central reason: there was no revolutionary leadership rooted among the mine workers which could lead this militant class struggle to victory.

The Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin defined strikes as a "school of war," *class war*. UPS, with its militarized discipline, abysmal pay and rampant discrimination, is an embodiment of American capitalism today. In fighting this behemoth, the task of militant Teamster strikers, along with all class-conscious workers, fighters for minority and women's rights, is to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy and fight for genuine independence from the bourgeois state by forging a multiracial revolutionary workers party. This party must vigorously fight every instance of racist oppression; it must defend and give leadership to the struggles of the working class in the international struggle for socialist revolution. The Internationalist Group invites you to join us in this fight. ■

185,000 Strikers...

continued from page 25

What's needed is a broad class offensive mobilizing labor and bringing in oppressed minorities, immigrants, women and the rest of the working and poor people who have been the object of capitalists' feeding frenzy in recent years. The UPS strike should be a springboard for an all-out drive to organize the unorganized--beginning with Federal Express...and low-wage hellholes like McDonald's. It is crucial to *unite the factory with the ghetto and the barrio*, to link the cause of labor to the liberation of the black, Latino and Asian poor in a broad class struggle that transcends narrow sectoral limits.

The labor bureaucracy has always been in the companies' pockets, and has brought the unions to their present sorry state. Instead of flag-waving business unionists like Carey and Hoffa, we need a revolutionary leadership that is prepared to fight against the whole system of capitalist exploitation and wage slavery. U.S. workers remain politically tied to the Democrats and Republicans, the capitalist parties of Clinton and Gingrich. A fight for a *workers party* is needed, for a leadership that can take the struggle forward to a fight for power.

Many self-described socialists are hailing a great victory at UPS without telling the truth to the working class. The Teamsters had important advantages that will not be the same elsewhere. Striking against a single company that handles 80 percent of all packages delivered in the U.S. came near to an industry-wide strike. With 185,000 strikers out, it would have

been difficult for management to mount an effective scab operation. For once "public opinion," that fickle reflection of media manipulation, was on the strikers' side. And the Clinton administration limited its intervention to arm twisting.

In the first nationwide strike ever against UPS, the terms of the settlement are a real but *limited* success for UPS workers. The company's agreement to create 10,000 full-time jobs, and move up another 10,000 part-timers to replace retiring full-time workers, must be compared to the fact that UPS employs more than 120,000 part-time workers, most of whom want full-time jobs. The \$4 wage increase for part-timers (spread over several years) has to be measured against the fact that part-time workers at the company hadn't had a wage increase since 1982! The two-tier wage system will be preserved, while new full-time workers will be paid substantially less than present full-timers. And the company won a *five-year* contract.

As *The Internationalist* emphasized in the strike, the key question the working class must face is that of *the capitalist state*. In the next major battle, you can bet that the bosses and their government will be quick to reach for Taft-Hartley, Landrum-Griffin, the Railroad Labor Act and the rest of the anti-union weapons in their arsenal.

Court injunctions can be ripped up, as striking coal miners showed in 1978. And workers must mobilize to throw the government out of the unions. Reformists and labor fakers of all stripes think the government can be "neutral" and even aid "union reform." Marxists say the government represents the class enemy.

Social democrats like the ISO (International Socialist Organization) and Labor Notes helped bring the government into the Teamsters. Now, as soon as the UPS strike is over, the federally appointed "overseer" orders a new Teamsters election. The government isn't worried about union corruption, it's worried about union power. We say: *Government hands off!*

Class-conscious workers must also know that ultimately these battles are only skirmishes in a far broader class struggle. We quoted in the leaflet reprinted here the remark by the Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin that strikes are a "school of war." The working class must learn how to successfully wage *class war* by studying the history of the class struggle. One of the key lessons to be learned concerns the possibilities, and the limits of trade unions. More than 130 years ago, at the time of the American Civil War, Karl Marx wrote of labor's struggles:

"The working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

Popular Front Ties the Workers to the Murderous Police, Armed Fist of the Bourgeoisie

Brazil: Crisis of the Capitalist State



Marco Antonio/O Globo

Demonstrators try to go through army lines at Maceió, Brazil, 17 July 1997.

The following article is translated from Vanguarda Operária No. 2 (August-October 1997), published by our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil.

JULY 27—Since the second half of the year began, this country has been convulsed by a veritable police revolt, revealing the crisis of the bourgeois state in Brazil. The shootout between military police and soldiers in Belo Horizonte was followed by others in Maceió and Ceará. The army was put on patrol or a state of alert in six state capitals. “We have not seen army soldiers mobilized from the north to the south of Brazil since the military coup of 1964,” observed the news weekly *Veja* (23 July). Meanwhile, on July 24, Day of the Rural Worker, more than 50,000 marched in Brazil’s main cities in protests against the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, with the participation of industrial workers, peasants, students and police. All this poses the question: What position should the workers take?

We of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB—Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) warn the working class that opposing the army occupation and Cardoso’s hunger policies does not mean falling into the arms of the murderous police.

It is a betrayal that a large part of the left supports those who carried out the massacres of Candelária, Vigário Geral, Acará, Diadema, Cerro Corá, Eldorado dos Carajás, Cidade de Deus and so many others [sites of police and army massacres of landless peasants, black street children and prisoners in recent years]. The military police’s armed action is not a workers strike but a military revolt which, if successful, will increase the power of the police. The guardians of capital demand more money from the bosses to carry out their dirty work and carry out even bigger attacks on the workers and the poor of the countryside and *favelas* (ghettos). Today they talk deceitfully about “unity” between the police and the people; tomorrow once again they will pull the trigger of capitalist repression.

The LQB stresses the fundamental Marxist lesson that “the police are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.” In the class struggle it is necessary to distinguish clearly between who are the friends and who are the enemies of the working people. Every alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie, from the police who are their agents in the streets to their corrupt politicians in the government palaces, leads to defeat. We need a revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois state in crisis.

Forge A Revolutionary Workers Party!

At the bottom of this crisis is the poverty and desperation of the working masses who suffer the blows of the hunger plans of free-trade "social-democrat" Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the International Monetary Fund. But in reality, the reformist Partido dos Trabalhadores [PT—the Workers Party of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva] and leaders of the union federations (from the CUT [linked to the PT] to the Força Sindical [company union]) support the

Cardoso/IMF duo by tying the workers hand and foot in a class-collaborationist alliance. Summed up in the Frente Brasil Popular, these ruinous politics have led to the defeat of one workers' struggle after another (as in the case of the 1995 oil workers' strike). Since the 1930s in Europe to Indonesia in 1965 and Chile in 1973, the popular front blocks revolutionary struggle—and this crime is paid in workers' blood.

In Brazil in 1964, the reformists linked the workers to the bourgeois populist João Goulart (Jango), and the result was 21 years of military dictatorship. The workers and all the oppressed must learn the lessons of this history, so as never to repeat it.

The present cycle began with a bonapartist mobilization of the military police in the state of Minas Gerais in late June. A massive armed demonstration of 4,000 military police in its capital, Belo Horizonte, on June 24 frightened the bourgeoisie, leading to a fire fight between cops and military police shock troops, causing the death of a corporal. This was a bomb that blew up in the Cardoso government's face. With a knife at his throat, the governor of Minas Gerais, a member of the PSDB [Cardoso's bourgeois Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy] decreed a 48 percent rise in the salaries of civil and military police. His panicked reaction soon led to the military police "strike" movement in a dozen states.

On July 17 another armed



Military police attack demonstrators protesting privatization of Brazilian mining company, Rio de Janeiro, April 30.

Divaldo Suruagy's state government answered the legislators' pleas. "If we're going to get out of here alive, either we have to impeach [the governor] or he has to take a leave of absence," said a frightened local leader of the PSDB. In the end, both were done.

On July 21 in São Paulo, CUT leader Vicentinho and Landless Peasants Movement (MST) leader José Rainha spoke from the same platform as Conte Lopes, deputy for the PPB [right-wing Brazilian People's Party] and a former captain of ROTA, the elite troops of the São Paulo state military police, who brags in his book *Matar ou Morrer* (Kill or Die) of personally killing 40 people in his bloody career as a cop. This collaboration of the reformist and peasant leaders with those who have massacred public workers, prisoners, *favela* dwellers, homeless people and landless peasants was a shameful act of the highest order. Moreover, it is a threat to all the workers and oppressed. Yet this betrayal is repeated by most of the

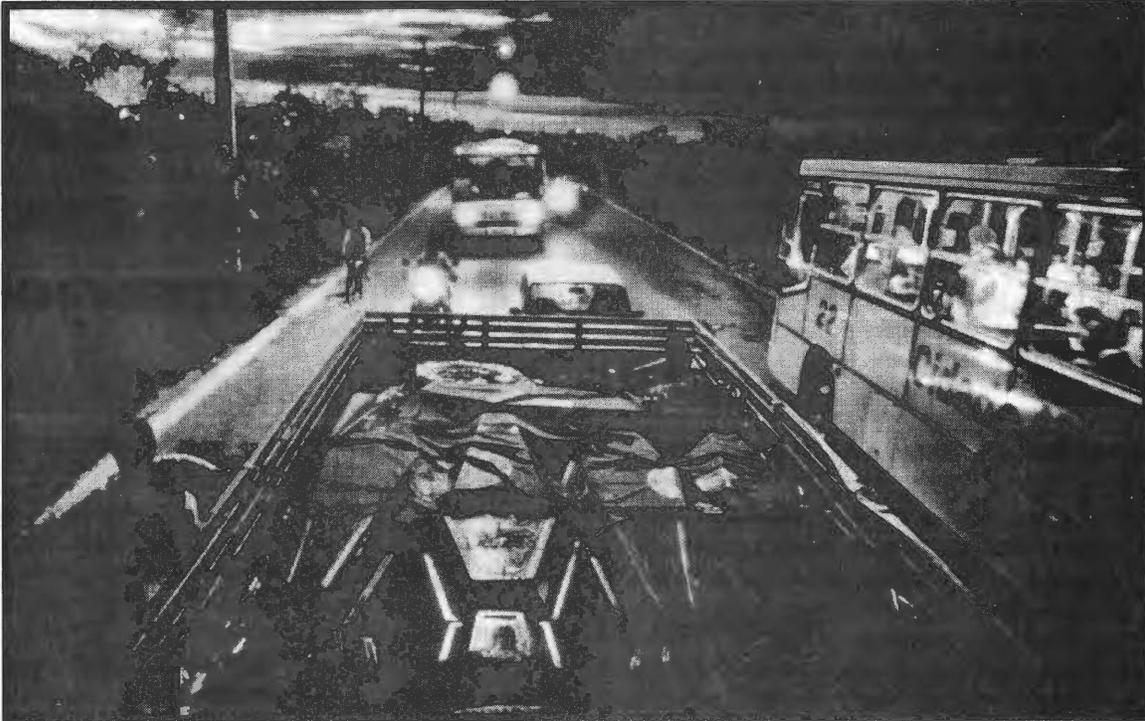
so-called far left, which also hailed the police "rebellion." The LQB does not go along with these betrayers—we defend Marxist principles and the interests of the proletariat.

The decay and bankruptcy of state governments, which is now affecting the cops, has brought poverty, shrinking wages, unemployment and even suicides to federal, state and municipal employees. The bonapartist cop revolt shows the fragility of the pseudo-democracy ex-



CUT union tops support the police, the capitalists' professional strikebreakers and racist killers.

Coffins of 19 peasants killed by Military Police in Eldorado dos Carajás, April 1996. Photo is by Sebastião Salgado, from his book, *Terra--Struggle of the Landless* (1997), published by Phaidon Press.



isting in poor capitalist countries which are dependent on imperialism, such as Brazil, as well as the rotting of capitalism in its imperialist stage. Bourgeois democracy is a privilege (an episodic one) of the imperialist countries, financed with the resources of their wealthy bourgeoisies, who exploit their own proletariat as well as all proletarians of oppressed nations around the world.

After the capitalist counterrevolution in the ex-USSR and East Europe, the "social-democratic" Cardoso government, in the name of "democracy," the "new world order," "globalization," "modernity and neo-capitalism," feverishly joined in the process of massive privatizations prescribed by the IMF. The government is neck-deep in a crisis within the capitalist class itself. The buying of votes for the reelection [of Cardoso], the scandal over the milking of state and municipal bonds, which is strangling state finances in the context of the struggle within the bourgeoisie over who will loot the state, the population and the working class in particular—all this encouraged the military police to join the squabble over dividing up the spoils and to charge more for their services of repressing the working class, the poor and oppressed in general.

This crisis is an example of the contradictions of capitalism. When the government carries out privatizations for the benefit of monopolies and capitalists, the latter order layoffs and squeeze wages, as they wipe out historic gains of the workers in order to raise their own profits. This increases unemployment. The capitalists have to increase their police forces in order to repress the growing number of poor people this creates. Meanwhile, the police "strike" has nothing to do with workers' strikes. It is a bonapartist revolt and a fight within the bourgeois class to improve the situation of the police as a body and gain a position of supremacy so as to better fulfill their historic role of repressing the proletariat.

No to the Coalition with the Bourgeoisie and Its Cops!

To explain the acute crisis Brazil is going through today, the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie are looking for all kinds of exceptionalist arguments. They explain the events in Alagoas by noting that this is one of the most socially backward states in the country. According to Cardoso's supporters, the events are a result of the region's remnants of *coronelismo* [local boss rule by large landowners, called colonels], going back to the era of the *capitanias hereditárias* [hereditary captaincies, provincial divisions in colonial Brazil]; of the unrestricted power of the twelve big families of sugar-plantation owners; and of the tax exemption established by [impeached former Brazilian president] Fernando Collor de Mello when he was governor there. All this doubtless plays a role. But if this were the basic cause, then how does one explain the rapid extension of the conflict to the southern part of the country and the big cities? Other, more leftist political scientists say the events are a product of neoliberalism, of the spectacular inequalities in the distribution of wealth in Brazil, of the Cardoso/Wall Street privatization policy and the current market fever on the São Paulo Stock Exchange. All these partial explanations seek above all to obscure the real origin of the crisis. The current explosion of social discontent is a product of capitalism in its period of decay, together with the acute crisis of revolutionary leadership.

After the capitalist counterrevolution which brought down the Stalinist regimes in the degenerated and deformed workers states of the USSR and East Europe, the Latin American left has been in a state of collapse. The fact that the police actions have met with the approval of many workers can only be explained by the absence of a revolutionary leadership

which could lead the masses' rebelliousness in class struggle. The leaders of the Brazilian trade-union movement, of the peasant movement, of the slum dwellers movements, and the Stalinist and fake-Trotskyist groups, have given their stamp of approval to these police revolts. They pretend that the military police are just "public workers" and that their strikes are just another fight for higher wages. "In each one of you, we see a worker who wants to protect the city," said MST leader José Rainha. "If this sector [police] is essential, its wages should also be essential," said the CUT's Vicentinho.

The UNE [National Student Union] also joined in the police demonstration in Rio de Janeiro, and its leader, Ricardo Capelli (of the PC do B [the formerly pro-Albania Communist Party of Brazil]) spoke at the São Paulo demonstration on July 25, just before the president of the "union" of civil detectives. This is logical: these ferociously popular-frontist ex-Maoists, who boast of the Araguaia guerrilla struggle [in the early 1970s], are now using UNE to campaign for disarming the population—a slogan which surely meets with the approval of their police "allies" and which is completely counterposed to the struggle for workers revolution!

"The people and police united will never be defeated!" This slogan—a variant of the now classic slogan of the Chilean popular front, "the people united will never be defeated"—shows as clear as day how the false and dangerous "unity"



Celso Meira/O Globo

July 23 demonstration commemorating black youths murdered by cops in Candelária, Rio de Janeiro. On other side of church in photo, killer cops were marching for higher wages, with support of fake leftists. Marxists say: capitalist police are a machine of racist repression.

Even more scandalous is the fact that the leader of the Alagoas civil police "union," José Carlos Fernandes Neto, is a member of the O Trabalho tendency!

In issue No. 37 of their newspaper, the pseudo-Trotskyists of the PSTU [mainstream Morenoites], brag that they were the only left party which really backed the revolt of the Belo Horizonte police. The PSTU Morenoites talk about "tactical" support to the police, just as the German social democrats talked about their "tactical" support to the German army in World War I—in both cases this is support to the class enemy, a betrayal of the working class.

Another pseudo-Trotskyist centrist group which follows the same class-collaborationist policy is the Tendência pelo Partido Operário Revolucionário (T-POR—Tendency for a Revolutionary Workers Party), followers of the Bolivian POR of Guillermo Lora. In its newspaper *Massas* (second half of June 1997), they end a short article on the Minas Gerais police "strike" with the sentence: "The police must join with the workers, peasants and other working people in an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle." This phrase sums up a whole anti-Marxist conception about the central question of the state. The police cannot "join with" their victims, because they are the bourgeoisie's main weapon for repressing the oppressed, an essential condition for the survival of capitalism.

The Brazilian T-POR, which imports the "anti-imperialist revolutionary united front" from Bolivia to Brazil, claims that so long as they are called "anti-imperialist," class-collaborationist coalitions are permitted in the economically backward capitalist countries. In Bolivia in 1971, the "FRA" (Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Front) embodied Lora's political alliance with general J.J. Torres and



Otávio Magalhães/AE

Police demonstrating in Rio de Janeiro, July. Sign says: "Support a cop before a drug dealer does."



Military Police in São Paulo district of Diadema, March 7, videotaped beating motorist. Brazilian "Rodney King" case provoked outrage over pervasive cop terror.

other "nationalists with epaulets." The Menshevism of Lora and the rest of the left politically and militarily disarmed the working class in the face of the brutal coup by Hugo Banzer (who was recently elected "constitutional" president). The result was a disaster for the combative workers of Bolivia's factories and mines, when the supposed "aid" from the imaginary "anti-imperialist officers" failed to materialize. If that was a tragedy, repeating this policy in Brazil would be a farce were it not for the terrible consequences it has for the workers.

In contrast, a correct policy is put forward in the first issue of *Vanguarda Operária*: "But in Brazil, a semicolonial country characterized by uneven and combined development, with a large and combative proletariat, the theses of Trotsky's permanent revolution show the way forward for the proletariat and all the oppressed." As Trotsky stated:

"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."
--Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930)

The centrists of the Partido da Causa Operária (PCO—Workers Cause Party) also commented on the mutiny under the rather positive headline "Strike of Minas Gerais Military Police Reopens Government Crisis." Then at the end of the two full pages they devote to the topic, they publish a small box calling for "Dissolution of the Military Police" (*Causa Operária*, 1 July 1997). Yet this slogan, too, is not Marxist politics but at best reformist utopianism. The idea that the bourgeois state dissolve a central nucleus of its police apparatus is an impossibility under capitalism, which is based on the "special bodies of armed men" (Engels) that are the police. Moreover, at the end of this call PCO adds the slogan for the "creation of municipal police under the direct control of the population." This is yet another way of deceiving the workers—there can be no police under the control of the population in a capitalist regime. The military police must be swept away by workers revolution, which will put an end once and for all to this killing machine and all capitalist police forces, the separate bodies of armed men whose job is to repress the exploited and oppressed.

Build a Leninist Party of the Proletarian Vanguard Which Acts as Tribune of the People

Contrary to all illusions in a supposed reform of the police, or a police force "under the control of the population," Lenin explained in his essential work *The State and Revolution* (1917) that the state consists of special bodies of armed men and "a standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power." Lenin was commenting on Friedrich Engels' book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) in which Engels emphasized that a fundamental characteristic of the state:

"is the establishment of a *public power* which no longer directly coincides with the population organising itself as an armed force. This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into classes...."

Thus, the police cannot be "reformed" into its opposite, nor "abolished" as the anarchists believe; instead, this apparatus of capitalist oppression must be destroyed through socialist revolution. These were the conceptions that served as the theoretical and programmatic basis for the October Revolution in 1917. This revolution swept away the police and armed forces of the capitalist state and established workers militias under the power of the soviets. It was this regime that was later betrayed by Stalinism, which bureaucratized and finally undercut the bases of the proletarian state, leading to its destruction by the capitalist counterrevolutions of 1989-92.

We of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have always emphasized that the police, of all kinds, are part of the "armed fist of the bourgeoisie." This was stated in the program of the *Municípios em Luta* (MEL—Municipal Workers in Struggle) tendency, led by Geraldo Ribeiro, which won the elections in the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR) in November 1995. Later, implementing this program as elected president of the SFPMVR, Ribeiro initiated the disaffiliation of the municipal *guardas* (cops) from the SFPMVR. After much resistance and a backlash from the commander of the *guardas*, the mayor and pro-police elements in the union, headed by Artur Fernandes (who called in the bourgeois courts to remove Ribeiro, and brought in the police to block the will of the ranks of the SFPMVR), a union membership meeting on 25 July 1996 took the historic decision of voting to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from the union.

The pro-police faction of Artur Fernandes has been advised systematically by the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista. The LBI's cynicism will be recorded in the history of the workers movement, as its newspaper *Luta Operária* talks about supposedly fighting for class independence and the dissolution of the military police, at the same time as the LBI makes a dirty alliance with pro-police elements against the Volta Redonda city workers.

In its polemic against PCO regarding the mythical municipalization of the police, the LBI joins PCO in calling "for the dissolution of the military police," but says not one word about the civil police. This is no accident. Boundless cynicism and a thirst to join the union bureaucracy don't hinder the LBI, which presented theses for the Sixth CUT Congress co-signed by a top leader of the LBI and the head of the pro-police faction which acts against the SFPMVR workers [Artur Fernandes]. The LBI's initiative will give it a pro-cop pseudo-Trotskyist profile, in serving as the public apologist of a faction which defends an alliance with the police. Thus, one can deduce that they support the series of bonapartist cop revolts that began in Belo Horizonte.

Naturally, the pseudo-Trotskyists who said they were opposed to an alliance with the police—as was the case of the International Communist League (ICL)—but fled from our campaign for "Police Hands Off the SFPMVR," later tried to revise what happened and lie about this principled struggle that is of fundamental importance for the entire workers movement in Brazil and internationally. However, sectors which have experienced repression by the cops and courts, such as the oil workers, as well as labor-movement and public-employee representatives, have supported our campaign for the class independence of the unions from control by the capitalist state. Now when the reformists call for unionizing the military police, we warn that the military cops are enemies of the working class, and we fight for the disaffiliation of every kind of cop from the CUT. As Leon Trotsky wrote, in a quotation we cited in the first issue of *Vanguarda Operária*:

"The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker."

—Leon Trotsky, *What Next?* (January 1932)

The cops not only carry out repression against the workers but are also a key element of racial oppression. This has been demonstrated historically. The more than 300 years of slavery of Indians and blacks which marked the expansion of capitalism to the Americas, the accumulation for which was



Landless peasants march on Day of the Rural Worker, July 24.

Journal do Brasil

begun by mercantile capital, was also backed up and guaranteed by the state through the cruel and shameful means of the police of that time. This era stained the history of humanity with the blood of the innocent in order to enrich a minority of colonizers in close collaboration with the church, which sprinkled holy water on the invading slaveowners' atrocities, first and foremost against Indians and blacks:

"The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation."

—Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, Chapter 31

While the fake socialists and pseudo-Trotskyists fall over themselves in their eagerness to get close to the cops in the name of an economic struggle, the LQB seeks to build a proletarian vanguard party fighting for socialist revolution. Following the lines set forth by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), the party must be a "tribune of the people ...able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; ...able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation" in order to present the revolutionary socialist program.

The social-democratic reformists, Stalinists and fake-Trotskyist centrists of all kinds explain the current crisis as a result of neoliberalism and answer it with bourgeois popular frontism, allying themselves even with the police. We Trotskyists explain that the current crisis of the Brazilian state is the result of moribund capitalism, that we must reject any alliance with the police, and fight for a revolutionary working-class opposition. This fight is summed up in the struggle to build an authentic Trotskyist Party in Brazil. This task has been taken up by the LQB as an integral part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution. **JOIN US.** ■

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For Workers Revolution Across the Borders!

Mexico Elections Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism

The polls closed at 8 p.m. on the evening of July 6, and by 9 o'clock Mexico City's main plaza, the Zócalo, was already filling with people waving the yellow flags of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). The PRD's standard bearer, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, had won the race for governor of the Federal District, Mexico's capital, with more than 47 percent of the vote. Nationally, the perennial ruling party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), lost its absolute majority in Congress for the first time in 68 years. Cárdenas showed up in the

Zócalo around midnight and climbed up on a flat-bed truck as crowds chanted, "first regent (mayor), then president," referring to the Mexican presidential elections three years from now. But amid the cheering, Marxists warn that *Cárdenas' election win is no victory for the workers, peasants and the millions of impoverished Mexicans*, who will continue to suffer under the yoke of capitalist rule. Cárdenas himself is a former PRI politician and his PRD is another capitalist party, formed precisely in order to pick up the pieces as the PRI regime crumbles.

The bourgeois media and politicians hailed the results. "Cárdenas Sweeps," headlined *El Universal*. "A Sweep" proclaimed *La Jornada* over a picture of the new head of the Mexico City government. For these liberals, the outcome of the elections represented "A Victory for Everyone." President Ernesto Zedillo announced that the vote legitimized the PRI and heralded an era of "democratic normalcy." And the capitalists celebrated. "Financial Euphoria After the Vote," announced *La Jornada* on its front page two days later, reporting that the Mexico City stock market was skyrocketing. In New York, Moody's and the Salomon Brothers risk evaluators recommended investment in Mexico. And in Washington, President Clinton gave his seal of approval to the "democratic process" in Mexico. The capitalist rulers, both winners and



Mexican elections under military guard. Soldier outside offices of the Federal Election Institute in Mexico City.

"losers," celebrate their victory. *Yet this "victory" spells further misery for the Mexican masses.*

The imperialist president in the White House and the Wall Street financiers are concerned about any signs of trouble "south of the border." Mexico is chained to an international debt of some \$160 billion, in addition to tens of billions of direct U.S. investments and billions in short-term capital placed in the volatile Mexico City stock market. The Mexican economy was even more thoroughly taken over by the U.S. as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that went into effect in 1994. Yet the promise by the former government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari that this would be Mexico's ticket into the "first world" of advanced capitalist countries, as well as Zedillo's campaign promise to bring "prosperity for your family," were a cruel hoax. And as the 1982 debt crisis and the 1994 peso devaluation dramatically showed, any serious economic dislocation in Mexico immediately places world capitalist finance in jeopardy.

Following the '94 peso crisis, under the brutal austerity plan ordered by the International Monetary Fund and imposed by the Zedillo government, only those with the very highest incomes have seen any improvement in the present "recovery." In 1995-96 more than 2 million workers lost their jobs,

and millions of peasants have been forced off their lands in the last decade. Meanwhile, Mexican factory workers earn between \$3 and a top wage of \$10 a day, making them some of the lowest paid industrial workers in the world. According to a recent study, the daily minimum wage (currently 26 pesos, a little more than \$3, in Mexico City) has fallen by 72 percent in the last 15 years. Fully half the working population receives the minimum wage or less, and one worker in eight receives *no pay at all* (a situation of semi-slavery, as in the case of many domestic servants). This picture of mass misery is no statistical illusion but a bitter reality, as the amount of corn and milk consumed by the population has plummeted in the last 30 months.

As a result of the capitalist economic crisis, Mexico has been seething with social discontent. For the third year in a row, the CTM corporatist "union" bureaucracy refused to call a May Day march for fear that it would get out of hand. Instead tens of thousands of workers marched to the Zócalo in front of the presidential palace to denounce the starvation policies of the government. Mexico City has been the scene of thousands of marches (an average of seven a day in the first five months of 1997) mobilizing peasants, Indians, teachers, fired factory workers, university students, nurses, bus drivers, subway workers, social security employees, sidewalk peddlers, debtors, residents of poor neighborhoods—almost every sector of the exploited and oppressed. During May, the streets of the capital were tied up for days by teachers of the CNTE union opposition group demanding a 100 percent raise and schoolbooks for their pupils. At the same time, due to the economic devastation that has made it almost impossible to make ends meet, strikes have been rare as workers fear to lose their jobs.

In the countryside, particularly in the central and southern states, the peasantry and Indian population are in rebellion. The uprising by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) at the beginning of 1994 was not an isolated Castroite *foco* (nucleus) that could be easily wiped out by sophisticated counterinsurgency techniques but a mass movement covering a third of the impoverished southern state of Chiapas. Since the Zapatista revolt, a second guerrilla group has appeared, the Revolutionary People's Army (EPR), operating in the south-central states of Guerrero and Oaxaca and in the mountainous Huasteca region in the east with evident popular sympathy. In all its varieties, peasant-based guerrillism does not offer a road forward for socialist revolution, which must be based on the power and class interests of the millions-strong Mexican proletariat under the leadership of an internationalist communist party. But the spread of such guerrilla struggles dramatically shows the massive discontent in the countryside. These same areas are the focus of land occupations led by militant peasant groups, while northern Chiapas is in a state of near civil war as the army, police and the landowners' *guardias blancas* (white guards) shoot down dozens of insurgent peasants.

It was in order to siphon off this unrest among their victims that the Mexican capitalists decided to bring in



Frida Hartz/la Jornada

Zedillo and Cárdenas meet following the July 6 election.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, diverting social protest into the safe channels of bourgeois electoral politics. The PRI regime could have red-baited him and kept him out of the media, as happened in 1988 and '94; instead Cárdenas received ample TV time and favorable coverage. The role of the son of former Mexican president General Lázaro Cárdenas, who nationalized the railroads and oil in the 1930s and presided over the (government-controlled) unionization of Mexico's urban workers, is to give the illusion of change to the masses' yearning for an improvement in their lives. The PRD bandies about the rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution, but it is no more revolutionary than the PRI-government, whose stock in trade used to be the same cynical nationalist appeal while it did the bidding of the Yankee imperialists. The PRD is a thoroughly bourgeois party, led by defectors from the ruling party who as the PRI machinery runs out of steam have seen the need for a new vehicle to save Mexican capitalism, and increasingly their own skins as well.

The PRD is sometimes inaccurately referred to in the bourgeois media as a "left-wing" party. This is due to the large number of ex-Communist Party members, ex-Castroites, ex-Maoists and ex-"Trotskyists" to be found (together with the ex-PRI politicians) in the PRD's National Executive Committee. The *New York Times* (9 July) quoted political scientist Denise Dresser worrying that, "There are Cárdenas backers who have a radical agenda, who want to reverse Zedillo's economic policies and move the country to the left, and they want Cárdenas to spearhead the effort. Can Cárdenas control his leftists? If he can't, then he'll butt heads with the president at every turn." Actually the ex-leftists in the PRD's upper echelons are quite house-broken. They didn't make a peep of protest when Cárdenas visited New York last May to speak to assorted financiers. Addressing the elite Americas Society, the PRD candidate said "we all agree

that in Mexico foreign investment is necessary," and called for promotion of such investment in order to "develop a new stability." When asked by a Mexican radio reporter if he was a leftist, Cárdenas answered flatly "no."

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his kept leftists are playing by the rule book of the U.S.-dominated New World Order. But in order to successfully play its role as an escape valve to let off the steam of popular discontent, Cárdenas' bourgeois-nationalist PRD has drawn around it and subordinated reformist-led unions and leftist parties as well as a host of groups of the rural and urban poor in a *popular front*. In such a class-collaborationist coalition, the working-class and self-proclaimed socialist

elements are tied to the representatives of a wing of the bourgeoisie, duly baptized "democratic," "progressive," "anti-fascist" or "anti-imperialist." As the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote of the Popular Front in the 1930s, referring to an earlier "cartel" or Left Bloc between the social democrats and bourgeois "Radicals" in France in the '20s:

"The job of the cartel always consisted in *putting a brake upon the mass movement, directing it into the channels of class collaboration. This is precisely the job of the People's Front as well. The difference between them—and not an unimportant one—is that the traditional cartel was applied during the comparatively peaceful and stable epochs of the parliamentary regime. Now, however, when the masses are impatient and explosive, a more imposing brake is needed, with the participation of the 'Communists'.*"

—Leon Trotsky, "France at the Turning Point" (March 1936)

By chaining the workers and peasants to their class enemy, the popular front paves the way for the victory of reaction. Thus it led to the victory of the butcher Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), to the murder of more than a million Communists by the CIA-aided General Sukarno in Indonesia in 1965 and the bloody coup against Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular by General Pinochet in Chile in 1973. In Mexico today, as the long-governing PRI regime loses its grip on the masses and comes apart, the Cárdenas-led popular front is key to the capitalist rulers' strategy to prevent mass discontent from turning into potentially revolutionary struggle.

The Fraud of a "Democratic Revolution"

The PRI machine certainly took heavy losses on July 6. In the voting in the Federal District for local assembly and national deputies it lost every direct contest: 67 seats to the PRD



1997 May Day march in Mexico City. Photo shows contingent of Independent Proletarian Movement, linked to SUTAU bus drivers union.

Internationalist Photo

and 3 to the right-wing National Action Party (PAN). Cárdenas' party won every single district in the capital in the Congressional vote, achieving a *carro completo* (full car) as the PRI used to do regularly. The PRI no longer has a guaranteed majority in the lower house of Congress, even including its satellite parties, the Greens and the Party of Labor (PT), that were set up to siphon votes from the PRD. Nevertheless, it is still by far the largest party, with 39 percent of the vote nationally (compared to 27 percent for the PAN and 26 percent for the PRD) and control of the Senate. It won every Congressional seat in seven states, and will continue to push through its policies by blocking alternately with the PAN or the PRD. Following the elections, Zedillo flatly declared that there would be no change in the government's economic policies, and no one challenged him, least of all Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

Ever since 1929, the PRI and its forerunners have held power in a *bonapartist*, and later a semi-bonapartist regime. This comes down to a military/police dictatorship, only thinly disguised with the trappings of "democratic" bourgeois parliamentarism, in which the government acts as the supreme arbiter of the nation. The regime sustained itself for decades by a *corporatist* system of incorporating workers and peasants, in particular, in rigidly controlled organizations that are part of the ruling party, which is simultaneously intertwined with the machinery of the capitalist state. The PRI has long been a "state party," directly (although secretly) financed by hundreds of millions of pesos diverted from the national treasury, and relying on government resources for propaganda, transportation and police control. The PRI machine used state-owned companies as cash cows to be milked to pay for projects to appease discontented communities and/or bribes to poten-

tial troublemakers, or else would come down with an iron hand to crush those who would not be bought. Trade-unionists, peasant leaders and leftists often spent years, even decades in jail, and torture is a routine method of police interrogation.

What is happening in Mexico is a shift in the mechanisms of capitalist rule. For some time, the PRI-government hasn't functioned for the bourgeoisie. Its legendary corruption used to serve a purpose; now it's just a rush to grab what they can as they head for the door. And now the money isn't there. Under heavy pressure from the U.S. and international finance capital, in the *sexenios* (six-year terms) of the last three presidents (Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas, and now Ernesto Zedillo) the PRI has abandoned the heavily government-directed economy. After Salinas sold off virtually all the state-owned companies (except for oil) to his cronies, making several billionaires in the process, Zedillo now finds himself without carrots and only the stick to keep restless workers and peasants in line.

Meanwhile, as Wall Street ravages the Mexican economy via NAFTA, the U.S. is pumping in vast amounts of military equipment and seeking control of the army's officer corps under the guise of the so-called "war on drugs." The real purpose is to step up repression, the necessary adjunct to a policy of brutal anti-working-class austerity, wholesale privatization and clearing the peasants from the land. In the last couple of years, police operations in Mexico City and the federal and state prosecutors' offices have been taken over by military officers (see "Mexico: Militarization Made in U.S.A." in *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997). Both the southern and northern states have been occupied by the army, the former in order to combat and corral leftist guerrillas and the latter in the name of fighting drugs. And on the other side of the border, the Clinton administration is waging a war on "illegal" immigrants by deploying thousands of U.S. National Guard and Army troops who have begun to routinely shoot down both Mexican and American Latinos.

Revolutionaries and class-conscious workers must demand: *Yankee imperialism, hands off Mexico!*

ICL Denies Popular Front in Mexico

The increasingly desperate situation of Mexican working people cries out not for a phony bourgeois "democratic transition" but for workers revolution, extending across the border to embrace U.S. workers as well. Mexican and U.S. rulers are well aware of the potential dangers, which is why they decided to bring in Cárdenas. But as the capitalist politicians scramble frantically to put another political system in place before the present regime collapses, there are important openings for Marxists to advance the revolutionary struggle in Mexico. To do so, it is necessary first and foremost to fight for proletarian independence from the bourgeois parties, not only smashing the corporatist vise of the decrepit PRI but also breaking from the popular front around Cárdenas' PRD.

For decades, the PRI's iron control of labor was one of the main foundations of its rule. The CTM (Mexican Workers Confederation), led for more than half a century by Fidel

Velázquez, is an official part of the ruling party. For decades, the bureaucratic leaders (known as *charros*, or cowboys) of its constituent "unions" have regularly signed sweetheart deals (*contratos de protección*) with the bosses, trooped its members to bused-in (*acarreado*) PRI demos and provided rent-a-thugs to beat up troublesome leftists, peasants, union dissidents and the like. But after 18 years of annual "tripartite" pacts between the PRI government, PRI employers and PRI "unions," under which workers' wages have been slashed by three-quarters, the ranks are fed up. Meanwhile, the umbrella group set up in the late '70s to keep breakaway unions under the PRI's thumb, the Congress of Labor (CT), is fracturing.

On May Day, dissident CT unions of the Foro Sindical (Trade-Union Forum) marched to the Zócalo together with some CTM unions who broke ranks to join them. In the CTM's own indoor rally, workers hooted down one leader after another. Now, after the death in late June of the 97-year-old CTM patriarch Velázquez, the stage is set for a hemorrhaging of the PRI's control of labor. At the end of August, 132 unions voted to form a new union federation in November, supposedly free of government and party control. The leaders of the new federation, headed by Francisco Hernández Juárez, are no leftists but rather *neo-charros*. Hernández is bankrolled by the AFL-CIO (widely known in Latin America as the AFL-CIA) and was a favorite of the now universally despised President Salinas. Where Velázquez' CTM was a pillar of the PRI's corporatist system in a heavily statified capitalist economy, Hernández and his cohorts are offering their services as labor lieutenants of a privatized "free market" capitalism. (Hernández' phone workers union made millions by grabbing a huge block of shares in the privatization of Telmex.)

But the CT and CTM dissidents are far from united, and burgeoning labor insurgency could escape the control of the *neo-charros*. The left-led unions are grouped together in the May 1st Inter-Union Coordinating Committee along with several organizations of poor and working-class neighborhood committees, many of which arose when the government's inaction left tens of thousands living under plastic sheets in the streets following the 1985 Mexico City earthquake. Among the unions in the May 1st Committee are the SUTAU bus drivers whom Zedillo fired en masse in 1995, trying to repeat Ronald Reagan's destruction of the PATCO air controllers union, Margaret Thatcher's defeat of the British miners, and Salinas' army assault and arrest of the Oil Workers Union leaders (who still languish in jail eight years later). Other components include university workers unions and the Authentic Workers Front (FAT), which has been active in organizing workers in the *maquiladora* free trade zone in the north.

This is where the popular front around Cárdenas and the PRD have a particular role to play. It serves to keep the unions not controlled by the government in check, by tying them to a wing of the bourgeoisie and thus to defense of capitalism. It also serves to keep a rein on the hundreds of militant peasant groups proliferating in the countryside, and has enrolled leftist students and virtually the entire spectrum of self-proclaimed socialist parties. Meanwhile, both the EZLN, dubbed "the first post-modern guerrillas" by liberal intellectuals who like the fact that the

Zapatistas are explicitly not fighting for power, and the “retro guerrillas” of the EPR all but openly endorsed Cárdenas in the July 6 elections. EZLN Subcomandante Marcos has been feuding with PRD parliamentary leader Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who was head of the PRI at the time of the 1968 government massacre of leftist students, for saying that the first priority of the new congress must be the “pacification” of Chiapas. But through the vehicle of the Cardenista popular front, the petty-bourgeois guerrillas and their Indian peasant ranks are subordinated to the discipline of the “opposition” bourgeois party.

Ever since Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas broke from the PRI to run for president of Mexico in 1988, the International Communist League warned workers and youth against the new popular front. As leaders of the ICL internationally and in Mexico, the comrades who were expelled from the ICL a year ago and subsequently formed the Internationalist Group helped formulate and defend this Marxist policy against the host of pseudo-Trotskyists who denied that Cárdenas was leading a popular front, the better to cozy up to the bourgeois opposition. Since the expulsions, the IG has warned that the reconstituted ICL leadership was in the grip of a centrist tendency and was beginning to revise longstanding Spartacist politics. Sure enough, this past May we discovered that the Grupo Espartaquista de México was now denying the very existence of a Cardenista popular front (see the IG open letter, “The ICL’s New Line in Mexico: To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists,” on page 48 of this issue).

So after almost a decade of warning Mexican workers that they must break with the popular front, on the very eve of Cárdenas’ victory in the Mexico City elections, the ICL drops this call. This is precisely the point when Trotskyists should be dispelling illusions among Mexican workers and youth and hammering home the crucial lessons of history, pointing to the experience of Spain, Chile, Indonesia and countless other examples where the popular front paved the way for bloody reaction. Yet at this very moment, the ICL leaders abandon the struggle against the popular front just where it is the hottest. This is of a piece with their recent actions in Brazil, where after first encouraging a struggle to oust police from the Municipal Workers Union in the steel city of Volta Redonda, when the fight reached a boiling point the ICL suddenly told the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, which was leading that key class battle, to “pull our hands out of the boiling water,” pull out of the union leadership and even pull out of town. When the LQB comrades rightly refused this shameful demand and continued the fight for cops out of the unions, the ICL leaders broke relations with them and is now slanderously accusing the LQB of betrayal, in order to cover their own treacherous tracks.

Now the latest issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 672, 8 August) publishes a lengthy article on Mexico, whose entire purpose is to try to answer the Internationalist Group. The article begins by claiming that the ICL’s Mexican group, the GEM, “opposed any electoral support to the PRD.” This must have been by telling their friends, because as we pointed out in an IG statement (29 July) answering *WV*’s lies on Brazil, the GEM didn’t bother to publish any propaganda on the Mexican elections. In-



José Antonio López/La Jornada

Contingent of May 1st Inter-Union Coordinating Committee in Mexico City May Day march, 1997.

stead, in line with the ICL’s current priorities, it put out an *Espartaco* supplement denouncing the IG and the LQB. What immediately strikes the reader about *WV*’s polemic is its blatant dishonesty. The article claims, “It is self-serving in the extreme for the IG to claim that the ICL’s principled opposition to the bourgeois-nationalist PRD constitutes a ‘new line’ in any sense of the term.” By this sleight of hand, *WV* tries to obscure the fact that the question is of a *popular front* around Cárdenas’ PRD. And then in the next sentence, the article *admits* that the ICL has changed its line, writing coyly: “But the anti-Spartacist diatribes of the IG have been a sometimes useful goad to re-examining and clarifying our past propaganda.”

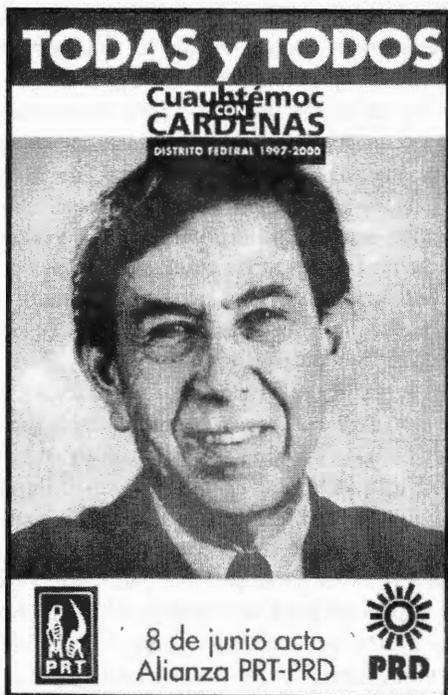
WV tries to dodge the issue by saying that it calls the PRD a bourgeois-nationalist party and counterposes the need for a workers party, while attacking the Internationalist Group for our supposed “emphatic centrist refusal to call things by their right name....” Really? Let’s see. In part one of our article, “Mexico: Regime in Crisis” in *The Internationalist* No. 1 (January-February 1997), we wrote that “the PRD has served as the linchpin for a ‘popular front’ whose purpose is to subordinate mass discontent among the workers, peasants and middle class to this bourgeois party.” In the second part of that article in *The Internationalist* No. 2, in the section titled “Build a Trotskyist Party in Mexico!” we write that the various Stalinist remnants are clustered “in or around the bourgeois PRD of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.” Our May 5 open letter referred to “the

bourgeois character of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas," and quoted extensively from GEM statements before the line change explaining that and calling for a Trotskyist party. The cynical *WV* polemic is written to hoodwink people who have never read what the IG has written, and for those who don't care.

After clearing away the lies, we still must ask why, according to *WV*, is there supposedly no popular front in Mexico? Here is the core of the ICL's argument:

"In many countries with mass reformist workers parties, as in West Europe, a favored form of class collaboration is the popular front, an electoral coalition tying the workers organizations to bourgeois parties.... However in Mexico, the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie has been particularly naked, with the trade-union movement *directly tied to bourgeois nationalism*. As in many semi-colonial countries, Mexico has not seen the development of even a reformist mass party of the working class (like the British Labour Party, the French Communists or the German Social Democrats). In the 1930s the workers were organized into *corporatist* unions (directly tied to the state) and considered the 'worker sector' of the PRI and its predecessors."

So according to *WV*, because there is no mass reformist workers party in Mexico and the corporatist "unions" were historically tied to the state, there *can't* be a popular front, which must be an electoral coalition. It should be noted that the IG has repeatedly insisted on the corporatist character of the bulk of the Mexican "labor" movement, while recent articles in *WV* were silent about this key fact. But this does not negate the existence of an *opposition* popular front, which was formed to subjugate the unions that had *broken from* the direct control of the PRI.



Pseudo-Trotskyists in the Cardenista popular front: Election flyer of Mexican PRT.

WV pretends that *because we uphold the longstanding ICL position against the Cardenista popular front*, "the IG in effect liquidates any distinction between the proletariat...and petty-bourgeois forces." Proof? That we write of "the subordination to the PRD of a whole range of trade-union, peasant, student, slum dwellers', women's and other organizations which do not form an organic part of that party' (the PRD). This true statement in no way denies the distinction between the proletariat and petty-bourgeois forces. We have repeatedly defined the popular front in Mexico and everywhere else as tying the workers organizations to bourgeois political forces. For example, in *The Internationalist* No. 2: "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 organization in the process of liquidation and as an instrument to rein in the movement for independent unions."

This function of the Cardenista popular front is quite concrete. In our May 5 open letter, we noted that among the "external candidates" put forward by the PRD in the last election—that is, candidates who were not members of that party—were Benito Mirón Lince, the lawyer of the SUTAU bus drivers union whose 14,000 members were fired by Zedillo in 1995. Mirón Lince was a main speaker at the May Day meeting in the Zócalo of the May 1st Inter-Union Committee. Cárdenas himself spoke briefly at the May Day meeting greeting "this demonstration of independent and democratic workers." Other PRD external candidates in Mexico City included Berta Lujan, leading spokesman for the FAT, Jesús González Schmal of the Foro Sindical, and a former candidate for the presidency of the SNTE teachers union. These candidates come from precisely the unions that have been active in opposing the PRI's corporatist labor controls, and which are being harnessed to the Cardenista popular front.

In outlying areas, the FAT has often worked closely with the local PRD, for example in Tijuana, where it is currently leading a struggle by workers at the Han Young truck factory, a subsidiary of Hyundai. In the state of Tabasco, a two-year-long struggle by fired street sweepers was waged in conjunction with the PRD. In Mexico City, many of the "grassroots" PRD organizers are the leaders of organizations of slum dwellers, and as a result of the Cárdenas sweep many of them are now sitting in the legislative assembly. This is so pronounced that the day after the election, the PRD leader in the federal district called on the various "social organizations" not to "go into the street as popular super-heros" and instead to go into "recess," so that "a government which has social sensibility such as the one headed by engineer Cárdenas shouldn't be subjected to unjustified pressure" (*Excelsior*, 8 July).

Another major component of the PRD's support is the host of former leftists who have attached themselves to the Cárdenas movement. Inside the PRD is the Militante group, followers of the British pseudo-Trotskyist Ted Grant, who from the early 1950s on has been burrowing ever deeper into the reformist Labour Party. With its method of indiscriminate "entrism" into whatever is popular, the Militant tendency has joined outright

capitalist parties like the Mexican PRD or the South African ANC. In Mexico they call for building “rank and file PRD committees,” and the June issue of *Militante* called for “a government of the PRD with a socialist program”! That would certainly be quite a trick—a government of a bourgeois party in a capitalist state on a “socialist program.” But such nonsense is to be expected from these dyed-in-the-wool reformists as they carry their program of reforming capitalism into “socialism” to its illogical conclusion.

Among the left parties that support the Cardenista popular front from the outside is the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party), Mexican supporters of the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel. The PRT ran a candidate on the PRD ticket, Patria Jiménez, who campaigned as a lesbian feminist. The Mandelite PRT put out election leaflets supporting Cárdenas with both its party symbol and that of the PRD (see illustration). At a June 8 election meeting, PRT leader Edgard Sánchez (a federal deputy who was elected on the PRD slate in 1994), explained that it was supporting Cárdenas because “a national democratic front is being constituted around the PRD,” and “the PRT has allied with the PRD to be part of this front” (*La Bola*, 27 June). Naturally the Mandelites, who falsely claim to be Trotskyists, deny that this is a popular front, for otherwise they would have to explain why they are part of it, contrary to all of Trotsky’s writings on Spain and France. In fact, theirs is precisely the kind of popular-front politics that Trotskyists must fight against in Mexico.

For Proletarian Opposition to the Cárdenas Popular Front!

According to *Workers Vanguard’s* “reexamined” and “clarified” new line, there cannot be a popular front in Mexico because there is no mass reformist workers party. Neither can there be a popular front in many neo-colonial countries where nationalism holds sway, according to *WV*, nor can there be in the U.S. where union leaders support the Democratic Party. In this portrayal, the popular front is limited pretty much to West Europe and a few other countries. The ICL implies this was Trotsky’s view. In another dishonest dodge, *WV* writes: “It is perhaps instructive to consider that Stalin justified the suicidal liquidation of the Chinese Communists into the Guomindang by baptizing that bourgeois-nationalist party a ‘bloc of four classes’.” The implication is that we consider the Cárdenas PRD a “bloc of four classes.” There follows a quote from Trotsky against the anti-Marxist conception of a two-class “workers and peasants party.” What is this supposed to prove? We have everywhere and always termed the PRD a *bourgeois* party, and we are discussing the *popular front*, a bourgeois coalition of class collaboration. And Trotsky certainly did not share the ICL’s new line.

It is perhaps instructive to read what Trotsky had to say precisely about China and Mexico in this regard. In a November 1938 discussion on Latin American problems, he trenchantly analyzed Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang (Kuomintang) in China, Lázaro Cárdenas’ Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM—the predecessor of the PRI) and Raúl Haya de la Torre’s “American Anti-Imperialist Alliance”



Carlos Ramos Marmahua/La Jornada

Mexico City cops during recent raids in poor districts of the capital.

(APRA) in Peru, all of them bourgeois parties:

“The Kuomintang in China, the PRM in Mexico and the APRA in Peru are very similar organizations. It is the People’s Front in the form of a party.”

This quotation can be found on page 785 of the *Writings of Leon Trotsky. Supplement (1934-40)*. We encourage ICL supporters and others to read it.

According to *WV*, if one says that there is a Cárdenas popular front in Mexico, then by that logic, one could define the PRI as a popular front, “or for that matter, the Democratic Party in the U.S.” We have seen what Trotsky had to say about the PRI’s predecessor, the PRM founded by Cárdenas Sr. As for the U.S. Democrats, the December 1938 *New International* of the Socialist Workers Party, then the Trotskyist party in the United States, had this to say:

“In France the Popular Front took shape as the union on a reformist program of the working-class parties with the great ‘middle-class’ Radical-Socialist Party. There were no such parties in the United States, but the same social forces nevertheless operated under similar conditions, and the United States equivalent of the Popular Front was simply the New Deal Roosevelt Democratic Party.”

That quotation can be found on page 33 of *Spartacist* No. 27-28, Winter 1979-80, along with a number of other instructive quotations from Trotsky and the Fourth International on the popular front. The SWP was referring here to the fact that the labor militancy of the new CIO industrial unions, which potentially could

have given rise to a workers party, was being channeled by the Communist Party and the CIO bureaucracy into support for the supposed "progressive" Democrat Roosevelt.

Thus popular fronts can be formed around certain bourgeois parties in the absence of reformist mass workers parties. Trotsky was clear about this. Even as he was defining the PRM as "the People's Front in the form of a party," he noted: "At the present time in Mexico there is no workers' party, no trade union that is in the process of developing independent class politics and that is able to launch an independent candidate" ("*Clave and the Election Campaign*," January 1939). But according to *WV*'s logic, there could be no popular front in Mexico in 1939, for the unions were tied to the nationalist PRM. The quotations from Trotsky could be multiplied at length. He writes, for example, in the "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution" (May 1940) that "in the colonial and semicolonial countries—not only in China and India, but in Latin America—the fraud of the 'People's Fronts' still continues to paralyze the working masses, converting them into cannon-fodder for the 'progressive' bourgeoisie and in this way creating an indigenous political base for imperialism." No mass workers parties existed at the time in China, India or most of Latin America.

Having struck out with the PRI/PRM and the Guomindang, *WV* cites the Argentine Peronists as another case of a bourgeois nationalist party the IG must consider popular fronts. This is deliberate confusionism. Just because a bourgeois party gets workers' votes doesn't make it a popular front (Clinton's Democrats certainly aren't nor are the Peronists). Rather, in particular circumstances the bourgeoisie finds it necessary to create such a front tying the workers organizations to a capitalist party in order to squelch potentially revolutionary or militant class struggles. In our two-part article on "Mexico: Regime in Crisis," we noted that the PRM and later PRI regimes had a semi-bonapartist character because the bourgeoisie could not afford even bourgeois democracy in this impoverished country which is the only place in the world that the semi-colonial and imperialist countries share a common land border, and a porous one at that, extending for some 2,000 miles. With the PRI's corporatist control of labor now visibly falling apart, the bourgeoisie needs the popular front around the PRD as an *alternative* means of chaining the workers to their class enemy.

In the late 1930s, the Mexican bourgeoisie was worried that burgeoning workers' struggles were getting out of control. Lázaro Cárdenas' nationalization of oil and railroads came amid militant strikes occupying the refineries and rail facilities. What came out of that was the PRM, with its worker, peasant, "popular" and military sectors, which Trotsky called "bonapartism *sui generis*" (of a unique kind). But before the bonapartist apparatus was consolidated, there was indeed a popular front in and around the PRM. Today, Mexican and U.S. capitalist rulers are again worried that with the extreme economic devastation of Mexico's working people there could be an explosion of class struggle, and they're calling on Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to head it off.

After all its arguments fall flat, the *WV* article asks: "What

can be the purpose of the IG's insistence on the supposed existence of a 'popular front' around the PRD?" To answer this question it quotes an earlier *WV* article that falsely accused us of rejecting permanent revolution, and thus "promoting or apologizing for cross-class blocs—popular fronts—with sections of the 'national' bourgeoisie in the name of an 'anti-imperialist united front'." Let's get this straight: the ICL accuses the IG of insisting on the existence of a popular front around the PRD *in order to capitulate to a "cross-class bloc—popular front" that according to the ICL doesn't exist!* The purpose of this mind-boggling absurdity is to mystify the readers. The title of our leaflet was: "To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists."

WV's method is to pile one lie atop another in an elaborate house of cards, in which every single element is false. The latest article claims that our May 5 leaflet "forgets" permanent revolution and "mention[s] it at all only to complain that we denounced them for 'forgetting' it in their earlier articles." Yet our earlier article had an extensive discussion of permanent revolution as the program for Mexico today, and the May 5 leaflet underlines the importance of a 1989 GEM leaflet which stated: "The key is a Trotskyist workers party, forged on the basis of the program of the permanent revolution" against the PRI-government and the Cardenista popular front. As for an "anti-imperialist united front" with the bourgeoisie, not only have we consistently opposed this anti-Marxist slogan, the comrades now in the IG wrote the ICL's propaganda against that slogan raised by the pseudo-Trotskyist Lora in Bolivia, including denouncing it in the 1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and Luta Metalúrgica, a document the ICL has now renounced.

But let us ask the opposite question: what is the purpose of the ICL leaders' new insistence that there is *not* and cannot be a popular front around the PRD? The answer is: they deny the existence of a Cardenista popular front in order *not to fight it*. As we noted in our 5 May open letter, the claim that there can be no popular fronts in most of Latin America comes straight from the arsenal of Nahuel Moreno, the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist caudillo. Moreno's current argued in 1973 that Allende's Unidad Popular in Chile was not a popular front but a "nationalist front." For the Morenoites, the popular front could only be "a coalition between the proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie" (see Ernesto González, "A March to Disaster on the 'Peaceful Road'," *International Socialist Review*, October 1973). This argument shares the following with the line now put forward by the ICL leadership: if there isn't a popular front, then you can't call on the workers and would-be revolutionaries to fight it.

There is a difference between them, of course. The Morenoites denied that Allende's UP was a popular front, claiming it was a "nationalist front," because they wanted to capitulate to it, just as for the same reason the Mandelites in Mexico deny that there is a popular front around Cárdenas, saying it is instead a "national democratic front." The ICL leadership says there is no Cardenista popular front not because they want to be part of it, but because they do not want to fight

in the workers movement or with fake-Trotskyists over their support to that popular front. The ICL's new line is an excuse for an abstentionist policy.

The latest *WV* article cites a joint election statement by the Morenoite POS-Z (Zapatista Socialist Workers Party), the LUS (League of Socialist Unity, a new pro-USec grouping) and a couple of other small groups calling to "Void Your Ballot!". *WV* points out that the LUS upholds voting for Cárdenas in 1994, and that the POS-Z called to vote for the EZLN in '94 while calling for a "democratic revolution." But the article says not a word about how the Morenoites capitulate to the PRD in practice: in numerous articles in its paper *El Socialista* on the CNTE teachers organization and the May 1st Union Coordinating Committee, the POS-Z never calls to break from the Cardenista popular front which these union groups are part and parcel of. As far as the ICL is concerned, all that Trotskyists have to say is "don't vote for Cárdenas and the bourgeois PRD." But precisely because the Cardenista popular front *isn't just electoral*, it is all the more vital to warn the workers and radical youth about it. Leaders of the CNTE and the May 1st Committee *will be imposing the discipline of the popular front on their unions* to make sure that the Cárdenas government should "not be subjected to unjustified pressure," as the PRD leader demanded on July 7.

These questions are not abstract. One of the unions in the May 1st Committee is the STUNAM, the union of workers at Mexico's National University, where the GEM has a fraction. If it was fighting against the Cardenista popular front, this is the sort of place where the question would be posed very concretely. In a crude attempt to cover the ICL leaders' shameful flight from the fight over removing police from the unions in Brazil, the *WV* article does call for "a struggle to remove cops from the Mexican labor movement, including in 'independent' unions like the Mexico City UNAM university workers and teachers union." But there is no call for STUNAM or the CNTE to break with the Cárdenas popular front. The *WV* article mentions several correct democratic demands, calling for free abortion on demand, for full rights for homosexuals, open admissions, and land to the peasants. But it is striking that there are *no* transitional demands at all in the *WV* article.

The ICL does not talk here or in any of the recent Mexico articles about forming independent workers committees to shatter the corporatist "unions," or about a sliding scale of wages and hours to fight inflation and unemployment, or about plant occupations and workers defense guards, which would be necessary to defend workers action against assault. In fact, the *WV* article raises *no* program to mobilize the working people in struggle against the economic misery imposed on them by the PRI regime, which Cárdenas has pledged not to change (except maybe to "smooth the rough edges," as PRD leader Andrés López Obrador remarked). Yet as Trotsky wrote:

"It is necessary 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. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one

final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat." —*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (The Transitional Program)

This glaring absence is no small matter in a major article titled "For Workers Revolution in Mexico!" In the entire article there is no strategy on how to get to such a revolution. In practice, the ICL is abandoning the Transitional Program, a cornerstone of Trotskyism. And when it writes of permanent revolution, it is a caricature of Trotsky's program. The editors of *WV* continue to harp on the need for a fight against "elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage [that] survive in the countryside." Like what? "The *hacienda* (landed estates), peonage and the *tienda de raya* (stores that take scrip instead of money, to which many peasants are indebted for generations)," says *WV*. Yet large landholdings in Mexico are thoroughly capitalist, the overwhelming bulk of them dating no farther back than this century; debt peonage is a product of capitalism, not feudalism; and if *tiendas de raya* are feudal, that would make John D. Rockefeller a great feudalist, because company stores that would only take scrip was one of the grievances the Ludlow, Colorado miners were revolting against when he had them shot down. And Tennessee Ernie Ford must have been a medieval troubadour when he sang, "I owe my soul to the company store."

The picture *WV* paints of Mexico is pure fiction, so it is hardly surprising they present no program for struggle for workers revolution. Peasants in Mexico are fighting against *capitalism*, not feudal holdovers. Far from negating Trotsky's program of permanent revolution, this makes it all the more urgent. The fight for *agrarian revolution* is not being waged against semi-feudal hacendados wearing *charro* outfits, like something out of *Zorro*, but rather against American-owned agribusinesses (Green Giant) in Guanajuato, Spanish-owned wineries (Domecq) in Baja California, German-owned coffee *fincas* in Chiapas and PRI-connected ranchers whose private armies of white guards are paid for out of the government budget. The program of a workers and peasants government in Mexico would not only be for land to the tiller but for the *nationalization of land and collectivization of agriculture*. Challenged to provide an example of "feudal remnants" in Mexico, a GEM "leader" declared: "Campeche." This is absurd. The Gulf Coast state of Campeche is a center of the oil industry, where Indian peasants are fighting against PEMEX, the national petroleum company, and oil workers are the largest section of the work force.

A few months before we were expelled, the movie *Clueless* was playing in movie theaters in the heavily Indian state of Oaxaca, introducing the populace to the world of San Fernando Valley airheads. And "clueless" would be what Mixtec Indians now in revolt in Oaxaca and Guerrero would say of any GEM leader who tried to explain to them that they are essentially fighting the heritage of Spanish colonial feudalism. Rather, they are fighting against the semi-colonial *capitalist* regime that grew out of the aborted Mexican Revolution of 1910-17.

According to *WV*, one can't even fight popular-frontism in Mexico, a fight which was a cornerstone of Trotskyism since the 1930s, because there are no mass workers parties, and the Latin

American masses are all hopelessly bound to bourgeois nationalism. The issue is not limited to Mexico. If there can't be a popular front in Mexico because there is no mass workers party and the masses are tied directly to nationalism, what about El Salvador? ICL supporters should go back and read the articles in *Workers Vanguard* from 1981 to 1984 where we repeatedly polemicized against popular frontism tying the insurgent Salvadoran masses to an alliance with the bourgeoisie via the FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front).

And what about Bolivia? There was and is no mass workers party there, yet the ICL repeatedly and correctly attacked Guillermo Lora and the COB union federation leadership under Juan Lechin for forming popular fronts with the bourgeois MNR (National Revolutionary Movement). This was the core of our Trotskyist analysis of the fiasco of the 1952 revolution in Bolivia and of the 1970-71 Popular Assembly. In the course of "re-examining" and "clarifying" the ICL's past propaganda, perhaps *WV* will want to renounce that as well. And while they're at it, ICL leaders might take a look at their article on "Indonesia Powder Keg" (*WV* No. 654, 25 October 1996), which refers to the "trap of popular-frontist betrayal" in Indonesia, where there is no mass workers party today.

The ICL's new revision goes beyond Mexico and Latin America, or semi-colonial capitalist countries in general. Let's return to *WV*'s bait about the U.S. Democrats supposedly being a popular front according to the IG's logic. In the first place, to compare the situation in Mexico to that in the United States shows a complete political disorientation. But according to the ICL leadership's arguments, there *can't* be a popular front in the U.S. No mass workers party, no popular front, says *WV*. So what about the Spartacist League's polemic in the Vietnam antiwar movement in the early 1970s in which the various coalitions such as the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) set up by the Socialist Workers Party were characterized as *popular fronts*? The SL's youth group put out a whole bulletin in 1973 to explain this position, titled "On the United Front," which was recently reissued as a Spartacist pamphlet. Would the ICL leadership care to explain how NPAC was a popular front in the absence of a mass workers party but there can't be a Cardenista popular front in Mexico?

The SL's 1973 bulletin contained an excerpt from the pamphlet, *The People's Front: The New Betrayal*, published by the American Trotskyists in 1937. As that pamphlet explained: "The Peoples' Front has not, of course, advanced as far in the United States as in France or Spain. In the formal sense, there is not yet in the United States an established 'Peoples' Front.' The United States is not faced with a developing revolutionary crisis, as is France, nor is it in the midst of a Civil War, as in Spain....

"But just as the issue of state power can be settled in favor of the proletariat only by the independent revolutionary class struggle of the workers, and is lost for the proletariat through the reformist strategy of the Peoples' Front, in the same way, at the more elementary stages, the interests of the proletariat can be served only by the appropriate methods of class struggle, and are fatally undermined by the class collaborationist methods of the Peoples' Front. The Peoples'

Front in this country, seeping into the labor movement under the sponsorship of the Communist Party, has made considerable headway, and already its disastrous effects are becoming apparent in a dozen fields.

"Up to the present, the best known and most conspicuous result of the People's Front strategy emerged during the 1936 election campaign. From the point of view both of the social composition of his support and likewise of the political content of his program, Roosevelt was in effect a Peoples' Front candidate."

In denying after the fact that there is a Cardenista popular front in Mexico, the ICL leadership is renouncing key programmatic elements of the struggle of the Spartacist tendency in that country going back years. The latest *WV* article says coyly that "it was wrong to characterize the Cardenistas at any point as a popular front, as we did on a number of occasions over the years." A number of occasions? This was the centerpiece of the ICL's propaganda on Mexico from the inception of the Mexico City station. Our May 5 open letter lists numerous examples, beginning with the article on the 1988 Mexican elections under the headline, "Left Peddles 'Unity' with Cárdenas Popular Front" (*WV* No. 456, 1 July 1988, or Spanish language *Spartacist* No. 21, October 1988). In fact, articles in *every single issue* of *Espartaco*, the publication of the GEM, called to break from the Cardenista popular front up to the time the central leaders of the ICL's section were expelled last year—except for one issue, No. 6 (Winter 1994-95). And that issue contained the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with the Brazilian Luta Metalúrgica group, which the ICL also now renounces.

So with its new line, the ICL has renounced the first seven issues of *Espartaco*—they represent the politics of the Internationalist Group. The ICL leadership turns its back on the struggle for genuine Trotskyism in Mexico at the very moment when the Trotskyist opposition to popular frontism is most urgent, when the Transitional Program for socialist revolution is most relevant to the workers struggles, when the authentic program of permanent revolution is key to workers revolution not just in Mexico but also extending across the border to the imperialist colossus to the north. The ICL leadership's line change on the popular front in Mexico is the *programmatic preparation to abstain from and ultimately desert the class struggle as it did in Brazil*.

As the 1937 pamphlet on the popular front concluded:

"The Peoples' Front condemns the workers, in advance, to defeat. As against the class collaboration of the Peoples' Front, Marxists uphold the slogans of the fighting united front of proletarian action, through which the unity of the working class will be forged, its allies gained, and its compass set toward the struggle for power. Only by breaking utterly with the policies of the Peoples' Front, and all that they signify, will the proletariat go forward to the sole solution for it and for mankind: to the proletarian revolution and to the international socialist society."

This is the program of Trotsky's Fourth International, of the early Socialist Workers Party and of the Spartacist tendency that the International Group and our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil stand on today even as the leadership of the ICL turns its back on this heritage. ■

Mexico

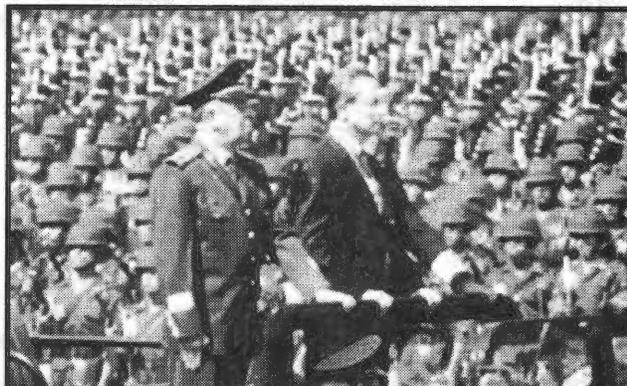
Cárdenas and the Generals



Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas at press conference with generals and admirals who are joining the PRD.

In 1986, several high-level officials of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) began meeting privately to form a dissident "Democratic Current" in the government party. They were concerned that after four years of brutal austerity policies imposed by Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid and his predecessor José López Portillo on orders from the Reagan administration in Washington as a result of the 1982 Mexican debt crisis, the PRI was proving unable to carry out its usual policies of containing protest through a combination of cooptation and repression. The trio, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and Ifigenia Martínez, failed in their attempt to pressure the PRI to shift to more "populist" policies for the upcoming elections. After De la Madrid selected a leading technocrat, Harvard-trained economist Carlos Salinas de Gortari, as the PRI candidate, the dissidents bolted the party to run Cárdenas as an opposition candidate who would act as an escape valve for mass discontent.

Twelve years later, Mexican and U.S. rulers are worried that the country could blow apart, and so they brought in Cárdenas as governor of the federal district (Mexico's capital) and his bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) is now the second-largest group in Congress. From the outset, the PRD has served as the pole of attraction for a Cardenista popular front extending from disgruntled PRI apparatchiks to the former Communist Party and a panoply of pseudo-Trotskyists. But while the popular front has acted to corral the reformist and centrist left, and particularly to hold in check the movement for unions independent of the PRI's corporatist control, chaining them to the shadow of a "progressive" bourgeoisie, Cárdenas himself has always looked to the state apparatus for his real backing. If anything, this is even more the case with Muñoz Ledo, who as head of the government party led the chorus of praise for the president after the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of hundreds of student protesters



Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo reviewing troops in the Zócalo last year.

As we have said from the beginning, the PRD wants to be a "second PRI." The character of the PRD as a slightly more "centrist" version of the increasingly rightist PRI has been confirmed in recent months as one prominent PRI politician after another has quit the official party to join with Cárdenas. The PRI senator for Campeche, Layda Sansores, triggered a wave of defections in December after it became clear that she would not be chosen as PRI candidate for governor (which has access to substantial financial resources in this oil state). The PRD immediately named Sansores, whose father was the long-time PRI *caudillo* (boss) of Campeche, as its candidate for governor.

But the most significant indication of unraveling in the party/state apparatus came when eleven top-level military officials formally announced that they were quitting the PRI to join the PRD. On January 13, Cárdenas and PRD party chairman Andrés López Obrador held a press conference in a Mexico City hotel with three brigadier generals as well as six vice admirals and rear admirals. The military officers are now part of a "Strategic Planning Committee" of the PRD, Cárdenas announced, whose purpose would be to enable the armed forces to "better accomplish their task of ensuring the preservation of the constitutional order." One of the generals declared, "I am not a traitor to the army and never will be" (*La Jornada*, 14 January).

This coordinated action by high-level military officials is obviously a cautionary warning that the armed forces are not as "reliable" as in the past as an unconditional support for the PRI leadership. But this move also underlines that the "populist" PRD with its mildly nationalist rhetoric is an integral part of Mexican capitalism and a loyal enforcer of the bourgeois order against the peasants, workers and leftists who make up much of its ranks. This is nothing new for Cárdenas, who when he broke with the PRI in 1987 first accepted the presidential nomination of the PARM (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution), a right-wing outfit widely known as "the party of the generals."

continued on page 51

The ICL's New Line In Mexico

To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists

Open Letter to the Grupo Espartaquista de México and the Juventud Espartaquista

The following is a translation of a leaflet issued by the Internationalist Group in Mexico on 5 May 1997.

Dear Comrades:

The Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) was founded in struggle against the Cardenista popular front. In this struggle, we applied to Mexico the program of the Spartacist tendency (now the Internationalist Communist League) of intransigent proletarian opposition to all popular fronts, which subordinate the exploited and oppressed to the politicians and institutions of the bourgeoisie.

But now, as part of the right turn of the ICL leadership, the GEM *denies the existence in Mexico of a popular front*, a class-collaborationist coalition. This revision of fundamental conceptions on Mexico can only disorient those who seek to fight against the subordination of the exploited and oppressed to the bourgeois "opposition." Without such a struggle, it is impossible to forge the Trotskyist party which is needed to lead the socialist revolution.

The Internationalist Group, formed by leading cadres of the ICL expelled last year, has noted that the recent events in the ICL have their own logic. The bureaucratic expulsions paved the way for a betrayal in Brazil. The ICL had correctly encouraged the struggle of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica to throw police out of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union. But when the struggle heated up, the "new I.S." (International Secretariat) of the ICL decided it posed "unacceptable risks to the vanguard" and called on the LQB to abandon the struggle, dissociate itself publicly from the union leadership and even get out of town. When the Brazilian comrades did not agree to act in this irresponsible and treacherous way, the ICL handed them a sealed envelope with a letter breaking fraternal relations with the LQB—one day before the 19 June 1996 union meeting where the disaffiliation of the cops was scheduled to be voted. The I.S. attempted to cover its flight from this important class battle by heaping one slander after another on top of the Brazilian comrades.

In our publications we have shown that the ICL's turn has been accompanied, as is the historical norm in these cases, by the revision of basic conceptions held by the organization for many years. The effective defense of an immigrant hostel in Berlin, carried out in 1993, was renounced. A new line was "discovered" on the capitalist reunification of Germany: dur-

ing the intervention in the German events of 1989-90, the most important intervention in its history, the ICL stressed that the Western bourgeoisie used the Social Democracy as its "spearhead" and "Trojan horse" for counterrevolution, while the Stalinists capitulated and sold out the bureaucratically deformed workers state. But now the new line says that the Stalinists not only played a counterrevolutionary role (which is correct) but that they literally led the counterrevolution (which is false and disorienting). (For more details, see issue No. 2 of *The Internationalist*.)

Now the conceptions which the ICL put forward on Mexico since before the foundation of the GEM are being revised, conceptions that were expressed not only in the first seven issues of *Espartaco* [newspaper of the GEM], but in the ICL's other publications as well. We had already noted that starting with issue No. 8, *Espartaco* stopped referring to the *semi-bonapartist* nature of the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party]/government regime, which for decades has rested largely on the *corporatist* structures of the CTM [the state-controlled Federation of Mexican Labor], and which is now in crisis. The same is the case with *Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.: the articles on Mexico published in issues No. 647 (7 June 1996), No. 658 (27 December 1996) and No. 664 (21 March 1997) do not refer to the semi-bonapartist nature of the PRI regime, nor to the serious political crisis it confronts today, nor do they put forward transitional demands for proletarian struggle.

Espartaco No. 9 (Spring-Summer 1997) recently came out, and it struck us that while it correctly denounces the bourgeois character of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, it makes no reference to the *popular front*. Nevertheless, we did not want to jump to conclusions. Nor did we want to launch a phony polemic such as the one put forward by the ICL when it absurdly and dishonestly accuses us of "disappearing" the theory of permanent revolution, when anyone who reads our publications can see that the permanent revolution is an essential part of our program. So we decided to check it out.

At a student protest we asked the editor of *Espartaco*, and he told us that, sure enough, they had changed the line and they now hold that *there is no popular front in Mexico*. Then, during the May Day march we asked several GEM comrades, who confirmed that this is the new line and that the formula-



The Trotskyist politics the ICL leaders are renouncing: articles and leaflets by *Espartaco* (August 1994 and Spring 1995) denounced Cardenista popular front, called to build revolutionary workers party.

tions in the new issue were “carefully” written. However, *Espartaco* has changed its line without explaining this change to its readers, who since the publication was founded had read that there *is* a popular front in this country. Meanwhile, we were told the fairy tale that “before,” *Espartaco* used to talk about the existence of a popular front in Mexico due to the nefarious influence of its previous editor, who was one of the comrades purged last year.

Origin and Function of the Cardenista Popular Front

In response to a wave of workers’ strikes, student protests and unrest in the countryside, a new popular front arose in Mexico in 1987-88 under the leadership of long-time PRI politicians Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. Passing through a series of forms and incarnations, this popular front has always had the same function: to tie the exploited to the exploiters and channel their discontent toward a “recycled” bourgeois alternative, given the crisis of the semi-bonapartist PRI/government regime.

We always emphasized that the struggle against this popular front is key to the construction of a Trotskyist party in Mexico. After the Mexico station of the international Spartacist tendency was founded in 1988, one of its founders made a public declaration at a meeting called by the Mandeliste PRT (and attended by Ernest Mandel and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas) at the Leon Trotsky Museum. The Spartacist representative emphasized:

“Today in Mexico a new popular front has been formed. Trotsky defined the popular front as a class-collaborationist

alliance subordinating the proletariat to a sector of the exploiters. . . . Against the popular front, and against the apologists for the popular front, Trotsky founded the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. It is necessary to reforge that Bolshevik-Leninist Fourth International of Trotsky.”

This declaration is reproduced in the Spanish-language edition of *Spartacist* No. 21 (October 1988), together with an article explaining the crisis of “the semi-bonapartist regime in Mexico, now in full decay” and the role of the “corporatist, gangster-butressed CTM union bureaucracy which to this day enforces PRI control of the labor and peasant movements.” Under the subtitle, “Cárdenas and the New Popular Front,” another article in the same issue explained the origins of this popular front and how it was joined by countless leaders of “independent” unions, fake leftists, former guerrillaists, etc. [These two articles were adapted from the English versions published in *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 456 and 457 (1 and 15 July 1988).]

But the popular front and its malignant role in the subordination of the workers and peasants, as well as of discontented youth, did not cease to exist after the elections held on 6 July 1988. The first leaflet published by the Grupo Espartaquista de México, on the national strike carried out in 1989 by half a million dissident teachers, stressed: “The key is a Trotskyist workers party, forged on the basis of the program of the permanent revolution, which fights not only against the PRI government but also against the ‘back-up option’ of the Mexican (and international) bourgeoisie: the Cardenista popular front.”

A leaflet against the Mexican Mandelites, “The PRT in the Cárdenas Popular Front” (30 October 1989) explained that Cárdenas’ new bourgeois party, the PRD was leading a popular front and that the latter was not only of an electoral nature: “The PRT leadership maintains that it is not convenient to make an ‘electoral’ front with the bourgeois PRD, but that it is fine to swear loyalty to the bourgeois state as part of a ‘patriotic front’ with the PRD. Surprising as it may be to parliamentary cretins, history has known many ‘non-electoral’ popular fronts, from China in 1927, Spain through three years of civil war and the support of the Stalinist CPs to ‘democratic’ imperialism in the Second World War, to the ‘clandestine’ popular fronts formed in Bolivia, Chile and other countries.”

In June 1990, the fusion bulletin of the GEM and the Trotskyist Faction expelled by the Morenoites (*Del morenismo al trotskismo—La Cuestión Rusa a quemarropa*) referred to the “popular front of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas,” and the fight against this class-collaborationist alliance was a central point in “What Is *Espartaco* and What Does It Want,” the article which introduced the GEM’s publication, which resulted from

this fusion. Another article from *Espartaco* No. 1 (Winter 1990-91) gave a detailed explanation of our principled policy against this popular front. The same conceptions were expressed in each of the subsequent issues of *Espartaco*; in the joint declaration against the North American Free Trade Agreement by the Canadian U.S. and Mexican sections of the ICL; in the founding declaration of the Juventud Espartaquista (Spartacist Youth—see *Espartaco* No. 7, Winter 1995-96) and all the other key documents.

But is it true that the profusion of references to the popular front in the Mexican Spartacist press was due to some kind of diabolical conspiracy? This theory is absurd on the face of it, as absurd as the many other accusations of the same kind that have been made. But if anyone takes it seriously, all they have to do is consult the other publications of the ICL, from *Workers Vanguard* and *Women and Revolution* (see No. 38, Winter 1990-91) to *Spartacist*, organ of the ICL. In fact, the document of the ICL's Second International Conference contains a section on Mexico which begins:

"Mexico City Station was established...in 1988, at a time of considerable labor and political turmoil. It was the first Spartacist group functioning in Latin America. In the face of nationalist left support for the bourgeois presidential candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, including indirectly from the Mandelites and Morenoites, our tiny group has been unique in its unflinching proletarian opposition to this popular-frontism and its exposure of the left's capitulation to it. While support for the Cardenista popular front crested in the '88 elections and has since considerably ebbed, it has played a key role in derailing class struggle."

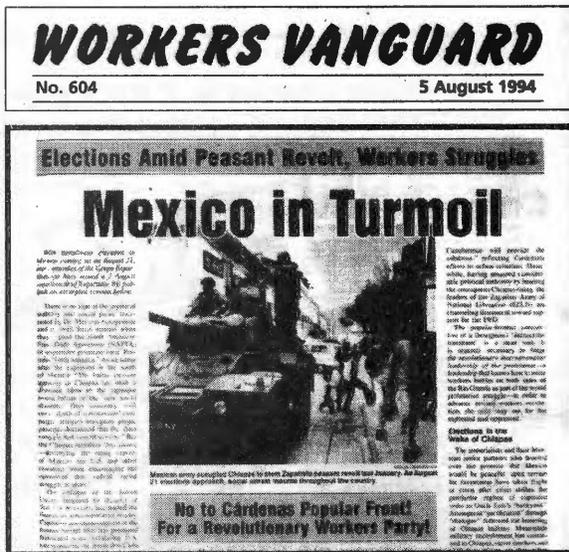
—"For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!" *Spartacist* No. 47-48 (Winter 1992-93)

How could it derail the class struggle if it did not exist? The point is that it did exist and it continues to exist. (As for the Mandelista party, it liquidated so as to better submerge itself in the popular front, while each of the spectrum of Morenoite groups capitulates to the popular front in its own way.)

Implications of the New Line

This is not an academic discussion. If you do not understand the functions and the crisis of the semi-bonapartist structure in Mexico, it is impossible to programmatically orient the Mexican proletariat to break the corporatist stranglehold and build the revolutionary, internationalist workers party which is indispensable for the socialist revolution. If you do not understand the question of the popular front, that means being disoriented in the struggle for the political independence of the working class. When Salvador Allende formed the Unidad Popular in 1970 in Chile, the Morenoites denied that the UP was a popular front, because they wanted to capitulate to this class-collaborationist front. In Mexico, the "ex-Morenoite" Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo denies the existence of an "organic" popular front. This line served them when it came to sowing illusions in the National Democratic Convention (CND) and other popular-frontist groupings.

But even if one does not seek to capitulate to the popular front, it is difficult to fight it if you deny its existence!



When *Workers Vanguard* denounced Cardenista popular front in Mexico. That was then.

The question of the CND is a good example. To deny the existence of the popular front would have blunted the revolutionary edge of the Trotskyist position on this assembly, which was called two years ago by the EZLN. While defending the Zapatistas against repression by the bourgeois state, the GEM correctly wrote, in a front-page article highlighting the slogans "Break with the Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!":

"Thus this petty-bourgeois nationalist movement used its moral and political authority to strengthen the bourgeois popular front led by the PRD, calling on Cárdenas to head up a 'movement of national liberation,' a (bourgeois) transition government, etc. This was the programmatic basis for the calls on 'civil society' with the 'National Democratic Convention' and the 'consultation' carried out this summer, after which Marcos called for a 'National Dialogue among all patriotic forces'."

—*Espartaco* No. 7 (Winter 1995-96)

The EZLN then united with a range of forces to form the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, which in reality serves as another instrument to "unofficially" subordinate rebellious sectors to the bourgeois party of Cárdenas, the PRD.

And what about today? According to the new line of the GEM, how can one understand the subordination to the PRD of a whole range of trade-union, peasant, student, slum dwellers', women's and other organizations which do not form an organic part of that party? Do you believe that a popular front cannot exist unless it has an "official" name and an "organic" structure? The writings of Trotsky, as well as more than years of Spartacist publications, amply show that this is not the case.

A few days ago, on May Day, we saw the popular front in action. In the Zócalo (Mexico City's central plaza) there were two rallies. In front of the cathedral were the "dissident" *charros* [pro-government "union" bureaucrats] from the Congress of Labor (CT) grouped in the Labor Forum. In front of

City Hall was the platform of the Intersindical (Union Coordinating Committee) that is, the popular-frontist opposition to the PRI "unionism" of the CTM and CT. There were speeches by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the PRD's candidate for Mexico City mayor, and by Benito Mirón Lince, lawyer for the SUTAU bus drivers' union and now a PRD "non-member candidate" for federal deputy and member of the FAC-MLN (Broad Front for the Construction of a National Liberation Movement), an extra-parliamentary component of the Cardenista popular front. Of the several union speakers, the spokesman for the *La Jornada* newspaper workers union "stated that the economic changes demanded by the working class must first be political changes"—in other words, a scarcely veiled call to vote for the bourgeois opposition in the upcoming elections.

It is very likely that Cárdenas may win the election, with explicit or tacit support from innumerable organizations that are not an organic part of the bourgeois PRD. In *La Jornada* (2 May) we read the following:

"Yesterday the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) released the final list of its nationwide candidates for the parliamentary elections, made up of leaders of university unions, the SNTE [teachers union] and FAT [Authentic Labor Front]; also of peasant organizations such as the CIOAC, UNTA and CODUC, ex-members of the CNC [pro-government peasant federation], the UCD; leaders and activists from the El Barzón [debtors movement] and slum dwellers' organizations.... In the first places on the list, more than 50 per cent of the candidates were not members [of the PRD]."

Yes, there is a popular front in Mexico! Due to the crisis of the semi-bonapartist PRI regime, the bourgeoisie needs the popular front as a bourgeois "alternative." To deny its existence is hazardous to the Trotskyist program.

The fight for genuine class independence, which is possible only under revolutionary leadership, is an urgent and basic task. It is necessary to fight to break the control over the proletariat exercised not only by the PRI but by the bourgeoisie as a whole. Above and beyond the disputes dividing the various union tops, there is a common effort to subordinate the working class to "the historic alliance between the workers of Mexico and the Mexican state," as president Zedillo put it in his speech to the CTM/CT officials who shut themselves inside the National Auditorium. The [CT dissidents'] Labor Forum wants to take the place of the worn-out apparatus of Fidel Velázquez [head of the CTM] as the main instrument for regimenting the workers. For their part, the popular frontists seek to reformulate this "alliance," in reality a straitjacket for the exploited, through the victory of that neo-PRI, the PRD.

But if you deny the existence of the popular front, you cannot fight for the unions to break from it. If the proletariat does not break from the Cardenista popular front, it cannot fight for power, for a workers and peasants government and the extension of socialist revolution to the south and above all to the imperialist metropolis, the U.S. In denying even the existence of the popular front, the leadership of the GEM and the

ICL shows they are not interested in fighting for revolutionary leadership of the working class.

The recent publications and behavior of the ICL give the impression of an organization which has lost its political moorings. This is not surprising. First the conceptions on what occurred in Germany were revised. Then came the purge in Mexico, the bureaucratic expulsions and the betrayal in Brazil. Now basic conceptions on Mexico are thrown overboard. What next?

Fraternally,

The Internationalist Group

5 May 1997

Cárdenas and Generals...

continued from page 47

When the Zapatista uprising took place in January 1994, Cárdenas declared his support for the federal army, declaring, "In the face of an armed uprising, the Army will necessarily have to maintain the peace" (!), referring sarcastically to "those señores [of the EZLN] who are out there shooting bullets and killing soldiers." A PRD campaign spokesman commented that "it would be absurd to claim that in the face of an attack on the troops or barracks, the army would not respond," and PRD senator Muñoz Ledo signed a joint declaration lamenting that "the juridical order was broken in the state of Chiapas" (cited in *Espartaco* No. 5, Spring 1994). In his closing rally in the 1994 elections, Cárdenas vowed that a solution to the conflict in Chiapas must include "that there be only one army in our territory: the army which has been the founding institution of the Mexican state" (*La Jornada*, 14 August 1994).

Most recently, at the end of August another general split from the PRI to join Cárdenas' PRD. This time it was the regime's top military politician, General Luis Garafias, chairman of the commission of national defense of the Chamber of Deputies and a former ambassador. Complaining of Zedillo's use of the military in the "war on drugs" and in policing the capital, and the resulting damage to the prestige of the armed forces, Garafias declared: "the Army is there to work for the fatherland, not to work in the streets" (*Proceso*, 24 August). In his letter of resignation, the general emphasized the continuity of his political views, saying he was "joining another political party (PRD) where I am sure I can continue to fight for my convictions." Those "convictions" include continuing to refuse to criticize the military for the Tlatelolco massacre—for decades the most graphic symbol of PRI terror—saying it was "a difficult matter which still hasn't been cleared up fully."

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of a general, has always been loyal to the military/repressive institutions of the Mexican capitalist state. His repeated calls on the military to protect the "constitutional order" are a threat to the workers, peasants and leftists who would be the first victims of any such crackdown. The recent joining of the PRD by high-level retired military officers only reinforces this threat. Mexican workers must break with all the bourgeois parties and their camp followers to build a revolutionary workers party in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. ■

Statement of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

ONCE AGAIN ON THE ICL'S CAMPAIGN OF DEFAMATION AGAINST THE LQB AND THE ANTI-RACIST UNIONISTS OF VOLTA REDONDA

[translation]

The leadership of the ICL decided there were "unacceptable risks to the vanguard" and fled from the class battle in Brazil. Trying to cover this up, it launches one slander after another against those who rejected this betrayal.

Volta Redonda

24 June 1997

To the ICL:

We have read a translation of the 30 May 1997 *Workers Vanguard* article against the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), the anti-racist trade unionists of Volta Redonda and our fraternal comrades of the Internationalist Group. The article talks about the need to raise the consciousness of the working class so it will understand its historic tasks. However, what you are doing is deliberately introducing confusion instead of clarity, and this can only *lower* the consciousness of the workers and particularly that of the ICL's own members. The attitudes you are encouraging go against the struggle for proletarian socialism. You are basing your campaign on *lies and slanders* against revolutionary workers picked up from enemies of the proletariat, in particular the pro-police clique of Artur Fernandes, his advisers—the bigoted centrists of the “Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista” (LBI)—and his friends in the local bourgeois press.

Thus, while you pretend that you “discovered” the new slander—that Geraldo Ribeiro is supposedly “suing the union”—we all know that you found this lie in the newspaper of



Vanguarda Operária

Volta Redonda municipal workers rally, 4 July 1996. Signs say: “Bourgeois Courts, Military Police and Municipal Guard Out of the Union” and “Bourgeoisie Hands Off Our Union.”

the LBI, which reproduces whatever comes out of the mouth of Artur. The accusation that we are suing the union is a lie. We have not brought suit against the union or the pro-police provocateur Artur Fernandes.

Moreover, months ago, when one of Artur's lying court suits collapsed, the court asked us if we wanted it to rule in favor of the validity of the union meeting of 25 July 1996 that reaffirmed Geraldo as the union's legitimate president. We rejected this "offer" because it would be against our principles, as we declared publicly and as Geraldo and Marcello wrote in their letter of 31 December 1996. We have emphasized that the workers must reject any interference by the bosses' "justice" system in the labor movement, and we have done this while facing the pro-police elements who really do launch one court suit after another and are the source of the slanders that you spread.

It is obvious that in your campaign of defamation you are prepared to do anything, and that you are shameless. What is also clear is the reason for this base behavior: the leadership of the ICL will not forgive the LQB for refusing to follow its flight from the struggle to throw the municipal *guardas* (cops) out of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union (SFPMVR). The leadership of the ICL will not forgive the fact that when they stabbed us in the back, abandoning the struggle at the crucial moment, we called this by its right name: a betrayal.

And since the ICL leadership is afraid it will face political problems because of these facts, it tries to "protect" itself by covering us with dirt.

Several weeks ago you declared that we and everything we do is a "Potemkin Village," in other words something that does not exist. Now you declare that we and everything we do is a "fraud" and a "paper dragon" manipulated with "rotten strings"; that our newspaper, of which almost 1,300 copies have been sold in various cities, is just an "adornment"; when we recruit militants from the unions and the youth you say, with petty-bourgeois haughtiness, that this is just a maneuver; that nobody knows about us here in Brazil and that it's all just for "international consumption." This logic of quantities and popularity is the same argument used by the reformists, centrists and other enemies of Trotskyism.

Our struggles are not "unknown" to the armed police who shut down the union meeting of 19 June 1996 and arrested comrade Marcello (a revolutionary black worker and student we recruited from the union) during the general strike of 21 June [1996], during the same week the ICL fled from the class struggle in Brazil. Nor to the authors of the multiple prosecutions against us in the bourgeois courts. (The most recent interrogation of Geraldo at the police station occurred on 20 May [1997] in the SEVENTH legal action against us. But this does not interest you.)

Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR) bulletin (17 June 1996) built for June 19 union assembly. Front page reproduces brochure for June 13 delegated union conference which voted overwhelmingly for ouster of municipal guards from the union (point 7 on listed agenda). Back page headline says: "The Campaign for 'Cops Hands Off the SFPMVR' is Growing."

Unknown? Not to the hundreds of workers who signed the petition for the union meeting of 25 July 1996 and the 150 who attended and voted the disaffiliation of the municipal guards, in spite of the repression and the occupation of the union hall by the courts' puppet Artur. Yet when your representatives made a recent lightning visit to Volta Redonda in the attempt to get "dirt" on us, they did not speak to the workers at the municipal garage, the SMO [dispatch hall for road repair and other public works] or other places where city workers are to be found. They could have informed you of the reality of this struggle.

Would you dare to say all this to Regina Célia, whose defense against racism was answered by the Popular Front city government with a court case against Geraldo that could bring four years in prison? Or to the mother of Ernane da Silva Lúcio (a black child murdered by the police), who supported the campaign you call a fabrication; or to the residents of her neighborhood, Vila Americana, who followed and supported our efforts? In the face of the defense campaign for the anti-racist unionists who have faced police and court repression, you scream that it's all a "fraud." Only the enemies of the proletariat can benefit from this defamatory campaign.

In your article you quote letters from the ICL to the LQB. But you never published or even answered our letters to the ICL; for example, our 4 July 1996 letter protesting the disloyal break of relations in the midst of the struggle to remove the cops and answering the false justifications given for that break. Nor our letter of 17 October 1996 refuting the slander that we supposedly made a "deal" with the cops. Or is this new slanderous article supposed to be the answer? You quote selectively from your letter of 26 October 1996, without mentioning that it began with more grotesque slanders against the Internationalist Group, and you pretend that it just requested "proof" of the repression against us. In our answer (30 December 1996), we wrote:

"You pretend we made a 'deal' with the police, when the truth is the exact opposite: we have fought for the disaffiliation of the police from the union, and the courts and cops did everything to throw us out and repress us. So now, when you have been unmasked and your lies have been revealed, now you demand 'proofs'! At the same time you launch new slanders. How ironic! The slanderers demand 'proofs'! But the proofs are not and will not be to your taste! We have documented and will continue to document not only the anti-communist repression against class-struggle trade unionists and the LQB, but also the disgraceful role of the current leadership of the ICL, which acts against that organization's honorable traditions and program."

It is incredible that you pretend that we refused to provide documentation and proof. Way back in July 1996 we faxed the ICL many pages of documents, leaflets, articles from the press, and also written accounts by comrades Geraldo, Ildelfonso, Cerezo, Marcello, R and MC, all of it describing the campaign to remove the cops and the repression against us. You did not respond, but you never mention these materials publicly, and we think you probably never even translated them for the ICL's own members. We know directly that other materials which *were* translated, such as the 6 May 1996 leaflet (which begins "The Rank

and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union"), were not distributed to the ICL's membership.

Later, when the Internationalist Group, in collaboration with the LQB, published a dossier showing graphics and documents on six court cases against us, you disregard this, call it a "fraud," pretend the meetings never happened, etc.

You use similar methods in your new article. For example, the article includes various supposed quotations from comrade Cerezo of the LQB. First, according to you, Cerezo said the head of the *guardas*' association was "killed" by a *guarda*. He did not and could not have said this, because that individual, although he was shot, continues to be very much alive.

Then you state that Cerezo said Artur controls the union. But the fact, which Cerezo explained, is that Artur controls the *union hall* because he was installed there by the intervention of the bourgeois courts, with repeated interventions by the cops and Military Police, "invited" by Artur, to oust Geraldo! Your supposed spectacular revelation is nothing more than what is known in Brazil as "raining where it's already wet." And you try to use this as "proof" that the *members* of the union did not vote the disaffiliation of the cops. Shame! This only reveals that you accept that "reality" is defined by the class enemy.

Nevertheless, the workers voted democratically to reaffirm that Geraldo is the legitimate president. As stated in the 31 December 1996 letter from Geraldo and Marcello on their defense: "...what decides is the organized will of the workers. This will was expressed in the election of Geraldo in November 1995 with 62 percent of the votes. It was reaffirmed in the 25 July [1996] union meeting, which affirmed that Geraldo is the legitimate president of the SFPMVR. The mobilization of the ranks will impose the democratic decision that the workers have repeatedly expressed."

—"*Anti-union lawsuits.*" This is supposed to be the main dish offered by your article. Shamelessly, the authors of the article do not mention Cerezo's answer when the ICL representatives asked him if we are suing the union, because he clearly stated that *this is a lie and a slander from Artur Fernandes spread by the bourgeois press and the LBI*. Artur and the LBI do this in order to cover up the fact that it is the pro-police clique which "invited" the "justice" system to intervene against the class-struggle, anti-racist leaders. The LQB categorically rejects any use of the capitalist courts in the workers movement. This is also one of the principles of the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class-Struggle Caucus) founded by our comrades. But you twist facts in order to slander us.

Your article cites the same 31 December 1996 letter by Geraldo and Marcello where they declare that we reject any interference by the bourgeois "justice" system in the SFPMVR and the workers movement as a whole. You attack the defense letter for this, saying "these people lie to the world," a false accusation which can only harm our defense. But you suppress the first part of the same sentence, which showed this was not just a general statement but something with a very concrete content. Referring to the fact that in early December 1996, the Artur grouping had to desist from one of its court

suits against Geraldo since it could not prove its accusations, the complete sentence in the letter states:

“When Artur withdrew from the legal case, the courts asked if Geraldo wanted the courts to rule on the validity of the July 25 union meeting, but this is against our principles: we reject any interference of the bosses’ ‘justice’ system in the workers movement in general and the SFPMMVR in particular.”

In other words, the courts offered to intervene “in favor of” Geraldo and he refused this offer of “aid” from the bourgeois state. This matter of public record dates from December of last year. You know this, but you do not mention it because it refutes your accusation that our words were empty. The LQB and comrade Geraldo have said exactly the same thing to the workers in Volta Redonda and the organizations which defended us, as well as to the capitalist courts themselves.

In your article you refer to “evidence” from the *Diário do Vale* claiming that Geraldo used the “justice” system against the union, and you dramatically ask: “If this were not so, where then is the necessary refutation by the LQB or the IG?” The incredible thing is that you never asked us this question before publishing your article. If you had had the elementary honesty to ask, we would have told you: When the *Diário do Vale* claimed this, Geraldo immediately, on 26 July 1996, sent them a letter refuting this accusation. When this newspaper of the CSN [National Steel Company] bosses refused to publish the letter, Geraldo did an interview with *Opção* newspaper (9 August 1996), denouncing the “justice” system’s intervention in the union, stating the justice system is “bourgeois” and comes from the military dictatorship. Then, when the accusation was repeated by the pro-police faction, Geraldo published a “Declaration” (31 January 1997), which was widely distributed to the workers, refuting this slander once again and citing his 26 July 1996 letter to the *Diário do Vale*. *Workers Vanguard* says nothing of all this, and in reality your theatrical question, like your entire defamatory campaign, is a condemnation of yourselves.

It is very curious that when you write about “lawsuits [which] are a matter of public record,” you fail to mention that months ago the *Diário Oficial* (official daily gazette) of the State of Rio de Janeiro recorded that the cases you enumerate



Vanguarda Operária

August 1995 rally in Volta Redonda for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Rally was called by Luta Metalúrgica (forerunner of LQB) and Municipal Workers Union. Signs read: “Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution,” “Down with the Racist Death Penalty,” and “Capitalism Means Oppression of Women.”

another physical attack against him, went to the police to press new charges against Geraldo (case number 327456), and in order to cover this, accused him of suing the union. Geraldo refuted this in a public statement and reaffirmed his principled opposition to any intervention by the courts in the labor movement. When Geraldo asked the lawyers about the cases mentioned by Artur, they informed him that instead of being directed only against the decisions of the court itself, the two requests for injunctions were registered as actions with the union as “defendant,” something which he, as president of the union, would never have permitted, since his fight has been to defend the SFPMMVR against the “justice” system’s attacks. So Geraldo immediately insisted on the complete withdrawal and nullification of these actions. On February 17, the lawyers turned in the formal withdrawal—in other words, more than four months ago, long before the *WV* article and its real source, the article by the LBI advisers to the pro-cop clique of Artur Fernandes.

Artur’s lawyer asked that Geraldo declare that the actions would not be revived over the following years, and this was accepted by Geraldo, who also made an official declaration to the court refusing to have anything to do with any lawsuit against the union and explaining that we reject any intervention by the “justice” system in the unions.

Our defense of this principle produced an open break with the lawyers, who did not understand it and only because of our insistence agreed to nullify the actions which were erroneously filed. Despite running the risk of having no lawyers at all at a time when even more new charges were pressed against us by the gangsters of the pro-police grouping, we continued to defend the principle of “Courts out of the unions.” You claim that we

were stopped, and this was at Geraldo’s insistence. In July 1996, Artur’s pro-police grouping got the courts to oust Geraldo as president of the SFPMMVR. Geraldo’s then lawyers asked for two injunctions to block the implementation of the summary decisions which the court decreed even before holding a hearing in which Geraldo could present his defense in the face of this judicial coup against the union. In December 1996, the Artur grouping had to withdraw from its main suit against Geraldo because they had no evidence. When Geraldo went to the union hall, the Artur group organized

sued the union. The truth is the opposite of what the ICL says: We have been the target of repression by the bourgeois state's "justice" system and police. The LQB and Geraldo have not sued the union or even the pro-cop grouping installed by the courts, and we insisted on the nullification of the suits which *WV* accuses us of carrying out.

In addition to this smear taken from the mouth of the king of the union-suers, Artur Fernandes, there is a veritable cornucopia of falsehoods and distortions.

—*Dishonest game regarding dates.* *Workers Vanguard* tries to confuse its readers by citing various dates having to do with the disaffiliation of the *guardas* and asking sarcastically: "June 13? June 19? July 25?" This is really grotesque. The ICL's newspaper tries to present the situation as if the Internationalist Group had invented different dates for the same event. However, as the ICL is fully aware and as anyone can see in the dossier, what is involved here is a series of events in the disaffiliation campaign. In early May [1996], as part of preparing the ranks and increasing their consciousness, delegates were elected by work sector to the union *seminário* (conference), and one of the points was "Police out of the union." The *seminário* was held on 13 June [1996] and the delegates voted in favor of disaffiliating the *guardas*, as preparation for a union membership meeting with decisive power.

This union meeting was called for 19 June 1996, as the ICL's representatives knew perfectly well. The workers attended, Geraldo was reading the resolutions of the *seminário*, but the *Popular Front* mayor sent the police with a court order to dissolve the meeting and begin the process of ousting Geraldo from his post as president. It is grotesque that the ICL tries to make a joke out of it in order to "disappear" this fact.

In the face of the judicial/police coup against the union, we organized meetings in the work sectors. A petition from hundreds of workers and an official notice called the 25 July [1996] union meeting, which voted the disaffiliation of the *guardas*. Artur did not want to recognize this official decision of the ranks, but the *guardas* began the formation of their own "association." What is scandalous is that the ICL too does not accept that this was the democratic decision of the workers. You use the fact that the court-installed coup-maker Artur has support from the cops in order to deny the convulsive struggle of the last year and a half in Volta Redonda. Basing yourselves on the "facts" created by the bourgeois state, you seek to deny the reality of the class struggle.

The claim that what we did was "slip in" the disaffiliation of the *guardas* "at the end of a long meeting centered on an economist wage campaign" is a *total invention*. The disaffiliation campaign was the subject of preparatory meetings, many leaflets (at least twelve items had print runs of 1,000 to 3,000 copies each), and even articles in the local press. At the 25 July 1996 meeting, this point was moved from number six on the agenda to Point 2 on the agenda (as shown by the minutes from that meeting which you had in your hands because they were sent to you), long before the wage campaign point, and it was introduced by a minute of silence in homage of Ermano as a symbol of the victims of racist police terror.

—*"Deal with the cops."* Ten months after making this slander (at a forum in New York after the break), now for the first time the ICL tries to justify it publicly. The supposed "proof" is that the MEL (Municipários em Luta—Municipal Workers in Struggle) slate in the November 1996 union elections included "the pro-cop agent Artur Fernandes." The idea you seek to put forward is that Fernandes was already known as such when he was included in the slate. But this is false, and the truth is that the same ICL representative cited as the supposed "discoverer" of our "opportunism" had political discussions (a contact session) on Eastern Europe with Fernandes in August 1995, which is something one doesn't do with pro-police agents. Fernandes turned out to be an opportunist element who, when he saw after the union elections that the MEL program was going to be put into practice, aligned himself with the cops and the Popular Front.

As you know, Geraldo began negotiations for the disaffiliation of the *guardas* in December 1995, immediately after taking office as president of the union. Artur proposed that [the union] take 10 percent of *guarda* association's dues, and Geraldo immediately refused. Fernandes' attack underlines the fact that Geraldo sought to disaffiliate the *guardas*. Fernandes published a leaflet (13 March 1996) citing the part of the MEL program which called the *guardas* and other police the "armed fist of the bourgeoisie." Fernandes' leaflet said "Geraldo clearly wants to exclude the Municipal Guards and watchmen from the union movement" and sought a provocation, calling on "everyone to defend the *guardas*" at a union meeting.

The ICL's slander about a supposed deal with the cops in November 1995 was only invented nine months later, in order to deny the LQB's struggle against the presence of cops in the union and justify the International Secretariat's abandonment of this struggle. The ICL's letters (for example from April 1996) recognized the "hard and principled fight" for the disaffiliation of the cops, a fight which "has drawn our organizations closer together." But after breaking relations, the I.S. cynically "discovered" this fictitious deal with the cops.

It is absurd to accuse us of a "deal" with the cops on the basis of an MEL program which denounced any "alliance" with any kind of police (explicitly including the *guardas*) "since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions." We have critically analyzed that period, but as we wrote in our 4 July 1996 letter to the ICL: "It is not logical to make (correct) criticisms about the way the MEL slate was put together and to say (correctly) that, while the MEL program originally talked about the question of the police in general, it did not explicitly call for the disaffiliation of the *guardas* and then run away from the struggle when we try to improve the MEL program and put the program of Trotsky and the ICL on this question into practice." Today we would add that you are trying to bury the historical truth of this fight under a pile of falsehoods.

—*"Hasty" recruitment as a maneuver.* The *WV* article claims that we brought Geraldo and other SFPMVR activists into LQB membership as part of a fraudulent maneuver to justify "control" of the union. You talk about these comrades as if they were ignorant people who are not interested in Marxism. Yet despite the attitude of petty-bourgeois contempt which you ex-

press, the truth is that these comrades had worked with us for a long time (for example during the demonstration in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal in August 1995), and they were won to the LQB through study and struggle, in particular the struggle to throw out the cops.

These comrades joined the LQB in a period when our organization was the target of a campaign of hatred and repression directed against us by the bourgeoisie, its agents and the popular front. It was obvious that they could not attain any "privileges" by becoming members of our small Trotskyist organization. But you launch the dirty statement that we "covet" and protect "posts." Far from coveting posts, privileges and influence in the union bureaucracy, we have fought for the Marxist program. You speak indecently when you know perfectly well that our comrades live in poverty because they decided to become revolutionaries. The bourgeoisie has put LQB comrades on its "blacklist," including in the racist sense of this term, after firing them for fighting for the workers' interests, and many remained unemployed for years. And when the popular-frontist members of the "CUT [labor federation] Opposition" let themselves be corrupted by CSN, forming their "CUT Independent Investment Club," Luta Metalúrgica (as we were called at that time) was known for refusing to buy privatization stocks and rejecting this corruption.

And in the face of the LQB's fight for Marxist principles, the response of the bourgeoisie, with direct or indirect support from the various popular-frontist bureaucrats, has been to use the cops, courts, thugs and the bourgeois press in order to expose our comrades to beatings, arrests, court suits and slanders.

We continue to recruit young comrades and on 17 June 1997, thirty students participated in the demonstration that the LQB organized at the university where comrades M. and S. study, against a fascist from the University of Juiz de Fora (in Minas Gerais) who went on the Internet to call for the extermination of blacks and homosexuals.

—*"Nobody" knows about the LQB.* You say everything is a fraud for "international consumption" and the LQB has no support "in Brazil." This accusation could be taken straight from the mouths of the anti-communists and the local bourgeoisie, who always say the same kind of thing.

Supposedly the ICL "knows" this among other things because it talked with the regional CUT. But the regional CUT is led by union bureaucrats who are part of the popular front which tries to smash us because of our proletarian opposition to this class collaboration and which is the boss exploiting the municipal workers. Moreover, the regional CUT which the ICL visited to request information is the very one which had so much hatred for our struggles that it closed its doors when our positions won 40 percent at the sev-

enth regional [CUT] congress in late 1993.

What you do not mention is that during the "Police Hands Off the SFPMVR" campaign we received the support and reproduced solidarity statements from the oil workers, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro municipal workers and CUT and others, particularly sectors which have had conflicts with the popular front.

Another absurd "proof" in the *WV* article is that on May Day in São Paulo, supposedly nobody knew that "the LM/LQB even continued to exist after the ICL broke fraternal relations!" In other words, when we had fraternal relations with the ICL these people knew we existed, but later they forgot? What incredible arrogance! You carried out a kind of "lightning opinion poll" there, but your sample was taken from the run-of-the-mill practitioners of class collaboration: CUT leaders, fake-left groups, etc., and you came up with the "discovery" that we are not popular or "known" among them. At bottom this is an anti-communist method.

You know, because we informed your representatives who carried out their 20-minute interview with us, that on May Day we were at the rally in the city of Rio de Janeiro. At that demonstration, our comrade Ildefonso (known in the Brazilian workers movement as one of the organizers of metal workers strikes starting with the illegal mass strike against CSN in 1984) was a speaker in the name of the LQB, and he spoke about the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe and its impact in the privatizations and mass layoffs in Latin America.

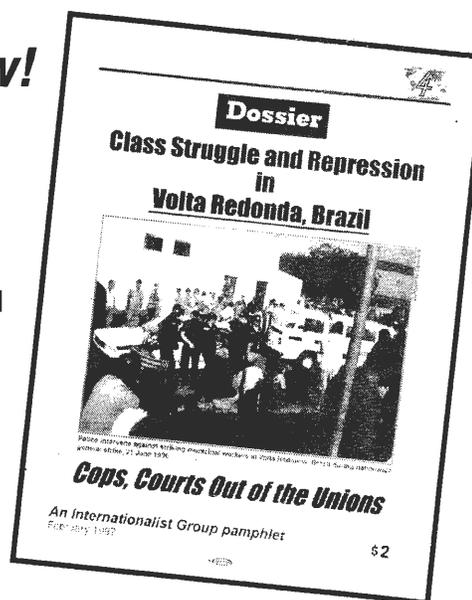
But the ICL leadership keeps on slandering, saying that we did not inform the workers of the struggle against the *guardas*. At a public meeting in Mexico, you screamed that we had no propaganda on the attacks by the São Paulo police and that nobody knows of our existence. False. At the same Rio de Janeiro demonstration we distributed our declaration against the government's repression of the Santos dockers, which also talked about the "attacks and murders carried out by the Military Police

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in the slums of Diadema (state of São Paulo) and Cidade de Deus (state of Rio de Janeiro), which are part of the constant police attacks against workers, the poor, blacks, homosexuals, the oppressed and exploited in general” and talked about the example of the struggle to disaffiliate the *guardas* in Volta Redonda.

The ICL leadership does not forgive the fact that the LQB did not disappear after the ICL's betrayal of breaking fraternal relations with us one day before the union meeting which was to vote the disaffiliation of the *guardas*; that we publish a Trotskyist propaganda newspaper; that we carry out work among the university youth, recruiting young people (two of whom were recently elected delegates to a national student congress fighting on our program against the popular-frontists); that we established a local of the LQB in the city of Rio de Janeiro but did not accept the position of abandoning Volta Redonda, the city with the largest steel plant in Latin America, and not to “set foot” here again (as put forward in an ICL document); that we did not accept the position of hiding our international links and that we continue to fight, together with the Internationalist Group, to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International.

We add today, given that we were originally drawn to the ICL in good part because of its opposition to the popular front, that we reject the revision of historic conceptions which the ICL leadership is carrying out now with its “discovery” that no popular front even exists in Mexico.

What the ICL leadership did in Brazil was a betrayal, as any worker who ever participated in a difficult struggle would understand. First it correctly encouraged us to organize a struggle to separate the *guardas* from the union. But when the struggle heated up, especially after Artur Fernandes invented the fake “armed attack” on himself, you decided that the struggle posed “unacceptable risks to the vanguard.” You said we had to abandon the struggle, which also meant abandoning

the workers involved in this fight, and leave town. We did not agree to commit this betrayal. So you cut relations and abandoned the struggle. To cover this up, you repeat any lie that comes out of the mouths of Artur and the LBI and the pages of the bourgeois press.

Having committed this dirty act, you have tried to justify yourselves by covering us with slanders, hoping that our voice will be suffocated under the weight of so much dirt. You try to blame us for the repression directed against us. Now you try to declare us pariahs in order to silence any doubt or question about the path you are taking. We have always sought the unity of words and deeds, even at great cost. Now you heedlessly spew words in order to sow confusion. We learned from you the question from the American miners' song: “Which side are you on?” This question applies to your behavior towards the bitter struggle in Brazil. And it has profound implications for your future course.

In defense of communist principles, for the revolutionary independence of the working class,

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Corrections

In *The Internationalist* No. 2 (April-May 1997), a picture caption in the article “From Millerand to Mitterrand: Popular Front Chains the Workers,” incorrectly stated that Marshal Pétain, the bonapartist dictator of Nazi-allied Vichy France, was hanged for war crimes. Pétain was sentenced to death but President Charles de Gaulle commuted the sentence.

In the text and illustration of the article, “WV's Smear Job: How They Defend the Indefensible,” in the same issue, references to *Workers Vanguard* No. 633 should have read No. 663 (7 March 1997).

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Internationalist Group Statement

ICL Leaders Escalate Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Militants

JUNE 25—For the past year, the press of the International Communist League (ICL) has displayed a remarkable fixation on the Internationalist Group and our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. *Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., has published major pieces on the IG and the LQB in issues No. 648, 651, 652, 653, 657, 663 and 669. The ICL has also brought out four public bulletins totaling hundreds of pages on us. Yet at the same time they repeatedly refer to the “small” LQB and the “handful” of members of the IG. What explains this striking disproportion? If we are so insignificant, why all the attention?

From the very first article, the ICL leaders sought to bury us with invective and discredit us with slander and willful distortion because they couldn’t answer our political arguments—which they have barely addressed—and because they were desperate to blot out the fact that they committed a genuine betrayal in Brazil. The dramatic expulsion of leading cadres of the ICL in June 1996 was the immediate prelude to the breaking of fraternal relations with the LQB when the Brazilian comrades refused to abandon the struggle to remove police from the municipal workers union of Volta Redonda, Brazil’s “steel city.” This was a fight over the key issue of the capitalist state—a fight, moreover, which was initially encouraged by the ICL. Yet when it reached the boiling point, the ICL abruptly abandoned the LQB in the midst of this fight as it was under the fire of bourgeois repression. This *desertion* from the class struggle was in sharp contradiction to the Trotskyist program defended by the Spartacist tendency for over three decades.

The ICL’s latest diatribe (“IG’s Brazil Fraud Exposed,” *WV* No. 669, 30 May 1997) is intended to take the place of an answer to our recent publications on Brazil. In February, the Internationalist Group in collaboration with the LQB published a carefully documented dossier titled *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda—Cops, Courts Out of the Unions* (February 1997). In the last issue of *The Internationalist*, in addition to a lengthy article refuting the ICL’s myriad accusations against the IG, we demonstrated in detail how the ICL leaders have engaged in repeated fabrications in the attempt to defend their indefensible actions in Brazil.

We cited the ICL’s own documents and speeches to refute the smear that the Brazilian comrades “refused” to publish a newspaper or take other key steps towards building a Trotskyist party, the revolting slander that they had a “deal” with the cops, and the ICL’s attempt to pretend it did not know about the union meeting, scheduled for the very next day after it cut relations, where the disaffiliation of the *guardas* (municipal cops) was to be voted. We proved that the ICL repeatedly rec-



More lying smears from ICL to cover up its Brazil betrayal. Above: *WV* No. 669, 30 May 1997.

ognized that the LQB had waged a principled struggle to throw out the cops, but decided that “the power of the bourgeois state” had made the fight too hot to handle, calling on the LQB to “disassociate” itself from its supporters in the union leadership and even “get out of town” (see “Brazil: Context of a Betrayal,” *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997).

The ICL leadership does not even attempt to answer this—because it cannot. Instead, feeling damaged and exposed, it has lashed out with yet another lying smear, which is supposed to put an end to all discussion and place the LQB and IG beyond the pale. Thus, *WV* states that ICL representatives were recently sent to Brazil, where they “discovered firsthand” that everything we have written about the struggle in Brazil is supposedly a “fraud.” The centerpiece of the new accusation is that there was a “class betrayal carried out by the LQB in Volta Redonda”: that the Brazilian comrades and Geraldo Ribeiro, an LQB member and elected president of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union (SFPMVR), are allegedly guilty of “appeal[ing] to the capitalist state to decide who should lead the municipal union” and of “filing anti-union lawsuits.”

It is *Workers Vanguard’s* charges against the Brazilian comrades that are a fraud. The LQB and union president Ribeiro have not sued the union. On the contrary, they have repeatedly stated that they oppose on principle all court intervention in union affairs. Moreover, the slanderous charges against the LQB are taken from the very forces who have, repeatedly, called down repression by the capitalist state against the elected class-struggle leadership of the SFPMVR. The source of *WV’s* charges is one Artur Fernandes, who openly brags that he is “oriented by the police,” and who has over and over called in armed cops and the courts in an anti-communist

witchhunt against comrade Ribeiro and the LQB. *WV* picked the smears up from the newspaper of the Brazilian Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI), which acts as advisers for Fernandes. And *WV* "confirms" them by citing the paper of the steel bosses who have for many years waged a vendetta against the LQB and its predecessor, Luta Metalúrgica (LM—Metal Workers Struggle).

For the most unprincipled factional reasons and to cover its own tracks, the ICL leadership has become a willing accomplice of a very dirty operation. It is giving a "left" veneer to the campaign by the capitalist rulers of Volta Redonda against the nucleus of Trotskyist workers, black and white, who have been fighting tooth and nail for working-class independence from the bourgeoisie. In the 1980s, the LM militants played a leading role in a series of militant steel and municipal workers strikes. In the 1994 Brazilian elections, Luta Metalúrgica was the only political tendency that opposed *on principle* voting for any candidates of the Frente Brasil Popular headed by the PT (Workers Party) of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. Over the last year and a half, the LM/LQB has waged a hard fight to expel the cops from the Municipal Workers Union headed by LQB member Ribeiro. In doing so, they have faced an unholy alliance extending from the longtime head of the National Steel Company (CSN) and the military police chief to the "progressive" Popular Front mayor, a pro-cop clique in the union and its pseudo-Trotskyist advisers (see the 24 June letter from the LQB to the ICL responding to the latest *WV* attack).

This class-collaborationist coalition has gone after the LQB with provocation, gangster violence, police force and court suits. Having failed in their attempt to destroy this nucleus of the Trotskyist vanguard as it has steadily developed, they then tried to defame and discredit them. While the ICL earlier denounced this sinister lash-up, it is now acting as its megaphone, broadcasting internationally *some of the very same anti-communist charges WV exposed only 15 months ago*. In doing so, it relies on *WV* readers' distance from the scene of the battle. Nobody in Volta Redonda even pretends today that the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista is suing the union—in the first place because they aren't, and secondly because (contrary to *WV*) the LQB's fight against intervention by the bourgeois state in the workers movement is widely known. The pro-police

provocateur Fernandes tried to float this smear earlier this year, in order to cover up his own thug attacks and court suits, but dropped it in the face of Ribeiro's clear stand against court intervention. Nevertheless, the failed slander has an extended half-life in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*.

Attentive readers should consider the following telling fact: in the 3,800 words of the *WV* 669 article, nowhere is the barrage of state repression against Ribeiro and the LQB mentioned. The only reference to defense efforts is insinuating demands for "evidence" and claims that they are based on "lying." Readers of the *WV* article would have no inkling that the Brazilian Trotskyist militants have faced *seven* different court actions, as well as arrest for leading strike pickets, repeated bureaucratic thug attacks,

and attempted intimidation by shotgun-wielding military police. Why is this not mentioned in *Workers Vanguard*? Because *WV* is pushing the cover story of the very forces who unleashed this repression.

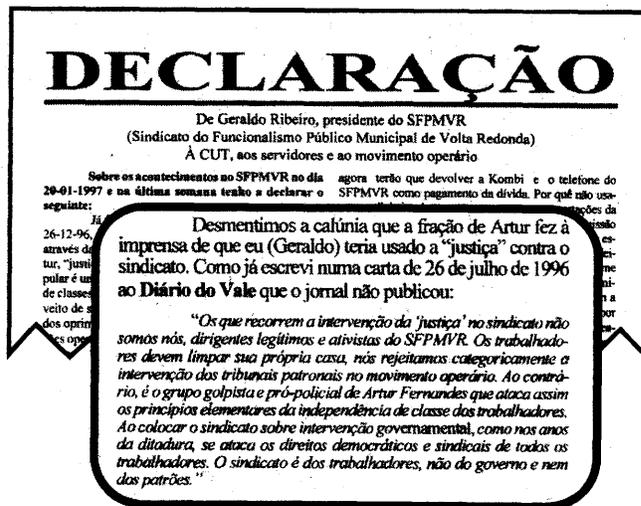
Cops, Courts Out of the Unions!

So let's examine the linchpin of the *WV* article's "case" against the LQB and the Internationalist Group—the charge of suing the union. First, the context:

Since late 1995, when Geraldo Ribeiro was elected president of the SFPMVR on a program against the popular front, Ribeiro and the LQB have been hit with: a suit accusing Ribeiro of defaming the police; a case charging him with defaming the city because he led a

campaign against the blatantly racist firing of a black woman; an injunction to shut down the 19 June 1996 union meeting with police force, in an attempt to stop the disaffiliation of the municipal *guardas*; the court-ordered suspension of Ribeiro as union president and imposition of "jurisdictional receivership" over the SFPMVR, using as a pretext the union's publication of an article by black American death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal explaining that police are enemies of labor; the arrest of union activist and LQB member Marcello Carega on the charge of "disobedience" when he led 150 workers in shutting down the municipal garage during a nationwide general strike. Most recently, Geraldo Ribeiro was called into the police station on 20 May 1997 to be interrogated in yet another legal action against him by the Fernandes clique.

The initiators of these prosecutions have been the commander of the municipal *guardas*; the Popular Front city gov-



***WV* No. 669 (30 May) claims Geraldo Ribeiro sued union, saying if not, "where then is the necessary refutation by the LQB or the IG?" Above: 30 January declaration by Ribeiro denying this lie and quoting from his 26 July 1996 letter to *Diário do Vale*: "Those who resort to court intervention in the union are not us, the legitimate leaders and activists of the SFPMVR. The workers must 'clean their own house' and we categorically reject intervention by the bosses' courts in the workers movement." Steel bosses' paper (*WV*'s favorite source) refused to publish letter.**

ernment, led by a bourgeois "Socialist" mayor, which correctly sees the LQB as its most intransigent opponent; and particularly the pro-police grouping led by Artur Fernandes, who was installed by court order as the city bosses' puppet in the SFPMMVR. Who is it that "appeals to the capitalist state to decide who should lead the municipal union"? Fernandes vows that "the return of Geraldo to the presidency of the union is impossible," according to an article in the Volta Redonda weekly *Opção* (17-23 January), which quoted Fernandes as saying: "We will only accept him back with a judicial action saying he is president of the body." While Fernandes states that the capitalist courts dictate who will lead the union, and acts as their agent, Ribeiro emphatically stated in a January 30 "Declaration": "We reject any interference by the bosses' 'justice' system in the labor movement. The union belongs to the workers, not the bosses! They are the ones who decide!"

In December 1996, when some of the Fernandes group's suits against Ribeiro collapsed because they could not prove a single one of their false accusations, the courts told Ribeiro that this gave him the right to request a court ruling in his favor on the basis of the union meeting last July that had voted to reaffirm him as union president and to disaffiliate the municipal cops. Ribeiro refused this "right." A 31 December 1996 letter by Ribeiro and Carega on their defense campaign explained:

"When Artur withdrew from the legal case, the courts asked if Geraldo wanted the courts to rule on the validity of the July 25 union meeting, but this is against our principles: we reject any interference of the bosses' 'justice' system in the workers movement in general and the SFPMMVR in particular. The union belongs to the workers, not the bosses!"

WV half-quotes this statement, leaving out the fact that Ribeiro refused a court invitation to rule in his favor, and then pretends that "these people lie to the world." The full quotation demonstrates the *opposite* of *WV*'s smear that Ribeiro "appealed to the capitalist state to decide who should lead the municipal union."

On 20 January 1997, Geraldo Ribeiro went to the SFPMMVR hall and was physically attacked by the Fernandes clique, who thereupon filed new charges of assault against him with the police. The next morning, the bosses' press reported Fernandes' cover-up claim that Ribeiro was suing the union. Ribeiro issued a leaflet with a statement refuting this charge and stressing:

"The workers must condemn and reject gangsterism and the use of the bourgeois courts in the labor movement. These methods violate workers democracy and only serve the bosses. They are the continuation of Artur's campaign to enslave the union to the 'justice' system, military police and *guardas*."

Ribeiro went to the lawyers, provided him by a local civil rights group, to inquire about the court cases that Fernandes alleged Ribeiro had filed against the union. They told Ribeiro that the cases referred to were requests for injunctions to block implementation of the court actions launched against him last July. Without his knowledge, they had been filed with the union listed as the defendant, something Ribeiro never would have permitted. When he learned of this, Ribeiro immediately gave instruc-

tions that these cases be withdrawn, which they were, despite the vociferous objections of the lawyers, who do not share the LQB's views. This was more than four months ago, and the notice of the dropping of the cases was published in the *Diário Oficial* of the state of Rio de Janeiro. But that didn't faze the authors of *WV*'s hatchet job.

Moreover, when Fernandes' attorney then demanded that Ribeiro also renounce any "right" to future court action, not only did Ribeiro do so (which led to a break with the lawyers), but he appended the following statement to the record:

"I, Geraldo Ribeiro, legitimate president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMMVR), have been the target of continual attack by the Volta Redonda city government and the repressive forces of the police. This was their response to the campaigns I initiated with the support of the ranks of the SFPMMVR, first and foremost for the disaffiliation of police (municipal *guardas*) from the union. The pro-police faction led by Artur Fernandes requested court intervention to suspend me from the post to which I was elected by the workers in November 1995 with 62 percent of the votes and which was reaffirmed in the meeting of the union's ranks on 25 July 1996. After six court cases against me, in which they were unable to prove a single one of their accusations, the coup faction had to 'desist.' Since I was guilty of nothing, I attempted to reassume my post in the union. However, in January of this year, the coup faction formally launched a new legal case to stop this in the 93rd District in Volta Redonda, and that case is continuing.

"Despite all of this, even when obliged to defend myself and the union on the hostile terrain of the bosses' courts, I have repeatedly affirmed in public statements that the workers must place their confidence in their own class power and not in the capitalist 'justice' system. We categorically reject the intervention of the bosses' courts in the workers movement. This is the opposite of the policy of the pro-police coup faction, which thereby attacks the class independence of the workers. I emphasize that I do not participate in any case of that kind. More than five months ago, we explained that this is our position: immediately after the pro-police faction of Artur Fernandes and Sebastião Passos ('Motorzinho') desisted from court suits they had waged against me, the court asked if I wanted the courts to decide the case in my favor, and I declared that this would be against our class-struggle principles.

"When I found out the nature of two requests for injunctions that were erroneously introduced as a defense in my name, in response to the attempt to remove me by court action from the post to which I was democratically elected by the union ranks, I immediately gave instructions to my then lawyers to declare my desistance from those legal actions, and this was done.

"I reaffirm here once again that the attempts at usurpation by the pro-police, thug and gangster elements who have brought the capitalist courts into the union with the objective of subverting the will of the ranks will not be fought by asking for intervention by the judicial system. To respond to these attacks requires that the working class impose its class power, independent of the bourgeoisie. The workers must clean their own house. The union belongs to the workers,

not to the bosses' 'justice' system. These are the principles which I defend against those who have no principles. We fight for the class independence of the workers."

This is the real story of legal actions 30.831/96 and 30.833/96, which *Workers Vanguard* refers to as "a matter of public record." The public record shows that Ribeiro and the LQB have insisted on the principle "cops and courts out of the unions," while they have been the *targets* of cop and court repression backed up by a barrage of slander. Far from seeking to have the courts decide who will control the union, they have insistently rejected this and fought for the class independence of the workers. Far from committing a "class betrayal," they have *defended class principles*, at great cost to themselves.

LQB: "What Decides Is the Organized Will of the Workers"

In tandem with its charge that the LQB engaged in anti-union lawsuits, *WV* pumps out a series of other accusations which boil down to the claim that the LQB has no support in Brazil. Haven't we heard this taunt before? It's the classic reformist claim that revolutionaries are an "irrelevant," tiny minority. More generally, it's the jibe, "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?"

WV 669 announces with great fanfare that comrade Geraldo Ribeiro does not "control" the union, and says that the cops are still in the SFPMVR under Artur Fernandes. The fact that Fernandes is in league with the police has been at the heart of the struggle in Volta Redonda, and he was placed in control of the union hall through court intervention last July to suspend and then remove Ribeiro. The events were extensively documented in our dossier, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil—Cops, Courts Out of the Unions* (February 1997). In a 31 December 1996 letter reprinted in that bulletin, Ribeiro and Marcello Carega reported exactly what the current situation was:

"As vengeance against [the] class-struggle campaign, the bosses' 'justice' system intervened in the union, as in the years of the military dictatorship, seeking to obstruct the organized will of the rank and file, who decided that the *guardas* are not part of the union, because they are not part of the working class. The courts maintained their puppet Artur Fernandes, head of the pro-police faction, in the union hall. But even under those conditions, the mobilization of the ranks and the pressure and international extension of the campaign made the municipal guards begin to withdraw from the structure dominated by the puppet Artur Fernandes, and they created their own association in November."

So much for *WV*'s phony revelation! In this letter of thanks to international supporters of their struggle against capitalist repression, LQB members Ribeiro and Carega stated that the union hall was occupied by the court-installed Fernandes. They added that the dropping of some of the prosecutions against the class-struggle militants were only "*partial victories*" which "do not mean the end of the repression against us." They stressed: "As we have declared repeatedly, what decides is the organized will of the workers.... The mobilization of the ranks

will impose the democratic decision that the workers have repeatedly expressed." But for the ICL leadership, what counts is who controls the office and who the bosses' press treats as head of the union. In *WV*'s account what decides is not the will of the workers but the dictates of the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, as they undergo intensive on-the-job training in purveying disinformation, the *WV* editors assume that in making a "case" against us, they can determine what facts and "facts" will be communicated. Take, for example, the front-page headline from *Diário do Vale* used as a centerpiece illustration in the *WV* 669 article. Relying on readers' lack of knowledge of the Portuguese language, *WV* says it states that Ribeiro "was ousted as union president" while omitting the rest of the headline, which says that he was "assaulted." And if you look closely, you will see that the *Diário* subtitle says that the so-called "assembly" that approved Ribeiro's "ouster" consisted merely of "about 25 municipal workers." While the pro-cop provocateur Artur Fernandes managed to scrape together a few flunkies to "approve" a red purge carried out by the bourgeois courts, four days before that 150 municipal workers met in a union meeting convoked by a petition signed by hundreds of union members, and voted to reaffirm Ribeiro as their legitimate president and to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas*.

But *Workers Vanguard* haughtily decrees the non-existence of the 25 July 1996 vote to throw out the cops, declaring that the disaffiliation of the cops "*never happened*!" Not only did it happen, even the *Diário do Vale* (26 July 1996) reported on the union meeting of the previous day, noting: "Another decision of the assembly was to approve the disaffiliation of the Municipal Guard. The proposal has been discussed for several months." As Ribeiro and Carega note in their 31 December 1996 letter, under the impact of this vote *guardas* began handing in their resignations at the union hall occupied by the court-installed Fernandes clique. An association of municipal police was formed in November, but little has been heard of it after its leader was wounded by another cop (not killed, as *WV* misquotes LQB leader Cerezo as saying). Even so, of the approximately 100 *guardas* originally in the SFPMVR (out of a union membership of 1,400), less than two dozen of Fernandes' cop cronies are reportedly left in his court-rigged outfit. For *WV*, once again taking the same line as Fernandes, this renders non-existent the *union ranks' decision to disaffiliate the cops*. On the contrary, for revolutionaries this means that the struggle continues against state intervention in the union, which is aimed precisely at *blocking* the will of the ranks.

The ICL leaders' argument has an extremely rightist thrust. In the *WV* article, in talks with sympathizers and in exchanges with IG supporters, they put forward as the key issue that "Artur Fernandes controls the union." We have pointed out that Fernandes' "control" of the union offices is the result of court action, police force and gangsterism. But beyond this, what *WV* presents is a rather strange criterion for self-proclaimed revolutionaries. We seek to build a communist pole in the unions, in the struggle to root the revolutionary party in the working class.

LQB supporters recently launched the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class-Struggle Caucus) on the basis of a revo-

lutionary program which begins with the call for "complete and unconditional independence of the unions from the capitalist state," demanding a "class-struggle fight against racist oppression and the oppression of women," a break from the popular front and "a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers and peasants government." A meeting introducing the CLC held on June 18 was attended by municipal workers, metal workers, educational workers and students from the Volta Redonda area, and received a message of solidarity from the Rio de Janeiro oil workers.

WV Then and Now

The depths reached in the ICL leaders' vendetta are shown by the use of smears that *Workers Vanguard* itself refuted before the break in fraternal relations. An example is the repeated charge that LQB spokesman Cerezo held an "unelected post" in the union, that he was an "unelected adviser" to the union, that the LQB comrades were only "coveting their unelected positions," and that the whole fight to remove the cops was nothing but a vulgar "power struggle." As reported by *WV* (No. 639, 16 February 1996) before the ICL broke fraternal relations, Luta Metalúrgica (which shortly thereafter formed the LQB) was invited to advise the November 1995 campaign by the Municipários em Luta slate headed by Geraldo Ribeiro "precisely because LM was the only group which fought for the independence of the working class, refusing to vote for any candidates of a popular front tying the workers to sectors of the bourgeoisie." Following the MEL's victory, Cerezo was briefly an unpaid adviser to the union. This was ended already by *February 1996*, as was publicized by the Fernandes clique in a leaflet.

The McCarthyite hue and cry against Cerezo as an "outside" agitator and interloper in the municipal workers union was first whipped up in late January 1996 by Causa Operária (C.O.)—a fake-Trotskyist group that votes for the popular front—and then picked up by the LBI braintrusts for the pro-police camarilla of Artur Fernandes. In February 1996, an "ICL Statement of Solidarity with Luta Metalúrgica" denounced the "unholy alliance stretching from the bosses' press and company-union officials to opportunist left parties" that was "frantically seeking to drive revolutionaries out of the union." The statement noted that the popular-front mayor and pro-government labor leaders sought to stop Geraldo Ribeiro and the MEL from taking office, and when that ploy failed, the bosses' press began "trumpeting vile accusations" from a phantom outfit "appearing out of nowhere to demand that Cerezo be excluded from union meetings." The ICL declaration continued:

"To portray this veteran class-struggle militant—fired by the steel bosses for defending the workers' interests, and slandered by [the pro-company labor federation] Força Sindical and the class-collaborationist left alike—as an 'outsider' in

Para Geraldo, Artur se espelha em Luizinho para acabar com a categoria

O presidente afastado do Sindicato do Funcionalismo de Volta Redonda, Geraldo Ribeiro, diz que o diretor geral da entidade, Artur Fernandes se espelha no presidente do Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos do Sul Fluminense, Luiz de Oliveira Rodrigues, o Luizinho, para acabar com a categoria e ter cargos mais altos. Além de Luizinho, o ex-presidente da Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional e Depoendo, Roberto Procópio Lima Neto, também é lembrado por Geraldo como responsável pelo desemprego e violação na cidade.

Opção 09 de agosto de 1996

Geraldo Ribeiro, garante que o diretor do Sindicato do Funcionalismo, Artur Fernandes, se espelha no presidente do Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos do Sul Fluminense, o Luizinho, para derrubar a categoria e conseguir melhor posição. Além de responsabilizar Luizinho por mais de dez mil demissões na CSN, o presidente afastado do Sindicato, afirma que Luizinho usa também a política de parceria com a Siderúrgica, para derrubar os metalúrgicos. "E, é isso também que Artur quer fazer no Funcionalismo", disse Geraldo. As acusações de Geraldo não param, ele afirma com total certeza que o ex-presidente da CSN, Roberto Procópio Lima Neto, é o principal responsável, ao lado de Luizinho, pelo grande número de desempregados, e pela violência em Volta Redonda.

A Justiça de Volta Redonda também não escapa da revolta de Geraldo. Ele disse que o Sindicato do Funcionalismo está sob intervenção da Justiça, mas nem por isso, vai deixar de lutar pela categoria. Como ele mesmo informou, a Justiça da cidade é burguesa, e portanto não



Geraldo diz que Artur se espelha em Luizinho para derrubar o Sindicato

acredita nela. "A Justiça de agora, ainda está na era da ditadura militar, por isso, nada funciona a favor do trabalhador", diz parais. Acrescentando também, que é pelo motivo da Justiça não funcionar que Artur colocou o sindicato sob intervenção.

"Esse acréscimo está entrando o sindicato, ele é mesmo o homem da demissão, como o Luizinho. Todos os associados já constataram que Artur não passa de um mentiroso, nada que ele faça contra mim pode ser provado, mas o que sei dele, tenho como provar. Durante uma assembleia, no dia 13 de maio deste ano, ele chegou a chamar a polícia para espancar os funcionários. Isso não é democracia - revelou.

Geraldo acusa Artur de mentir, caluniar e falsificar notas para provar que ele roubou da entidade. Já Artur, garante que a arrecadação mensal no sindicato, não dá para cobrir 55% do roubo que o presidente afastado deixou. Segundo Artur, a entidade arrecada, por mês, cerca de R\$ 5,700 e o valor da dívida é de R\$ 9.771,49;

Interview in *Opção* (9 August 1996) with Geraldo Ribeiro, president of Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union, where he says judicial system is "bourgeois" and "will not work at all in favor of the workers."

Steel City is an abomination propagated by those who are at home in the antechambers of Popular Front mayor Baltazar and Lula's Frente Brasil Popular, if not in the front offices of the CSN [National Steel Company] itself....

"The history of the class struggle is replete with examples of such orchestrated attempts at defamation and repression of militant workers leaders, often with the connivance of the reformists, in order to destroy the capacity for resistance of the workers movement....

"The opportunists traffic in accusations of corruption and scandal mongering in imitation of the social mores of their bourgeois masters.... When their popular-front politics are unpopular, they resort to smears to divert attention from the fundamental questions at issue and to discredit those who do defend the workers' interests."

Workers Vanguard returned to the question of the Volta Redonda municipal workers when the Artur Fernandes group called military police and municipal *guardas* against a 13 March 1996 SFPMPV meeting. *WV* No. 642 (29 March 1996) printed a "Call for International Labor Solidarity" from the LQB, which noted:

"The timing of the police assault is particularly ominous, given that in recent weeks Geraldo [Ribeiro] has been working to separate the municipal police from the union, because the police are not part of the workers movement."

Anyone reading what *WV* printed *then* can see for themselves that it is entirely incompatible with the smears spewed out now. Just read *WV*'s condemnation of the role of C.O. and the LBI in February 1996 and compare it with the actions of the ICL today.

Bosses' Press vs. Class-Struggle Militants

Workers Vanguard's "case" against the LQB and the IG is supposedly clinched by "supporting evidence" from the Volta Redonda newspaper *Diário do Vale*. *WV* admits that "*Diário do Vale* is a bourgeois newspaper in a company town" which is "hostile to any leftist opposition in the local unions." Yet *WV* cites articles published by that newspaper in July and August of 1996 alleging that Geraldo Ribeiro sought to have the courts decide who controlled the SFPMVR, and then asks in bold italic print: "*If this were not so, where then is the necessary refutation by the LQB or the IG?*" It is telling that *WV* did not have the Marxist honesty or simple journalistic integrity to ask the LQB or IG whether such refutations had been made before printing its smear.

The answer to *WV's* question is very simple: the "necessary refutation" was made at the time, not once but repeatedly! On 26 July 1996 Geraldo Ribeiro wrote a letter to the *Diário do Vale* to set straight its "incorrect reporting," stating:

"Those who resort to court intervention

in the union are not us, the legitimate leaders and activists of the SFPMVR. The workers must 'clean their own house' and we categorically reject intervention by the bosses' courts in the workers movement. On the contrary, it is Artur Fernandes' pro-police coup group which attacks the elementary principles of workers class independence in this way. By placing the union under government intervention, as in the days of the dictatorship, they attack the democratic and trade-union rights of all the workers. The union belongs to the workers, not to the government or the bosses."

Yet *Diário do Vale* refused to print Ribeiro's letter, nor did it print any of his 30 January 1997 declaration. This is hardly a unique experience for any left-wing group, as the ICL knows well.

The steel barons' house organ, which *WV* elevates to the exalted status of "local paper of record," not only refused to al-

low Ribeiro to set the record straight, its reporters kept asking what legal steps he was taking against the court action to remove him as union president. When Ribeiro insisted that he was looking to the union ranks, they garbled his words and complained that he was "avoiding any comment, however, on what is being done to assure his regaining the presidency" (*Diário do Vale*, 2 August 1996). Faced with the systematic misrepresentation of his remarks, Geraldo gave an interview to the other Volta Redonda paper, *Opção*, which reported his denunciation of court intervention in the unions. After noting that Ribeiro denounced the mass layoffs carried out by the former president of the National



Sindipetro

SFPMVR is not the only union under state intervention in Brazil. After smashing militant 1995 oil workers strike with army and military police, government put union under court control. Above: offices of the Oil Workers Union (Sindipetro) in Duque de Caxias near Rio de Janeiro. Top banner reads: "We are under intervention by the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso." Bottom banner says: "Guarantee Freedom of Organization of the Workers—Labor Court Out!"

Steel Company (CSN)—Roberto Procópio Lima Neto, the force behind *Diário do Vale*—with the complicity of the union bureaucracy, the article in *Opção* (9 August 1996) continued: "The Volta Redonda justice system does not escape Geraldo's rebelliousness either. He says that the Municipal Workers Union is under court intervention, but this will not stop him from fighting for the members. In his own words, the city's justice system is bourgeois and so he does not believe in it. 'Today's justice

system comes from the era of the military dictatorship and it will not work at all in favor of the workers,' he claims."

The ICL's sources are the very forces that have brought court and police repression down on the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union and its class-struggle leaders. This continues a pattern going back more than a year now: whenever the bourgeois press or the Brazilian fake left launch a slander against the LQB because of its fight for class independence, the "new I.S." of the ICL picks it up. This came to the fore immediately before the expulsions from the ICL, when Fernandes lyingly accused LQB leader Cerezo of seeking a salary from the union equivalent to ten times the minimum wage. In a 22 May 1996 draft letter to the LQB, ICL International Secretary Parks repeated this dirty smear. When Jan Norden, then still a member of the International Secretariat, was asked for his comments on this letter, he wrote that rather than accept-

ing as good coin a charge coming from a notorious police mouthpiece, the I.S. should first find out the facts. For this, comrade Norden was grotesquely accused of “cop-baiting” the party, removed from all leading positions in the ICL, suspended from the Spartacist League two days later and then expelled.

In fact, Fernandes’ charge was a lie, as attested by formal depositions from the union treasurer (who was not part of the MEL slate) as well as union president Ribeiro, stating that Cerezo never sought, let alone received, payment from the union. Yet at a 28 February 1997 New York forum, a leading Spartacist spokesman took the slanderous charge one step further and called Cerezo a “paid adviser” to the union. The technique is familiar: just keep escalating the lie and slinging the mud, calculating that eventually something will stick.

Today, *Workers Vanguard* refers to *Diário do Vale* as the “local paper of record.” But as noted by *WV* No. 639 (16 February 1996), this paper is “notorious as a mouthpiece for the privatized CSN steel company bosses, [which] gave prominent coverage to attacks on LM spokesman Alexandre Honorato (Cerezo) both by the CSN-sponsored ‘union’ Força Sindical and by the pseudo-Trotskyist group Causa Operária (C.O).” *Diário do Vale* was set up to support the privatization of the CSN (National Steel Company) and was formed with the backing of notorious right-wing politician and former CSN boss Lima Neto, who imposed 10,000 layoffs. The steel company directly finances this paper, to the tune of \$250,000 a month (\$3 million a year) until recently. Lima Neto is a federal deputy of the right-wing PFL party, known as the mouthpiece of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie, notably big landowners. During the 1995 oil workers strike, he whipped up strikebreaking sentiment.

In the struggle against the privatization and layoffs, Luta Metalúrgica repeatedly crossed swords with Lima Neto. During the 1990 steel workers strike, he denounced comrade Cerezo in the company bulletin for using the strike “for political ends,” to which Luta Metalúrgica replied: “Yes, our strike is political.... It is against your politics of privatization and draining CSN to pay off the foreign debt. Our strike is against *your politics* and that of the government you represent” (*Luta Metalúrgica*, August 1990). Two years later, Lima Neto’s house organ *Diário do Vale* (27 June 1992) devoted its editorial page to denouncing LM as “Luta Medieval” (medieval struggle), a “fragment of

the Berlin Wall fallen into Volta Redonda” that seeks “a repetition of the 1917 Russian Revolution.” As documented in our Brazil dossier, *Diário do Vale* led the red-baiting chorus against Ribeiro and the LQB/LM during and after the municipal workers union election.

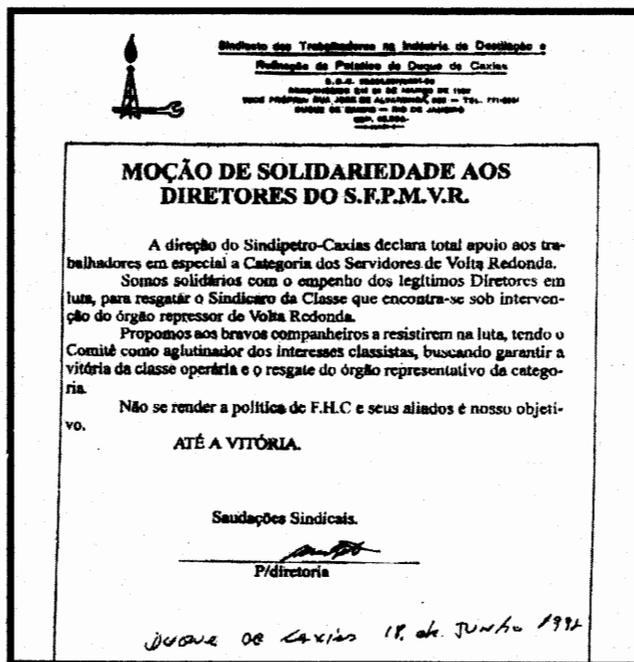
It is hardly surprising that this paper refused to print Ribeiro’s refutations of the accusations against him. It is damning of *WV* that it treats *Diário do Vale* as an authority for “evidence” against Marxist militants, and assumes that if this house organ of the steel bosses didn’t print these refutations, therefore they don’t exist. One can easily imagine *WV*’s justified indignation if political opponents quoted the *Wall Street Journal* as a “paper of record” for accusations against the Spartacist League. Yet today *WV* presents a collection of “evidence” selected from the pages of this steel company paper in a steel company town, a paper that has waged a vendetta against Luta Metalúrgica for years. For the ICL leaders, anything goes for the purpose of smearing the LQB and the IG.

Defend the Brazilian Class-Struggle Militants!

WV 669 derides the statement that the LQB waged a “principled fight” to remove the police from the municipal workers union. At the same time it advertises a new bulletin of correspondence between the ICL and the LQB from January 1996 through the ICL’s breaking of fraternal relations in June 1996 (carefully omitting prior correspondence, as well as the LQB’s reply to the break in relations). In the future the Internationalist Group will publish materials from the discussion on Brazil *inside* the ICL which shed additional light on

the expulsions and the ICL’s flight from the class battle in Volta Redonda.

For example, *WV* 669 cites a 29 January 1996 letter to Luta Metalúrgica in order to imply that LM upheld a position in favor of using the courts in the union movement when it was slandered by the candidate of the company union Força Sindical. However, at the ICL’s January 1996 International Executive Committee meeting, LM leader Cerezo stated: “After discussing with comrade Negrete, Luta Metalúrgica has reconsidered this. We decided not to go to the bourgeois courts, and instead to call a commission of workers.” As for police in the union, not only did the LM-backed slate

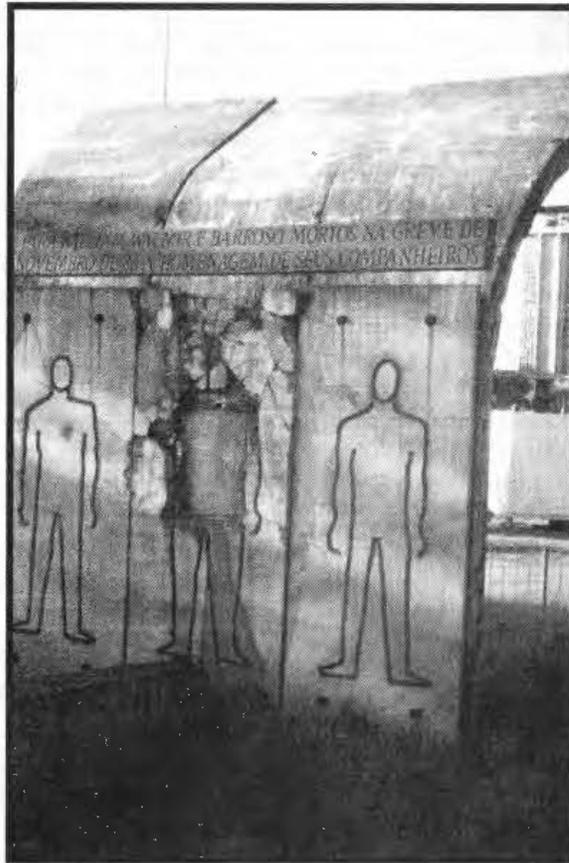


Caxias Oil Workers declaration of solidarity with Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union leaders against government repression.

(MEL) declare in its program that police are “the armed fist of the bourgeoisie” and say that no alliance with them is possible “since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions,” LM *agreed with* the ICL’s urgings to undertake efforts to oust the cops from the union. According to the ICL’s own reports on the initial discussion with comrade Cerezo on this question, he stated that they were determined to remove the police from the union and that this was a question of principle. In fact, newly elected union president Geraldo Ribeiro had *already* taken steps to do so before the ICL raised the issue, and Ribeiro with the backing of the LQB continued that fight through to the end while the ICL abandoned the struggle as it reached the critical stage.

Yet even the ICL’s own selective bulletin provides anyone who reads it with plenty of proof that *Workers Vanguard’s* cover story is a fabrication. Where *WV*, 669 charges the Brazilian comrades with “persistent refusal to take the necessary steps to constitute themselves as the nucleus of a Trotskyist party in Brazil,” the bulletin prints a 3 April 1996 letter from the LQB outlining a series of concrete proposals for these key steps, and a 7 April 1996 letter back from the International Secretariat, saying that the comrades of the International Executive Committee “strongly concur with your proposals.” This same letter from the I.S. states that “it has been you comrades who have withstood the pressures and dangers by waging a hard and principled fight” against “the presence of cops in the labor movement,” and stresses: “Pursuing fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica in Brazil is a choice we made at our IEC meeting and we are generally pleased with the direction things have been moving in since then” (see pages 105-107 of the bulletin).

Subsequent correspondence in the bulletin includes an I.S. motion (25 April) reiterating “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” (page 119); and it features specifics on the work that was underway on producing the Brazilian group’s newspaper (pp. 115-116, 122-123), which *WV* later



Internationalist Photo

Volta Redonda monument to steel workers William, Walmir and Barroso, killed in army attack on 1988 strike. Monument was later damaged by bomb.

comparison is positively ludicrous, not only in terms of scale. The fight to remove the cops from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union was systematically built with sectoral meetings, the election of delegates to a union *seminário* and then a membership assembly (19 June 1996). When that was shut down by court order and police force, the class-struggle union leaders came back with a petition, leaflets, a support statement from the mother of Ernane da Silva Lúcio (the black youth murdered by a municipal cop), and finally another union assembly (25 July 1996), attended by over 150 members, which voted the disaffiliation of the cops. Some “Canton Soviet”!

The real purpose of the ICL leaders’ absurdly false analogy is to attempt to justify their own desertion from the struggle.

The comrades of the LQB have fought and are fighting for communist principles in the face of tremendous obstacles. Where there have been insufficiencies in this fight they have corrected them. Facing bourgeois state repression, they appealed for and received solidarity both internationally and within Brazil. *WV* declares that Geraldo Ribeiro has no support locally, basing themselves on hostile popular-frontist union bureaucrats. They should have

claimed the LQB did not want to produce and now derides as an “adornment.” The claim that the LQB persistently refused to take steps to constitute the nucleus of a revolutionary party in Brazil is a *pure invention* to cover the ICL leaders’ betrayal.

And once again, *WV* tries to obfuscate the issues by crudely misusing a historical analogy. The fight to remove the cops, initially encouraged by the ICL and repeatedly characterized as a principled struggle, is now compared by *WV* 669 to Stalin’s 1927 “Canton Soviet”—in other words, an irresponsible adventure. The “Canton Soviet” was a foolhardy attempt at insurrection without adequate preparation, carried out following the devastating defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution in the Shanghai massacre of April 1927. It was intended to cover up Stalin’s line of political subordination to Chiang Kai-shek’s bourgeois Kuomintang, a betrayal that was directly derived from the reactionary dogma of “socialism in one country” and which led to that massacre. *WV’s*

spoken with those sectors who have run afoul of the popular front, such as the oil workers, whose 1995 strike was broken by army occupation of the refineries while Lula's PT (Workers Party) refused to mobilize in their support. The oil workers union, like the SFPMVR, was placed under judicial intervention following the strike as the government seeks to sell off the state petroleum company Petrobrás. And Brazilian oil workers have repeatedly declared their support for the struggle against police and judicial repression in Volta Redonda.

Further escalating its slanders, *WV* 669 obscenely accuses the Internationalist Group of having "damaged the tradition of internationalist, non-sectarian class-struggle defense." What cynicism! *WV*'s latest diatribe is a flagrant *assault on the tradition of internationalist, non-sectarian class-struggle defense*. Driven by factional frenzy, the ICL leaders viciously attack the Brazilian comrades' defense statement, accusing them of "lying to the world" while the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil has faced an onslaught from the repressive organs of the capitalist state, in league with the popular front and pro-police provocateurs.

With all its talk of "unelected union advisers," its positively gleeful proclamation that the union is supposedly "controlled" by the pro-cop faction of Fernandes, its cynical claim that the fight to remove the cops was an irresponsible adventure (at the same time it pretends that it "never happened"!) and its dirty attack on the defense of the Brazilian class-struggle union militants targeted by the capitalist state, *WV* is *trafficking in the vilest anti-communism*.

The despicable smear-and-slander job in *WV* 669 poses point-blank the question: *Where is the ICL going?* What is one to say of an ostensibly revolutionary organization that will stop at nothing in its vendetta to defame and destroy this nucleus of the revolutionary party in Brazil which has fought to actually carry out the Trotskyist program of revolutionary working-class independence that the ICL claims to stand for?

Far from being simultaneously adventurers and bureaucrats, as *WV* claims, it is precisely because the Brazilian comrades have fought to carry out this program in practice that they have been the target of concerted repression. After abandoning the struggle, the ICL leadership now blames the victims of this repression, crowing that "every danger we warned of came to pass." The very real dangers the Brazilian comrades face in waging the struggle have existed from the beginning, and they have taken them into account in systematically building support for this fight for working-class independence. The ICL's "warnings," about "pull[ing] our hands out of the boiling water" because of the power of the bourgeois state, came not when the ICL initially encouraged this struggle but as it prepared its treacherous desertion. Now *WV* illustrates the dangers by citing the *London Review of Books* about the number of street children killed by police death squads in Brazil. The Brazilian comrades know those dangers first-hand, and that did not lead them to betray this crucial class fight.

The *party question* is indeed the heart of the matter. A revolutionary party can only be built through intervention to bring the communist program into the class struggle, and by standing by this program in deed as well as word. The ICL correctly encouraged the difficult and necessarily convulsive struggle to remove the cops from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union, then withdrew at the last minute, covering its flight with smears against those it stabbed in the back. In the classic ploy of those who are unable to defend their politics, the ICL leaders resort to lies and defamation. At the same time they try to stifle what the LQB says in its own defense and smear the International Group as being "for sale."

At a May 18 public class in Mexico City, a local Spartacist spokesman blurted out what the ICL leadership seeks to accomplish with the new escalation of its slander campaign: "It's over. The discussion is finished." Some "discussion"! Internally, the ICL leadership responded with motions to limit circulation of documents, summary removal of leaders, trials, suspensions, expulsions—and always with the lies, slander and character assassination that lubricate the machinery of bureaucratic suppression. Following the purge, having been unable to refute the documented proof of what really happened in Brazil, their purpose in launching this new smear is to declare the Internationalist Group and Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil beyond the bounds of discussion. But the ICL will not be able to elude the discussion, and its members have the responsibility as Marxists to come to grips with the issues, carefully read all the documents and form their own opinion. For what is at stake is the course of their party, which is in flagrant contradiction with the historic Spartacist program.

From the beginning, we have systematically answered the ICL leadership's smears, because these methods are alien to Marxism and are an obstacle to a genuine struggle to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International. As the LQB points out, in seeking to bury the Brazilian comrades under a mountain of smears retailed by the bourgeois press, the bosses' labor lieutenants and their pseudo-socialist advisers, the ICL leadership condemns itself. For those who seek to advance the program of Trotskyism, upheld by the Spartacist tendency for more than 30 years, the struggle in Brazil has become a real litmus test. For the ICL leaders, the truth is an obstacle to be trampled underfoot in their flight from the struggle. Yet those who fight to reforge the Fourth International must be guided by the rules upon which it was founded:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

—Leon Trotsky, Transitional Program

Internationalist Group
29 June 1997

Letters to the ICL

From Members of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

We print below translations of two letters to the International Communist League from members of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in response to the lies and smears printed in *Workers Vanguard*.

Letter from Marcello Carega

Volta Redonda
15 June 1997

Comrades,

I got to know the LQB and the ICL during the campaign to "Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal," through the comrades of Luta Metalúrgica who brought the campaign to Brazil. In fact, they asked me to lay out a pamphlet for the campaign, which helped in my subsequent recruitment to the LQB and as far as I know met with the approval of the ICL. The LQB informed me that the ICL had historically demonstrated that it fought for Trotskyism around the world. I had discussions with members of this tendency in Brazil, during a period when I was participating in the municipal commission for the commemoration of the death of [slave revolt leader] Zumbi, and this was the subject of discussions with the ICL and the LQB in opposition to the collaboration of the state in commemorations of the death of Zumbi. This was the first time that I came into contact with organizations that talked about class collaboration and the popular front.

We distributed the Mumia Abu-Jamal pamphlet at the university where I study, as well as other universities in this region, calling on the students to participate in the [9 August 1995 Mumia] demonstration at the Zumbi memorial; and now as a member of the LQB I have participated in political work where I study and at other universities, carrying out the work of a propagandist together with the other comrades, principally through the sale of newspapers at universities in the big cities.

I have been surprised, however, by the succession of slanderous attacks made by the ICL. While the facts have been demonstrating a deformation on the part of the ICL's leaders, certainly there are still valuable members who, before they go spreading slanders to the four winds, should try to analyze the concrete facts, including the attitudes of the ICL itself during this episode.

This capitulation has occurred since the ICL's shameful flight from the class struggle in Brazil. Today the ICL ironically asks when the *guardas* [cops] were disaffiliated from the SFPMVR [Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union]: June 13? June 19? July 25? If you think this is something to laugh about, then I will describe what this fight was like.

At the 19 June [1996] union meeting at the Municipal Hall, Artur [Fernandes] used the violent and police-like element "Motorzinho" to go to court in order to dissolve the meet-

ing. And the restraining order accused Geraldo Ribeiro of robbing the union by having 10,000 leaflets printed with an article by Abu-Jamal, so they demanded that he be removed from his post. Around 30 Municipal Guards were at this meeting to impose the restraining order to stop the meeting, but even so Geraldo Ribeiro, despite all the pressure, read the resolutions from the *seminário* [the delegated conference of 13 June 1996] which among other things called for the separation of the *guardas* from the union. In its desperation, the Artur faction staged an uproar at the meeting and even violently pulled the microphone out of Geraldo's hands, hurting a newspaper photographer, who had to be hospitalized.

In the midst of the restraining order obtained by the Artur faction, we began a movement among the ranks of the SFPMVR to use a petition with a minimum of 10 percent of the union members signing in order to call a union meeting--subsequently scheduled for 25 July [1996] at the city's Council Yard--with an agenda including: disaffiliation of the *guardas* from the SFPMVR, rehiring of Regina Célia [a black woman worker fired by the city] and presentation of Geraldo's defense.

On 19 July 1996, one week before the meeting as specified by the union's statutes (Article 16), the lists of close to 300 signatures were turned in, surpassing the required 10 percent. "Motorzinho," the union juridical director, received and stamped this document, a fact recorded in the bourgeois press, which even published photos. On the same day we turned in an official call for the meeting, which was published in the newspapers.

On July 25, the union meeting was chaired by SAAE worker Beth and myself, and held at the Council Yard with the attendance of around 150 workers. The city government sent a troop of Municipal Guards there under the command of inspectors (part of the Guard's command hierarchy). They took up positions on the SMO [Municipal Works Service] patio, a clearly repressive stance aimed at preventing us from holding the meeting within that sector. Also present was a union executive board member belonging to the Artur faction, together with one of the faction's thugs for "security," a personal friend of "Motorzinho" named Edmilson, who is a former metal worker who works in SUSER, a sector of city hall. Throughout the meeting they carried out provocations against us, even accusing me of carrying out the "attack" on Artur.¹ At the moment when we were voting the removal of

¹ In May 1996, Artur Fernandes responded to the growing campaign to remove police from the union by pretending he had been the victim of a mysterious armed attack which left him unscathed and to which there were no witnesses. His story was so flimsy that, after Fernandes' initial attempts to use it as part of his witchhunt campaign, the local authorities declined to pursue the matter further. [Note by translator.]

guardas from the union, they were inciting the *guardas* by pointing Geraldo and me out to them. Despite this, we maintained our position and approved all the points, including Geraldo's defense, which received many cheers from those attending the meeting. It was also decided to remove the SFPMVR executive board members involved in charging Geraldo Ribeiro with theft.

This account shows the tension and danger we lived through in the struggle to disaffiliate the *guardas* from the SFPMVR, given that the Brazilian cops are known internationally as some of the most violent in the world; but the ICL ignores this in order to cover up its treacherous flight. In contrast to that flight, the Internationalist Group helped publicize the facts of this struggle internationally, and this fight was not a matter of a single day but one that went on for a whole period. In the face of this, why does the ICL insist on minimizing the historic assembly of 25 July 1996 and even making it disappear for the ICL's members and the readers of *Workers Vanguard*? There is a saying: there is no one more blind than he who will not see. However, I doubt that the ICL will succeed in throwing sand in the eyes of the workers movement's honest militants and fighters.

I do not have illusions that this letter will make the ICL reexamine its position, but my goal is to put the truth before its honest members who, unable to have direct contact with the facts, are left in the hands of those who, deformed, beat a retreat in the face of the pressure of the bourgeois state, saying there would be a "bloodbath." Now, after trying to disappear the meeting of 25 July 1996, they add on another slander, saying that Geraldo used the bourgeois courts against the union. Liars, the opposite is the case! We did not sue the union, we defended the union against the bosses' "justice" system. The truth is that Geraldo, myself and others have been the victims of multiple lawsuits put forward by the pro-police faction and the Popular Front, whose lies you are repeating. Our fight has been against any intervention by the bourgeois state in the affairs of the workers movement. In December 1996, when the bourgeois courts asked Geraldo, after the Artur faction withdrew from its suit, whether he wanted it to continue, we said no. We do not accept any intervention from the courts, even when it is supposedly in our favor. Our slogan was and is that the workers must clean their own house.

Yet the ICL press internationally reproduces lies from the LBI, the *Diário do Vale* and the pro-police faction, giving prominent coverage to the faction's coup and calling the pro-police faction's coup meeting a workers assembly. On 29 July [1996], under the protection of the "justice" system, with a fraudulent trial and with a handful of assorted types in attendance, Artur--openly disobeying the 25 July meeting--eliminated Geraldo Ribeiro from the presidency of the SFPMVR and expelled Beth and me from the membership lists. This was at the request of the union's former president, Luis Poello, who is linked to Força Sindical, a pro-company union federation supported by the popular front. This meeting was attended by approximately 29 people, among them Artur's brother, who is not a city worker, as well as

other people who are not in the union.

In *WV* No. 669 (May 30), the ICL leadership, trying to escape from its shameful flight, tramples on and denies the existence of the 25 July 1996 union meeting, highlighting the sarcastic article from the *Diário do Vale* which presents the beating and removal of Geraldo as if this were the will of the ranks. The ICL follows this up by legitimizing the pro-police faction's coup by giving it a left cover, as the LBI also does, and saying that "Geraldo sued the union in the courts."

As one of those who chaired the historic union meeting of 25 July 1996, I declare to everyone that the 25 July 1996 meeting existed and that the ICL and its newspaper are criminally lying. At the same time I call on the members of the ICL and the workers movement to seek to investigate the facts and on that basis to put an end to the swamp which the "new leadership" is trying to sink into, rapidly destroying the ICL's historic past.

Indignantly and sincerely,

Marcello Carega

Member of the LQB, city worker (SME),
and a leader of the 25 July 1996 union meeting.

Letter from Ronaldo

Volta Redonda
5 June 1997

TO THE COMRADES OF THE ICL:

First of all I want to make it clear that this letter is my own initiative and that I began to write it before the latest dishonest attack in *Workers Vanguard* No. 669 of 30 May 1997. Before joining the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil I was always an assiduous reader of Marxist ideas, and because of this I constantly went to bookstores and libraries to read the literature they had available about this. In 1996 I joined up with a genuinely Marxist organization, the LQB. In the past I abstained from joining other political organizations because, even without having a great knowledge of Marxism, I could see huge defects on the part of the other political tendencies that proclaimed themselves to be defenders of the workers.

In this period I worked in the public sector for the city of Volta Redonda, so I began to read all the bulletins that were periodically distributed to the workers by the union under the leadership of Geraldo Ribeiro. My attention was captured by the campaign to "save the life" of Mumia Abu-Jamal and win his freedom; and for winning back the job of Regina Célia, who was fired because of the racism of the popular front which governs the municipality of Volta Redonda. I identified myself with these struggles and ideas, since in that period the SFPMVR [Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union] bulletins called for expelling the municipal guards from the union because they are not part of the working class; among other things the bulletins also called for an end to social classes through international socialist revolution. I should make it clear to the comrades that I was present at the 25 July 1996 union meeting that voted the disaffiliation of the *guardas* from the SFPMVR.

That same year the workers of this sector [municipal workers] went on strike and comrade Marcello was arrested, which made me indignant at this attitude of the police who were called by the local popular front (PSB, PT, PC do B, PCB, PV¹), jailing a worker who only called for the interests of the workers: better wages and conditions, etc., as part of the struggle for the emancipation of the exploited and oppressed.

To make a long story short, today I am part of that revolutionary organization. I started a discussion with the LQB comrades in November 1996 and in December I was accepted as a member of the organization. Later I was assigned to help establish the LQB's local in Rio de Janeiro. Because of this I am indignant and extremely disappointed with the International Communist League (ICL), because I had gotten good reports about your organization. So every slander that the ICL proclaims against the LQB shows disrespect for Marxism-Trotskyism and a failure to remember Leon Trotsky's fierce struggle against Stalin's slander and defamation. The ICL's "new" leadership sets aside any materialist analysis of the facts "in order to cover its flight from the class struggle in Brazil" and spits on historical materialism when it insinuates, among other things, that there was no union meeting that voted the disaffiliation of the municipal guards from the union on 25 July 1996, or the jailing of comrade Marcello during the general strike of 21 June 1996. The workers here know very well that the events we have described are the truth and would be indignant at the attempt to deny this. The ICL's "new" leadership is using untruths against the LQB, a revolutionary organization, in order to cover over a difference which should be addressed on the terrain of Marxist, materialist discussion.

In his book *Anti-Dühring*, Engels writes about one of the principles of dialectics: the negation of the negation, which consists of the constant motion of matter, that is of the old which dies and the new which rises from its ruins. Thus we must look for the positive in the negative and vice versa, in other words constant discussion, and this is how the LQB is demarcating itself from the rapid degeneration and aging of the ICL, by fighting for genuine Trotskyism-Leninism. From the standpoint of historical materialism and of dialectics, which is a part of it, just as socialism-communism in its transitional stages means the negation of capitalism, so too must we remember that Trotskyism is the negation of the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party under Stalin. "All that is solid melts into air" if we are to judge by the slanderous and lying practices that the ICL's "new" leadership has been adopting. If it doesn't rectify this, it will very rapidly decline, and while we would find this regrettable we would have to accept the fact, since in the hands of Stalinism not even the Bolshevik Party escaped decline. Trotskyism rose from the ruins of the Bolshevik Party, taking with it everything it could use from the heritage of the revolutionary Marxist movement, and this is the program the LQB looks towards. Thus the way the "new"

leadership of the ICL is acting is unacceptable and anti-Marxist. In the first place, it is not Marxist to believe in the hearsay of the Third Worldist pseudo-Trotskyists of the LBI rather than real material proofs. So I would like to remind the comrades of the ICL that untruths are one of the most powerful weapons of capitalism, which used and continues to use this weapon in the service of enslaving blacks and the oppressed in general and to expropriate the working class.

I recognize that I still have a lot to learn about Marxism, and as Karl Marx said "necessity is blind only to the degree that it is not understood.... Freedom is the recognition of necessity." So I want to ask the comrades of the ICL to reevaluate their actions and to stop spreading slanders around the world, since this does not lead to the truth and the comrades merely based themselves on the hypocritical statements written by the LBI (which has shown itself to be a completely deformed organization) and on the bourgeois press. As the youngest member of the LQB (I am 22), I would be very happy to provide proofs--as has been done by the LQB and the Internationalist Group, with which we are linked--which are already known by various comrades and organizations in Brazil as well as in the world at large. And for those of you who have disdained Marxist practice, I will quote even Francis Bacon: "knowledge is power." Seeing so many lies, I note a great deal of confusion which goes along with the question of questions for today's workers movement: the "crisis of leadership," as Trotsky affirms and reaffirms in the Transitional Program.

For these reasons I ask the comrades of the ICL to STOP SLANDERING US, since by doing so you show evidence of political immaturity and a crisis of leadership, and this does not fit in with the revolutionary program of the Fourth International. Differences can exist, since matter never stops, so dialectics must be part of every discussion in order to eliminate the differences (this is what happened with Lenin and Trotsky); but how can you have a dialogue on the basis of a lie? How can you analyze something which does not exist? It is existence [being] which determines consciousness. Lies are a metaphysical attitude because they destroy all that is real. Lies are a barrier which can delay the revolution but can never hold back the inexorable wheel of history. An organization which puts itself forward as vanguard of the proletariat should not and must not be a false witness on the basis of slanders. "Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; a party becomes stronger by purging itself," as Ferdinand Lasalle said before degenerating.

Being black, exploited, and above all a revolutionary, I sought to learn the history of my brothers and discovered that the rulers, in order to attain their objectives, used so many lies that just thinking about it enrages me. And so I ask the ICL not to commit these absurdities. The struggles we have carried out show, among other things, the importance of Marx's phrase: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

Ronaldo

Note: I request that you print this letter in your newspaper.

¹ I.e., the bourgeois Brazilian Socialist Party of veteran capitalist politician Miguel Arnes, Lula's Workers Party, the formerly pro-Albania Communist Party of Brazil, the formerly pro-Moscow Brazilian Communist Party and the Green Party. [Translator's note.]

Outrage...

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lice and the brutal repression against minority communities across the country. As they carried out their vicious torture, the cops yelled at Louima, "This is Giuliani time." The police have taken the 1994 election of Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani as a green light for cop terror. Coming in the middle of the mayoral election campaign, Giuliani has been engaged in non-stop damage control, while his Democratic opponents Ruth Messenger and Al Sharpton have tried to get mileage out of the cops' "Giuliani time" boasts while making clear their support for the institution of the capitalist police.

Even before the last election, Giuliani was whipping up the killer cops to go on a racist rampage, addressing a mob of 10,000 armed police who besieged City Hall in 1993 to protest black Democratic mayor David Dinkins' support for a toothless civilian review board. But the Republicans and Democrats are the partner parties of American capitalism, and both rely on the police to keep down the exploited and oppressed. It was Democrat Dinkins who passed the legislation that hired 6,000 more cops so they can terrorize blacks, Hispanics, Asians, strikers and anyone else who runs afoul of the gang in blue uniforms.

In our article, "Police Are the Armed Fist of Capitalism—Racist NYC Cop Terror Sets Off Angry Protests" in *The Internationalist* No. 1 (January-February 1997), we documented the mounting executions of black, Hispanic and Asian youth by the cops. Anthony Báez, Hilton Vega, Anthony Rosario, Frankie Arzuaga, Aníbal Carrasquillo, Aswan Watson, Yong Xin Huang—these are but a few of the names of young men who have died at the hands of the NYPD torturers and killers.

As Giuliani slashes welfare, forcing the destitute to toil under virtual slave labor conditions while health and safety standards are thrown to the winds, his cops have carried out a reign of terror throughout the minority communities. In response to the escalation of death squad-style cop executions of youth on the street, the beatings and choke-holds, in the five years of its existence New York's "Civilian Complaint Review Board" has received 20,000 complaints against the police. Out of that number exactly *one* cop has been dismissed—Francis Livoti, the murderer of Anthony Báez. And that was only because, with angry protesters in the streets following Livoti's acquittal in the criminal trial, the city rulers figured they had to do something to clean up their image.

Since the sham CCRB is now universally seen as a phony, new gimmicks are thrown out to "reform" the police. The reformist Workers World Party handed out signs calling to shut down the 70th precinct. Democrat Al Sharpton is calling for a law to require cops to live in NYC—as if it would make a difference if the killer cops lived on Staten Island instead of in Rockland County! Sharpton himself wore a wire for the feds and spied on black leaders for the "black desk" of the NYPD.

Meanwhile, the anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic and anti-woman Louis Farrakhan has his own recipe for police "reform." Among the themes of his October 16 "day of atonement," in addition to "welfare reform" (kicking mothers and

children into the street), is *higher pay for cops!* Speaking in Springfield, Massachusetts two days before Abner Louima was tortured, Farrakhan grotesquely called the police "the real heroes of society because their lives are on the line." The lives of every black person, of Hispanics, Asians, of immigrants, are on the line because of racist terror by the cops Farrakhan praises (while he rakes in government money for his NOI Security Services patrolling housing projects).

Police chief Howard Safir vowed to bring in more black cops to the 70th, in particular a group of New York police now on duty in Haiti. Former NYPD commissioner Raymond Kelly was put in charge of "training" Haiti's police after the Marines invaded the Caribbean island nation in 1994. Train them in what, the latest torture techniques? For hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrants living in New York City, the torture of Abner Louima brought back the horrors they had fled in Haiti.

Yet from the bloody Duvalier dictatorship to death squad leader Emmanuel Constant, currently living in a comfortable house in Queens, the barbaric murderers who have ruled Haiti were all supported if not directly installed by U.S. imperialism. Remember that it was the popular bourgeois politician (and liberation theology ex-priest) Jean-Bertrand Aristide who invited the Marines and the NYPD to invade Haiti and put him back in the president's chair while they enforced capitalist "law and order" in the slums of Cité Soleil. From the U.S. to Haiti, working people must break with all capitalist politicians and forge a revolutionary, internationalist workers party!

The connection between the NYPD killers and the imperialist puppet regimes in Haiti was brought home in signs of the Internationalist Group at the August demonstrations, including "Giuliani's Cops—Tontons Macoutes of Brooklyn," and "CIA Protects Constant, Cops Terrorize Haitians." Other IG signs included "Democrats, Republicans, Capitalist Parties of Racist Cop Terror" and "Mobilize Workers, Minorities, Immigrants against Cop Terror in Brooklyn." We demand that all U.S. troops and cops be withdrawn from Haiti!

NYC's army of 40,000 trained racist killers, larger than the military of many countries, can not be "reformed." It is there to serve and protect the property and interests of the racist capitalist rulers of this country, and to keep the working people and oppressed in line. To fight racist cop terror it is necessary to mobilize the working class to use its tremendous power. The Teamsters striking UPS, as well as city transit workers and other sectors of the union movement, should have joined the thousands of Haitians protesting the torture of Abner Louima.

To wage such a powerful *class* struggle requires a fight to oust the present pro-capitalist misleaders of labor and to forge a multiracial, internationalist workers party, to organize and lead the fight to sweep away the whole capitalist injustice system of racist killer cops, courts and prisons through socialist revolution. ■

Frankie Arzuaga, Anthony Báez, Aníbal Carrasquillo, Anthony Rosario, Hilton Vega, Aswan Watson, Yong Xin Huang—just a few of the recent victims of the NYPD. Read "Racist NYC Cop Terror Sets Off Angry Protests" in *The Internationalist* No. 1 (January-February 1997). Write for a copy.

**NY Cops—Tontons Macoutes of Brooklyn
For Worker/Immigrant Mobilization Against Racist Cop Terror!**

Outrage! **NYPD Torture of Haitian Immigrant**



Abner Louima lies in critical condition in Coney Island Hospital, August 13; his wife Micheline cries out in agony.

By the thousands, Brooklyn's Haitian community and many others converged on the 70th police precinct on August 16. The rally outside the precinct spilled out across Ocean Parkway, culminating a militant march that swelled in numbers as the crowd snaked up Flatbush Avenue, through the center of Haitian migration in New York City. Brandishing bathroom plungers, chanting angry slogans in Creole and English, with signs reading "Devil in a Blue Suit" and "PBA—KKK," the demonstrators defied the sweltering 94-degree heat in the day-long protest.

And on August 29, over 10,000 protesters surged across Brooklyn Bridge to demonstrate in City Hall Park. The outpouring was in response to the cops' hideous torture of a 30-year-old Haitian immigrant, Abner Louima. The racist cops terrorizing Flatbush seized Louima outside a nightclub in the center of the Haitian community, beat him bloody, dragged him to the bathroom of the station house, where they held him down and shoved a bathroom plunger up his rectum, rupturing his intestines and damaging his bladder, then shoved the stick into his mouth, breaking his teeth. Louima could easily have been killed and is still in the hospital.

Like the videotaped beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles cops, the torture of Abner Louima has thrown a spotlight on the unspeakable racist depravity of the po-

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