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No. 4

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# Internationalist



**PRI Death Squads and Counterinsurgency in Chiapas  
Cárdenas Popular Front Ties Workers to Capitalism**

La Jornada/Pedro Valtierra



## Mexico

**Down  
With the  
Regime of  
Death –  
For  
Workers  
Revolution!**

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Front page photo: Tzotzil Indian women  
resist Mexican army occupation of  
Chenalhó, Chiapas, January 1998

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

## WV Attacks Defense of Brazilian Militants

The leadership of the International Communist League has reached a new low in its vendetta against the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Internationalist Group. This issue of *The Internationalist* reprints IG statements from July and September 1997 (see pages 58 and 67) taking apart the attempts by the ICL to stitch back together its patchwork of slanders and distortions after we had already refuted its lie that the LQB had brought the capitalist courts into the unions, when in fact Geraldo Ribeiro, the elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union, and his LQB comrades were hit with no less than *seven* court actions, in retaliation for their fight to get the cops out of the union. Now the Brazilian comrades have been hit by an *eighth* court suit (see appeal page 48). In this context, *WV* (No. 681, 2 January 1998) comes out with a sinister smear in an attempt to *undermine international solidarity* with the class-struggle militants under attack.

*WV* recycles the lies which we have already proven to be false, that come from the same pro-police elements and popular front city government that launched this repression. Labor organizations around the world have protested the repression (see article page 50). Yet not only does the *WV* article say not a word in defense of the victims, it *denounces* our campaign as "a cynical sham," sneers about our "'urgent' call" for solidarity, implies the repression is only "according to the IG," etc. It vilely attacks as "dangerous huslers" the targets of this repression, a largely black group of working-class militants with decades of struggle, who have been fired from their jobs and hit by endless court and cop repression for fighting class collaboration.

We will refute the latest *WV* slanders, as we have every one of its past attacks, and show the sordid role the ICL leaders have played throughout this period. Our response will be mailed to our subscribers and published in the next issue of *The Internationalist*. It will also be available on our web site ([www.internationalist.org](http://www.internationalist.org)), or can be obtained by writing to the Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008.

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## *The Internationalist*

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## PRI Death Squads and Counterinsurgency in Chiapas Cárdenas Popular Front Ties Workers to Capitalism

# Mexico

## Down with the Regime of Death— For Workers Revolution!

JANUARY 4—The Christmas eve massacre in the rural municipality of Chenalhó, in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas, was a military action of hideous mass extermination and a calculated provocation. The slaughter by a paramilitary death squad was intended to set the stage for a crackdown on the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) on the fourth anniversary of its New Year's Day uprising against the bloody regime that has presided over Mexican capitalism without interruption since 1929.

Already, the government has used the slaughter as an excuse to flood the area with thousands of army troops, extending their occupation from the lowland rain forest region, the base of the Zapatista rebels, to the Chiapas highlands.

The massacre in Chenalhó is not an isolated atrocity, and still less a case of feuding within the Indian population, as Mexico's then interior minister cynically claimed. At whatever level it was planned and ordered, this was an act of capitalist state terrorism, including participation of *forces armed and trained by the U.S. military* as part of counterinsurgency operations. The professional killers will not be stopped by humanitarian appeals, liberal editorials for Indian rights, or by removing a few officials. They cannot be defeated by peasant insurgents in remote regions, or by calls on the government to "negotiate" with the guerrillas. The fight must be taken to the cities, factories and the centers of power both in Mexico and the United States.

Acting in broad daylight, on the morning of December 22, a squad of about 60 uniformed men attacked some 350 Tzotzil Indian refugees while they were praying for peace in the hamlet of Acteal in Chenalhó, Chiapas. For six hours or more, the murderers went about the slaughter, executing the defenseless peasants with shots to the head and mutilating their bodies with machetes. Most of the victims were women (21) and children (15); none of the refugees were armed. A 13-year-old youth who survived recounted how he watched from hiding as the killers shot his father on the floor, slit the throat of his pregnant mother and then ripped the fetus from her belly with a knife. This happened in other cases as well. A total of 45 dead bodies were collected later, with another five reported missing while scores were horribly injured. Witnesses who escaped said that many of the murderers kept smiling as they carried out their heinous crime.

Caught in a hail of gunfire from gunmen positioned in a half-moon formation, the terrified women and children fled from the wooden chapel in Acteal and scrambled down an embankment, with the killers in pursuit. When the women tried to hide, their children's



Reuters

Indian mourners bury 45 refugees slain in December 22 massacre in municipality of Chenalhó, Chiapas, Mexico.



cries gave them away. After the killing was over, the assassins methodically went from hut to hut, stripping clothes from the bodies and looting possessions. The pools of blood on the floor of the religious shrine and the rivulets that flowed into the river are the symbol of the *dirty war* against the oppressed Indian population in Mexico. This is a *crime against humanity* as religious leaders and human rights groups have declared. But Chiapas is a battlefield of a *class war* that extends around the globe, and it will take the revolutionary mobilization of the *power* of the international working class to avenge the dead and subject the killers to proletarian justice.

As a result of an international outcry, Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León hypocritically declared that the mass killing was a "cruel, absurd and unacceptable criminal act." Yet the massacre was the direct product of his government, his party and his policies. As evidence mounted that the killers were tied to the government political machine, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the PRI mayor of Chenalhó was arrested along with 39 of his cohorts. To date, 16 have been charged with various crimes. In the national congress, there has been a clamor for the resignation of Chiapas state governor Julio César Ruiz Ferro and federal interior minister Emilio Chuayffet, saying they did nothing to stop the slaughter. This has also been a key demand of popular-front protests in Mexico City. Now Chuayffet has resigned and Ruiz Ferro (who was installed by Zedillo after a patently fraudulent election) could be removed at any time. But this does not mean the government's murderous policies will change.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the leader of the bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and now governor of the Federal District (Mexico City), has demanded a federal takeover of the Chiapas state government. Speaking to a December 24 protest at the Angel of Independence in the capital, Cárdenas declared: "it is necessary that the government of the republic disarm and dismantle the paramilitary forces" and "bring back tranquility to the region." The archbishop primate of Mexico also called for "disarmament." This is not only absurd, since the same federal government has been arming and protecting the death squads, it is dangerous. Upon taking office, the new police minister Francisco Labastida provocatively vowed to "disarm" the EZLN, as army troops entered the Zapatista headquarters at La Realidad. And while pretending to defend the Indian refugees from the paramilitaries, the army is extending its occupation to the Chiapas highlands.

The possibility that the tense standoff in Chiapas could explode in a regional civil war is ever-present. But it would be a very one-sided civil war, closer to a giant Acteal massacre. As thousands of Mexican army troops have moved into the highland communities sympathetic to the EZLN (and *not* into the paramilitaries' base camps), Indian women with their bare hands have resisted the military riot police carrying automatic rifles, electrified shields, stun guns and tear gas. In the community of Xóyep, Chenalhó the Tzotzil population chanted at 400 soldiers, "Chiapas is not a barracks, army get out!" and "Rapists of women go away!" Class-conscious workers and defenders of the oppressed in Mexico and throughout the world must demand that the Mexican army get out of Chiapas—and

that the army of U.S. military, CIA, DEA and other operatives get out of Mexico! An attack on the Indian insurgents and their supporters must be met by mobilizing the power of labor, including strike action, to bring the country to a halt.

The rows of coffins laboriously carried back up the hills by relatives of the victims to be buried in the killing grounds of Chenalhó are the grisly face of the New World Order of Yankee imperialism. Emboldened by counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the bosses and their governments want to jack up their profits by increasing the exploitation of working people worldwide. Today, Mayan Indian rebels in Chiapas confront the same capitalist-imperialist enemy as embattled unionists in the United States and Europe. The anti-Soviet Cold War is over, but the death squads that spearheaded it in Central America have reappeared in Mexico. To put an end to the endless massacre, what is required is a fight for *workers revolution*, mobilizing the powerful, millions-strong Mexican proletariat, and extending *across the borders* to the imperialist heartland. To call for anything less is to perpetrate a deadly hoax.

### A Massacre Announced Long Ago

The Chenalhó massacre was the bloodiest single crime in Mexico since the 1968 army massacre in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Plaza, in which hundreds of students, leftists and workers were gunned down. This mass murder was long in the making, and key components of the PRI-government apparatus were directly involved in carrying out the crime.

During 1997, hundreds of Indians were killed in Chiapas by the army, state police and paramilitary groups. The *New York Times* (26 December 1997) wrote that "At least 300 people have been killed in the rugged southern state of Chiapas since clashes began four years ago between Indian guerrillas fighting for greater rights and armed militia members opposed to their cause." Actually, official statistics report over 800 killings in the Chiapas highlands and the northern part of the state where the paramilitary groups are active, and Mexican human rights groups report that 1,500 Indians have been murdered since early 1995 under Governor Julio César Ruiz Ferro (*Proceso*, 28 December). And contrary to the *Times*' typical "evenhanded" portrayal, the overwhelming majority of the victims are Zapatista sympathizers.

But the evidence of government/PRI authorship of this monstrous crime is even more specific. Consider the following:

- On October 1, the PRI mayor of Chenalhó, Jacinto Arias Cruz, handed a 14-page document to President Zedillo during a presidential visit to San Cristóbal de las Casas, the largest town of the Chiapas highlands. Signed by 89 municipal employees, it announced that they were arming themselves to fight the Zapatista supporters who had set up an "autonomous" rebel local government. At the same time a new paramilitary organization, Máscara Roja (Red Mask), announced its presence in the area with the declared purpose of expelling or annihilating EZLN sympathizers. Its war cry: "We will put an end to the Zapatista seed."

- On October 2, four people were killed by hooded men in the neighboring municipality of Pantelhó, a Zapatista stronghold. In succeeding days, masked men demanded a "war tax"



**Mexican Army at the ready in streets of the capital. U.S. has poured in millions of dollars of equipment to supply military forces of semi-bonapartist PRI regime with firepower to put down "urban insurgency."**



Impact Visuals

from inhabitants, burning down the homes of those who refused to pay. In the municipality of Chenalhó in the period leading up to the massacre, paramilitaries left a toll of 16 dead and almost 400 families driven from their homes. Throughout the fall there were front-page headlines in Mexico City papers about the killings there.

- On December 21, the Catholic bishop of San Cristóbal, Samuel Ruiz, and his assistant in the diocese, Raúl Vera López, spoke with the secretary of the Chiapas state government, Homero Tovilla, to alert him about the imminent possibility of an attack on Indian communities in the municipality of Chenalhó. That evening, a meeting was held by the PRI mayor, Jacinto Arias, in the nearby hamlet of Los Chorrros, headquarters of the paramilitary group, to plan the massacre.

- On the morning of December 22, the 60 killers arrived in three pickup trucks belonging to the municipal government and paid for by the federal Secretariat of Social Development. All were wearing dark-colored uniforms, many had their faces partially covered by hoods, ski masks or bandanas. Others did not bother to hide their identities and were recognized by survivors as PRI members.

- A patrol of the state police (Seguridad Pública) arrived in Acteal shortly afterwards, its vehicles passing the trucks in which the gunmen had been transported, parked about 50 yards from where the killing was taking place. The police were joined by a team of black-uniformed commandos of the militarized rapid reaction group (Agrupamiento Fuerza y Reacción), an elite state police unit trained in counterinsurgency.

- The combined police detachment took up position in a school approximately half a kilometer from the chapel which was the focal point of the massacre. The police could hear the

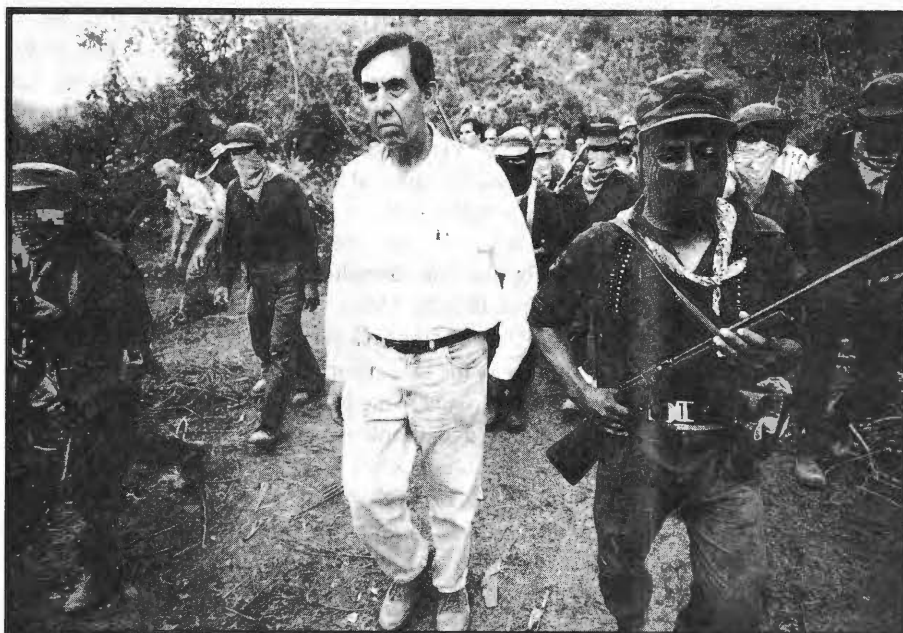
shots, and at approximately noon, peasants asked them to intervene to stop the killing, to no avail. Instead, the police fired their weapons in the air and spoke to their superiors by radio.

- Other police units in position in different hamlets at a distance of four kilometers, three kilometers and one kilometer from the site of the killing also heard the shots but did nothing. The purpose of this heavy police presence in an arc around Acteal was to hold off any counterattack by Zapatista insurgents by setting up a shield behind which the paramilitary killers could act without interruption.

- Alarmed peasants called the office of the National Mediation Commission (CONAI) in San Cristóbal around 11:30 that morning to report the shooting. An official of the CONAI called the secretary of the state government, Homero Tovilla, who called the state police. Several helicopters and light planes of the army and police took off from an air base near the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez to inspect the area of Chenalhó. According to Tovilla, the police reported that they "did not find any evidence of a clash, no house burned, no problem in the area."

- At approximately 5 p.m., peasants asked the police in the school to at least remove the wounded. Again they refused. When the peasants asked for an escort so they could bring out the wounded, the police gave them a password. When the peasants shouted out the password, the paramilitaries let them pass. After the survivors were removed, the police finally moved in, to collect the bodies and to hide them in a cave and at the bottom of a ravine. The purpose: to get rid of the evidence and disguise the magnitude of the crime.

- When the Red Cross discovered the bodies late at night, soldiers under the supervision of the head of the Chiapas State Security Council and the subsecretary of the state



Marco Antonio Cruz

**Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of the bourgeois opposition PRD, visits Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, May 1995.**

government, Uriel Jarquin, moved in to pile the bodies onto military trucks at 4 a.m. and transported them to the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, 170 kilometers away, without identifying the cadavers. There they were hosed down to wash off the blood. The purpose: to remove the cadavers before journalists arrived on the scene, and to clean them up before photographs could be taken.

● In almost every case, death was caused by hollow-point bullets (which expand upon impact) in the back or the head. These were cold-blooded executions. After the shooting had stopped, the killers systematically removed the clothing from the bodies and mutilated them, in many cases beyond recognition. The guns (AK-47 and AR-15 automatic rifles) were bought from army and police officials who regularly seize them in raids on drug traffickers and then sell the “hot” weapons on the black market.

**“Paramilitarization” of the War in Chiapas**

Simply relating the basic facts about the mass murder in Chenalhó makes it clear that it was a deliberate provocation. Like the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador in 1981, for instance, they sought to terrorize the local population and to isolate the guerrillas from their social base. But in this case the killing was clearly part of a broader counterinsurgency plan. Taking place in plain daylight, by uniformed men transported in government vehicles, who acted in military formation as state police stood nearby, who shot women and children on their knees in a chapel, just three days before Christmas: such a brazen action, flaunting wanton cruelty and viciousness, could only be intended to provoke a response, both by the EZLN and government forces.

Was it planned by high-level “hawks” in the army, seeking to reverse cutbacks in ground patrols and troop withdrawals, and anxious to put into action a long-rumored “six-hour plan” to exterminate the Zapatistas with a “rapid surgical operation” as many

speculated (*Clarín* [Buenos Aires], 26 December 1997)? Was it the “revenge of the *dinosaurios*,” the entrenched PRI *ca-ciques* (local and regional bosses), whose control was threatened by the spread of “autonomous rebel municipal councils” of Zapatista sympathizers, and who would like to force Zedillo’s hand? In any case, it was not some ancestral feud between Indian families, nor a religious dispute (the leaders of both the paramilitaries and the refugees are Protestant, while the bulk of the killers and their victims are Catholic). The assassins were recruited, paid, trained, armed, transported and protected by the state, and their orders clearly came from higher up in the chain of command of the PRI-government/military apparatus.

This corresponds to a growing “paramilitarization” of the war in Chiapas. The initial army offensive following the New Year’s Day 1994 EZLN upris-

ing was halted by then president Carlos Salinas after ten days because of a mass outpouring of hundreds of thousands of protesters in Mexico City. The number killed by the army was officially put at around 150, but human rights groups estimate several hundred dead. After beginning negotiations that soon ran into the ground, in February 1995 newly installed President Zedillo (who set off an economic disaster in devaluing the peso shortly after taking office) tried the lightning-strike plan intended to “decapitate” the rebels by seizing or killing EZLN Subcomandante Marcos. But again it had to be called off when the Zapatistas retreated while protests escalated in the capital. Since then, the army has occupied EZLN-held areas of the low-lying Lacandon rain forest in southeastern Chiapas with hundreds of roadblocks and scores of military bases.

Meanwhile, a series of paramilitary groups have sprouted in the upland and northern parts of the state. Interior minister Chuayffet tried to blame the Chenalhó killings on local disputes “going back to the 1930s.” The paramilitary bands are widely referred to as *guardias blancas* (white guards), the private armies of gun thugs hired by big ranchers in the ’30s to fight land reform. Then and today, impoverished Indians are the victims, but today’s death squads are organized directly by the governing party and are run by local PRI leaders who were some of the prime beneficiaries of the land reform. Likewise, the Zapatistas are settlers in land reform zones who opened new lands in the 1950s and ’60s where there were no *latifundistas* (large landowners). In the lowlands and highlands, the Indians’ direct oppressor is the capitalist state.

Four years ago there was only one paramilitary group, grotesquely named “Paz y Justicia” (Peace and Justice), operating in municipalities in the northern part of the state. Today, according to an article in the Mexico City daily *El Financiero* (24 December 1997), there are nine paramilitary groups in

Chiapas. The newcomers include "Los Chinchulines," centered on the municipality of Bachajón; "Los Degolladores" (Throat Slitters), in San Juan Chamula; "Máscara Roja" in Chenalhó, and an umbrella group, the MIRA ("Revolutionary Insurgent Anti-Zapatista Movement") headquartered in Oxchuc, a low-land municipality with many EZLN sympathizers. Eight of the nine groups are openly led by PRI members, including mayors, federal and state deputies and ex-government officials.

A French anthropologist working in Chenalhó, Andrés Aubry, investigated the origins of the paramilitary groups. He found 17 bases in the municipality and almost 250 members of the squads. Typically, they were youth who because of population growth in the region could get neither land nor work, and lived by stealing the crops or possessions of those who were members of the *ejido*, the communally owned lands given to the peasants under the land reform. Made desperate by the economic conditions of the agrarian counter-reform legislated by Salinas during his presidency (1988-94), which made it legal to sell *ejido* lands and quickly led to large landowners and companies buying up large swatches of land, this "lumpen peasantry" was easy prey for the police and PRI rural agents, who offered them guns and told them to extract "war taxes" from the Zapatista-sympathizing peasants. The amounts demanded, 25 pesos per adult every two weeks, were impossible for most to pay (*La Jornada*, 23 December 1997).

While these groups sport a variety of names, they act in identical fashion. In every one of the areas mentioned the paramilitaries have staged massacres as state police stood by only a couple hundred yards distant. They are armed with weapons supplied surreptitiously by the state. They have been observed receiving training from army commandos. Even the most barbaric practices, like slicing out fetuses from the mother's womb after murdering her, and then holding them up as trophies, are copied from the Guatemalan elite counterinsurgency troops, the so-called *kaibiles*, who in turn were trained by U.S. Green Berets. And on the day before the Chenalhó mass murder, the weekly magazine of the left-liberal Mexico City daily *La Jornada* published an article with a copy of the agreement under which Governor Ruiz Ferro supplied Paz y Justicia with 4.6 million pesos (about US\$600,000), coming from the federal Secretariat of Social Development. The agreement was cosigned, as a "witness of honor," by the then commander of the VII Military Region, General Mario Castillo (*Masiosare*, 21 December 1997).

Now *La Jornada* (3 and 4 January) has published eyewitness accounts from the region detailing how the paramilitary groups in Chenalhó were set up by ex-soldiers and expolice, paid for by the PRI agents, armed with weapons from the government, supervised and trained by state police on active duty, and aided by army officers to hide their uniforms and weapons the day after the attack. Dozens of names of the local leaders are supplied. And *Proceso* (4 January) has published an official army plan from 1994 for setting up paramilitary groups to destroy the EZLN's bases of support.

The direct ties between the paramilitaries and the PRI-government are now clear for all to see. But while they are led by local *caciques*, these bands are not rogue operations but the prod-

ucts of a strategy planned at the highest levels of the army and in the Pentagon. This is part of the U.S. military's doctrines for waging "low intensity conflict," the current name for "counterinsurgency" techniques perfected from the U.S.' losing battle against the Vietnamese National Liberation Front in the 1960s and its extermination of leftist Guevarist guerrillas in Latin America, culminating in the assassination of Che Guevara himself in Bolivia in 1967. An extensive report on the "Massacre in Chenalhó" by the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center (named after the 16th century Dominican friar who challenged the policies of the Spanish crown and colonists that led to the decimation of the Indian population in the New World) noted that today "Chiapas is living in a context of *low-intensity war*."

In fact, it is a textbook example, literally. The U.S. Army manual on "Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict" (FM100-20) states that "between war and peace is the ambiguous environment" which it calls "LIC." That condition certainly describes the situation of Chiapas today. "Military operations in LIC," it says, are mainly "conducted for political, economic and psychological effects." The "how-to" manual calls for the formation of "area coordination centers" at the sub-national level (such as the Chiapas state security council). It notes that "police forces often need assistance from military or paramilitary forces, or from some kind of auxiliary organizations.... National mobilization normally includes establishment of local paramilitary forces." These forces are called upon to carry out intelligence and psychological operations.

That would include the typical "civic action" programs by which the military propose to "win the hearts and minds of the people" while preparing to slaughter them. In this vein, on December 27, the Mexican Secretariat of Defense issued a statement detailing that troops of the VII Military Region had in the previous day provided: "377 medical consultations; 164 dental consultations; 83 first aid treatments; 18 injections; 222 applications of fluoride; 49 talks about sanitary conditions; carried out 124 tasks of carpentry, painting, masonry, repair of electrical appliances, installation of electricity, cleaning of latrines; and performed 135 haircuts" as well as providing toothpaste to 80 people, medicine to 644 people, and food to 569 displaced persons (*Excelsior*, 28 December). But the Mexican army has not stationed 40,000 troops in the state of Chiapas, one soldier for every 20 people, to provide haircuts, dental exams and clean latrines.

In particular in the case of "mass-oriented insurgencies," the U.S. Army manual calls for "populace and resources control operations" designed to "deny support and assistance to the insurgents by controlling the movement of people, information, and goods." This is precisely the role that the paramilitary groups in Chiapas have been playing. In Chenalhó, the several hundred gunmen in the PRI-organized bands kept thousands of Indian peasants trapped in their hamlets. In the last month, the paramilitary forces cut off all food and refused to let inhabitants come or go. Those who managed to flee were bottled up in refugee villages, such as the one at Acteal. These Indians, while sympathetic to the EZLN, had decided not to join the fighting in 1994 and formed a Catholic church-led civil society, Las Abejas (The Bees), to make local improve-



ments. But they did challenge the local PRI bosses and marched in antigovernment demonstrations in San Cristóbal. And so the strategy was to drive them out or wipe them out.

In the aftermath of the Acteal massacre, several thousand Indians were rescued from the hamlets surrounded by paramilitary gunmen in Chenalhó. While the press reported this as a humanitarian action of the army, it was for the most part carried out by various non-governmental organizations. And the result is that the peasants are not much safer than before, 8,000 of them crowded into a tiny village. Meanwhile, taken together, the actions of the official military and their paramilitary allies have resulted in the creation of huge free-fire zones in the highlands, in preparation for a military showdown against the Zapatistas. Whatever the ultimate goals, *that* was an immediate purpose of Operation Chenalhó.

The *New York Times* (29 December) recently reported that the U.S. military has been pouring funds into Mexico, supplying the Mexican army, navy and air force with equipment, training more than 3,000 troops, and lacing the country with CIA and DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agents. They report that among the young officers trained in the U.S. military schools are hundreds who form the core of Air-Mobile Special Forces Groups (GAFE), whose tasks "ranged from air-assault operations and military policing to human rights." The *Times* article notes that there is "nothing to stop the transfer of U.S.-trained army officers to similar special forces units that might be deployed against leftist insurgents in southern states like Guerrero and Chiapas." In fact, they have been deployed in Guerrero and Chiapas.

What the *Times* article does *not* mention is that these "special forces units that are now stationed at the headquarters of the 12 regions and 40 zones that make up Mexico's military geography" are *already* some of the most notorious killers of the blood-drenched Mexican army. The most infamous recent incident of assassinations by government forces before the Chenalhó massacre was the murder of six youths seized by a police squad in the Buenos Aires district of Mexico City last September. It now turns out that in the unit under the command of two top police officials there were a number of GAFE members, infiltrated into the police special forces (Jaguars and Zorros), which have since been dissolved. Described as "an elite commando trained for extreme situations and prepared to kill without hesitation" (*La Jornada*, 21 November 1997), the U.S.-sponsored GAFE were accused by other police of perpetrating the murder.

### Break with the Popular Front!

As part of the struggle for permanent revolution in Mexico, Trotskyists fight to break the working class and oppressed from the popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. In the 1930s, Trotsky warned that such class-collaborationist alliances, tying the workers to a wing of the bourgeoisie, would pave the way for fascism or brutal military dictatorship. This is what happened in Spain and France in the 1930s, in Indonesia in 1965, in Chile in the 1970s. Today, as the decrepit PRI regime totters, sectors of the bourgeoisie in Mexico and internationally have looked to Cárdenas to divert popular discontent into safe channels of bourgeois parliamentarism. Leaving the government party in 1987 to run for president the next year, he drew around him most of the

burgeoning "independent" unions which had broken from the corporatist CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and CT (Congress of Labor), and a host of smaller PRI-controlled federations (CROC, CROM). The result was a nationalist popular front.

Subsequently, Cárdenas and other ex-PRI politicians formed the Party of the Democratic Revolution. Various ex-leftists liquidated into the PRD, including the remnants of the Stalinist PCM and much of the pseudo-Trotskyist PRT. By 1995, following the Zapatista revolt in the south and the nationwide economic crisis that sent workers' real wages plummeting, the PRI "labor" officialdom was panicked. The CTM/CT called off the traditional May Day parade in the huge Zócalo plaza in front of the presidential palace, fearing that instead of saluting Zedillo, furious workers would boo him or even try to storm the building. For the first time in decades, half a million workers marched independently of the PRI. In 1996 and 97, the May Day marches, though smaller, still numbered several hundred thousand. Among the various "independent" federations that marched was the May 1 Inter-Union Coordinating Committee (the Intersindical), at whose invitation Cárdenas spoke in the Zócalo on May Day last year.

As social conditions in Mexico have continued to deteriorate, the ruling class needed an escape valve to allow the accumulating steam to blow off. Cárdenas was their man. In 1988, when he was cheated out of the presidential election by Salinas (election commission computers conveniently crashed, and later the evidence of ballot fraud was destroyed by a mysterious fire in the federal congress), and again in '94 when he lost to Zedillo, who was unknown but had the unlimited finances and organizational steamroller of the PRI behind him, Cárdenas faced a relentless blackout from the PRI-controlled media. But when he ran for governor of the Federal District in 1997, he was given lots of TV exposure, much of it favorable. Cárdenas won a three-way race with almost half the vote, and the PRD became the second-largest party in the national congress.

Virtually the entire ostensibly socialist left in Mexico is in Cárdenas' tow. Some, such as the Militante group (followers of the British Labourite Ted Grant), are actually part of the PRD, calling on this bourgeois party to adopt a "socialist program"! Others, including remnants of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party), supporters of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, ran candidates on the PRD slate. In another variant, the POS (Socialist Workers Party), part of the Latin America-based current formed by Nahuel Moreno, did not call for votes to the PRD, but tails after it under the watchword of a supposed "democratic revolution." In different ways, they are all part of the Cardenista popular front.

For the last decade the International Communist League warned Mexican workers and leftists of the danger posed by the popular front around Cárdenas, the main "alternative solution" for the bourgeoisie should the PRI unravel. Yet at this moment when it was more urgent than ever for Trotskyists to call to break from this class-collaborationist coalition, ICL leaders suddenly declared that there was no popular front in Mexico. What with the weight of nationalism and the PRI's control of labor (not to mention supposed "semi-feudal" social conditions, see page 11), they suggested, a popular front was out of the question for the

benighted Mexican masses. This shift was in line with the growing abstentionist tendency in the ICL, which coincided with the purge of the longtime cadres who formed the Internationalist Group. If the popular front doesn't exist, you don't have to intervene in struggles to fight for breaking with this class-collaborationist coalition.

Yet the popular-front character of the Cardenista coalition is confirmed by recent events. Among those elected federal deputies as "external candidates" on the ticket of the PRD were several leaders of the Intersindical. In the new Mexico City government, Cárdenas' chief of staff is Rosario Robles, an ex-member of the Maoist Organización de Izquierda Revolucionaria-Línea de Masas who was also the former secretary of the union of National University workers, STUNAM. At its inaugural session, the head of the new Federal District assembly, long-time leftist student activist Martí Batres, declared that the Cárdenas government was "the result of intense social, civic and political struggles....the students of 1968, the trade-union insurgency of the 1970s, the neighborhood organization after the 1985 earthquake" (*La Jornada*, 6 December 1997).

As we noted in our last issue, one of the purposes of the popular front coalition was to cut down on the huge number of street demonstrations in the capital. A PRD leader called on "social organizations" to give Cárdenas a respite from "unjustified pressure" (quoted in "Mexico Elections: Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism," *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997). Now, in a December 5 march to the Zócalo to greet the new city government, a loudspeaker proclaimed: "We are conscious that change is necessary and we must all support engineer Cárdenas to get it. The pitched battles in the streets are over.... There will be no more closed offices or streets."

The Cárdenas popular front would like to achieve this by heading off militant struggles from within the unions, student groups, neighborhood associations and the like. At the same time, it must still periodically put itself at the head of protests in order to keep them under control. Thus in the first demonstrations in the capital after the massacre in Chenalhó, Cárdenas was the featured speaker and his message was "to reaffirm...that the PRD continues to be the party that is leading the national protest against acts of violence in Chiapas" (*La Jornada*, 26 December). But just in case undermining struggles from below and detouring from above are not enough to hold things in check, Cárdenas appointed Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Rodolfo Debernardi head of the Federal District police. Debernardi, in turn, appointed three other military officers to top-level positions in the chain of command. This shocked many in the capital, coming after growing popular protest against militarization of the police. And after only a few days in office, one of Cárdenas' military top cops had to resign amid charges



Mexico City, May Day 1997: (Above) Contingent of CNTE, leftist opposition in teachers union. (Below) Platform of May 1 Inter-Union Coordinating Committee where Cárdenas spoke.



that he had covered for one of the drug cartels.

Meanwhile, the PRD is dutifully carrying out its role as "loyal opposition" in helping to maintain Zedillo's anti-working-class austerity policies. In early December, an anti-PRI coalition of the bourgeois opposition parties of the right and "left" in the federal Congress unexpectedly passed a reduction of the value-added (sales) tax from 15 percent to 12 percent. But when the right-wing PAN (National Action Party) quickly backpedaled and joined with the PRI in passing Zedillo's IMF-dictated budget, the PRD left the session in protest...and did nothing. Speaking on behalf of imperialist capital, the *New York Times* (16 December) praised the new "democratic civility" in ramming through the budget, saying that this ensured that Mexico would "stay on the path of fiscal conservatism and global engagement." Earlier, the *Wall Street Journal* (10 November) hailed the PRD as an example of a new trend: "Latin America Leftist Parties Trumpet Capitalism." It quoted PRD economic spokesman Senator Jorge Calderón saying: "Our party is postulating a market economy with adequate public regulation."

As the semi-bonapartist PRI-government comes apart, and its rigid control of labor through corporatist "unions" weakens, the popular-front opposition coalition around the PRD is doing its job to shore up capitalist rule. Cárdenas & Co. say they are ensuring a peaceful "democratic transition" from decades of one-party rule. The bloodbath at Chenalhó underlines, as we have repeatedly stressed, that the crisis of the PRI regime is likely to be anything but peaceful...or democratic. The long-expected massacre is a signal of the long-expected crisis of the regime.

Whether it puts on a "left" face with Cárdenas or is headed by the Harvard- and Yale-educated technocrats who front for Wall Street and the White House while siphoning off millions to their family and friends, any capitalist government of Mexico today will impose deadening poverty on the masses in the name of "stabilization" and "adjustment." To prevent an outcome of more misery and more massacres, Trotskyists call on the working people to *break from the Cardenista popular front*. It is necessary to forge a *revolutionary workers party* to fight for a *workers and peasants government* that can sweep away the rotting edifice of this rundown regime and the brutal exploitation it has enforced on behalf of its capitalist masters.

### Build a Trotskyist Party in Mexico!

In the international outcry over the mass murder at Chenalhó, the plethora of human rights groups all directed their appeals to one or another capitalist government. The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), an obedient servant of the PRI government, joined the "investigation" being carried out by the federal prosecutor, Jorge Madrazo, the former head of the CNDH, who in that capacity managed not to indict Governor Rubén Figueroa for the 1995 massacre of 23 peasant militants by state police in Guerrero. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) gave the Mexican government a deadline of six months to investigate. The Center for Justice and International Law and the Catholic Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Center for Human Rights (named after a fanatical right-wing priest killed by government forces in the clerical-led Cristero Revolt in the 1920s) joined Human Rights Watch Americas in calling on the Organization of American States to pressure Zedillo.

Other groups appealed to various agencies of the United Nations. The liberal Catholic Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center in San Cristóbal and the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights called for the UN special reporter on extrajudicial executions to come back to Mexico, and for the International Court of Justice to try individuals or state officials for genocide. Although they chose different addresses to lodge their appeals, all these human rights organizations looked to organs of the bourgeoisie to defend the Indian masses. Appeal to the United Nations, that den of imperialist thieves and their neocolonial lackeys? For what, so that they can stage another Somalia massacre in the name of "peacekeeping" and human rights? Appeal to the OAS, which Che Guevara rightly referred to as a Yankee ministry of colonies? The fact is that the Mexican government, the U.S. government, the OAS, the UN and the rest are agencies of the capitalist ruling classes who have unleashed the terror on the oppressed Indian masses, in Mexico and elsewhere.



Internationalist photo

**Internationalist Group supporters at NYC demo protesting massacre in Chiapas, January 2.**

While claiming to defend democracy and liberty, to oppose ethnic cleansing and genocide, they simultaneously launch saturation bombing raids against Serbian villages or the Iraqi capital. The OAS was the vehicle through which the U.S. gave a "pan-American" cover to its counterrevolutionary embargo against Cuba. The Yankee global gendarmes who rained death on the impoverished Panama City district of El Chorrillo on 20 December 1989, murdering more than 3,000 Panamanians in order to pursue Washington's vendetta against its former puppet General Manuel Antonio Noriega, today use the same excuse of a phony "war on drugs" as a cover for their intervention in Mexico and their racist terror in the ghettos and barrios at home.

From paramilitary white guards in Chiapas to black-uniformed hit teams in Mexico's capital, the U.S. is up to its neck in training and arming the death squads, just as it was in the 1980s in El Salvador and with the Nicaraguan *contras*. This is one more proof that it is impossible to defend the downtrodden indigenous population of Mexico without fighting imperialism. Popular-frontism props up capitalism while peasant guerrillas are incapable of replacing this system of misery and massacres with a society of abundance and equality for those who toil. When the Zapatistas led a caravan of 1,111 Indians to Mexico City last September, they were met with an outpouring of sympathy all along the way, capped by an impressive show of solidarity by a quarter million people in Mexico City's Plaza de la Constitución. Yet this was also a display of impotence, for they could only stage this event with the tolerance of the authorities. And a regime which slaughters scores of Indian women and children in far-off Chiapas is fully capable in its death agony of mowing down hundreds of students, workers and leftists, as it did in the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968.

Trotskyists have long proclaimed that in this epoch of imperialism, the stark choice facing humanity is *socialism or barbarism*. On the eve of the 21st century, the Chiapas Massacre is the face of modern barbarism. The killings in Chenalhó are the prod-

*continued on page 20*



# For Permanent Revolution in Mexico

Once again, Chiapas and the Zapatista peasant rebellion are on the front pages of the world press. After a brief period of fighting in January 1994, and the February 1995 army manhunt for EZLN leader Marcos, the uprising settled down into interminable "negotiations" between the insurgents and the government. This produced an interim "Agreement of San Andrés" (February 1996) on "autonomy" for the Indian populations, which Zedillo has refused to implement, alleging that it would undermine Mexico's sovereignty. This is pretty rich coming from a president who has mortgaged Mexico's oil income and sold off big chunks of the country's economy to Wall Street. In response to the Chenalhó massacre, the EZLN and many liberal intellectuals have demanded that the federal government implement the San Andrés accords, while Zedillo calls for new negotiations. Either way, this is a dead end. The liberation of Mexico's masses from poverty and racist oppression will not come through negotiations with their exploiters and oppressors.

Mexico is a classic case of what Marxists have analyzed as *uneven and combined development*, characteristic of countries of belated capitalist development. Alongside the most modern industries there is tremendous economic and social backwardness. In this context, the Stalinist reformists have put forward different versions of a program for revolution in stages, the first stage supposedly being bourgeois "democracy" while socialism is relegated to never-never land. Carrying this program to its logical conclusion, the pro-Moscow Communist Party ended up liquidating into Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' bourgeois PRD, while more militant-posturing Guevarists and Maoists undertake peasant guerrilla struggles on the basis of a "democratic" (i.e., bourgeois) program. Claiming to be fighting the remnants of feudalism, they wrap themselves in the *nationalist* imagery of the Mexican Revolution. But the reality is that Mexican working people face a U.S. imperialist-dominated *capitalist* regime, and what is required to defeat it is a workers revolution, supported by the peasantry and fired by *proletarian internationalism*.

This is the perspective of *permanent revolution*, as developed by the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky. He first developed this theory on the eve of the 1905 Russian Revolution, and later extended it to other countries of belated capitalist development, particularly colonial and semi-colonial countries. Trotsky held that in such countries, the tasks of achieving democracy, national emancipation and agrarian revolution could only be achieved through establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading the peasant masses behind it; that such a workers revolution, led by a communist vanguard party, would necessarily soon pass over to socialist tasks; and that this could only be secured and the basis laid for a communist society of equality and abundance through international socialist revolution extending to the most advanced capitalist countries. This was the program of the October 1917 Revolution

under the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, that gave birth to the first workers state in history, the Soviet Union. It was the internationalist program that Stalin denounced in inventing the nationalist myth of building "socialism in one country" (while peacefully coexisting with the bourgeoisie internationally). The latter was the ideology of the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution that paved the way for the ultimate demise of the USSR under the pressure of imperialism.

In polemics over the last year against the Internationalist Group, *Workers Vanguard*, the newspaper of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, has claimed that the IG supposedly *opposes* permanent revolution. Why? Because we reject the ICL's insistence that peasants in Latin America are fighting remnants of feudalism. *WV* No. 657 (6 December 1996) refers to the need for "the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside which continue[s] to plague the countries of Latin America," supposedly beset by "the inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism." Likewise, a lengthy article on Mexico in *WV* No. 672 (8 August 1997) harped on the need for a fight against "elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage [that] survive in the countryside," including "The *hacienda* (landed estates), peonage and the *tienda de raya* (stores that take scrip instead of money....)" In articles in *The Internationalist* Nos. 1, 2 and 3, we pointed out that peonage and company stores are capitalist phenomena, that large landholdings in Mexico today are thoroughly capitalist in character, and that Spanish colonialism had a *combined* character, with feudal and pre-feudal forms of servitude used to produce for the world capitalist market, as was also the case with slavery in the American South.

In short, we wrote:

"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 Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997

We noted also that the myth of Latin American feudalism, now repeated by the ICL, was invented by the Stalinists in order to justify their program of a revolution in "stages." It is flatly contrary to Marx's analysis of Spanish colonialism and American slavery. In his *Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1859* (known as the *Grundrisse*), Marx remarks: "That we now not only call the plantation owners in America [i.e., the entire Western hemisphere] capitalists, but they are such, rests upon the fact that they exist as anomalies within a world market based on free labor." And in his famous description of the genesis of the industrial capitalist (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 31), Marx writes, his pen dripping with bitter irony:

"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 black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."

But the ICL leaders' view of Mexico is not derived from a misunderstanding of Marx. It certainly has more to do with what they remember of the Marlon Brando movie *Viva Zapata!* (as well as more recent trash such as *Bring Me The Head of Alfredo Garcia*) than with a materialist analysis of actual social conditions in Latin America. They have picked up a theme sounded by the imperialist bourgeoisie, for whom it serves very definite political aims. In a recent typical example, a Reuters (4 January) news dispatch headlined "Is Mexico's Chiapas Slipping Out of Control?" states: "Observers trace Chiapas's semi-feudal politics back to colonial times when autocratic caciques (local bosses) fiercely defended their spheres of influence." The purpose of this simplistic and false view is to absolve the PRI of responsibility for the massacres, ascribing them to local backwardness.

The ICL leaders' anti-Marxist view is belied by looking at conditions in Chiapas. Even in this most economically backward state of Mexico, the contemporary Zapatistas are not fighting feudal or semi-feudal landowners and demanding an agrarian reform to institute land to the tiller; in fact, the Zapatista peasants (who live in agrarian reform settlements) rose up against the *abolition* of land reform by Zedillo's predecessor Salinas that has enabled big capitalist corporations to buy up *ejido* lands, forcing millions of peasants from their homes. The fact that the EZLN revolt broke out on the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect is no accident. One of their main complaints is over cheap Iowa corn being brought in by the trainload, sprayed with green goo so that it supposedly can only be used as feed grain, but which has been sold for human consumption, undercutting local producers. This and the drastic fall of coffee prices on the world market in the early 1990s drove many of these small peasant commodity producers to the wall economically. Chiapas peasants have demanded maintenance of price supports for basic grains and bank credits to buy fertilizer, hardly "anti-feudal" demands.

The situation of the Chiapas peasantry can be seen in a microcosm by looking at the conditions in Chenalhó, the site of the recent massacre, as detailed by the anthropologists Andrés Aubry and Angélica Inda (*Masiosare*, 28 December). By 1910, the lands—which a century earlier had belonged to the Spanish crown and were then seized by a leading post-independence politician—had passed into the hands of a former administrator, who briefly became governor of the state during the Mexican Revolution. In 1939, when General Lázaro Cárdenas (father of the present bourgeois opposition leader) launched the land reform, the lands in Chenalhó were expropriated from a German administrator of coffee plantations. (Both before and after World War II, Germans were among the leading landowners in Chiapas, including the Kronthals, Hesses, Obermayers and Blums, all of whom held land in Chenalhó.) While much of the land was given to the agricultural laborers to be held as communal *ejido* lands, larger estates were given to local Mexican farmers. Their descendants are the present landowners, PRI bosses and organizers of the paramilitary death squads. Feudalism or even semi-feudalism? Hardly.

This is not simply an abstract, analytical point. Were the ICL's anti-Marxist distortion of permanent revolution ever intended to be implemented, in Mexico or anywhere else in Latin

America, it would lead to serious disorientation. If conditions in the countryside were still semi-feudal, it would be normal for rural rebels to call for carving up large estates and handing out parcels to individual peasant cultivators. Yet even the peasant guerrilla reformers of the EZLN call for lands expropriated from large landowners to be distributed "to landless peasants and agricultural workers who request it, in COLLECTIVE PROPERTY." Under semi-feudal conditions, the technical and economic bases would not exist for voluntary collectivization of land. Yet not only the EZLN but landless peasants in various countries of Latin America, notably the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) in Brazil, call for collectivization of agriculture, a demand raised as well in Trotsky's Transitional Program. But does the ICL leadership even care about such questions? ■

### The LTS and the Cardenista Popular Front

## Another Invention by WV

In its obfuscating polemic against the Internationalist Group, *Workers Vanguard* (No. 672, 8 August 1997) uses a rather curious "argument" to justify the new line of the ICL that there is no Cardenista popular front in Mexico: it claims that the IG denounces the existence of a popular front in order to capitulate before this class-collaborationist coalition (which according to *WV* does not exist). In justifying this absurdity, it makes an amalgam between the Internationalist Group and the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS—Workers League for Socialism), an "ex"-Morenoite tendency which supposedly holds this position. According to *WV*: "The LTS' favored device to cozy up to the bourgeois PRD is to discover the existence of a popular front around Cárdenas, although it is unable to explain what are the components of this 'popular front'."

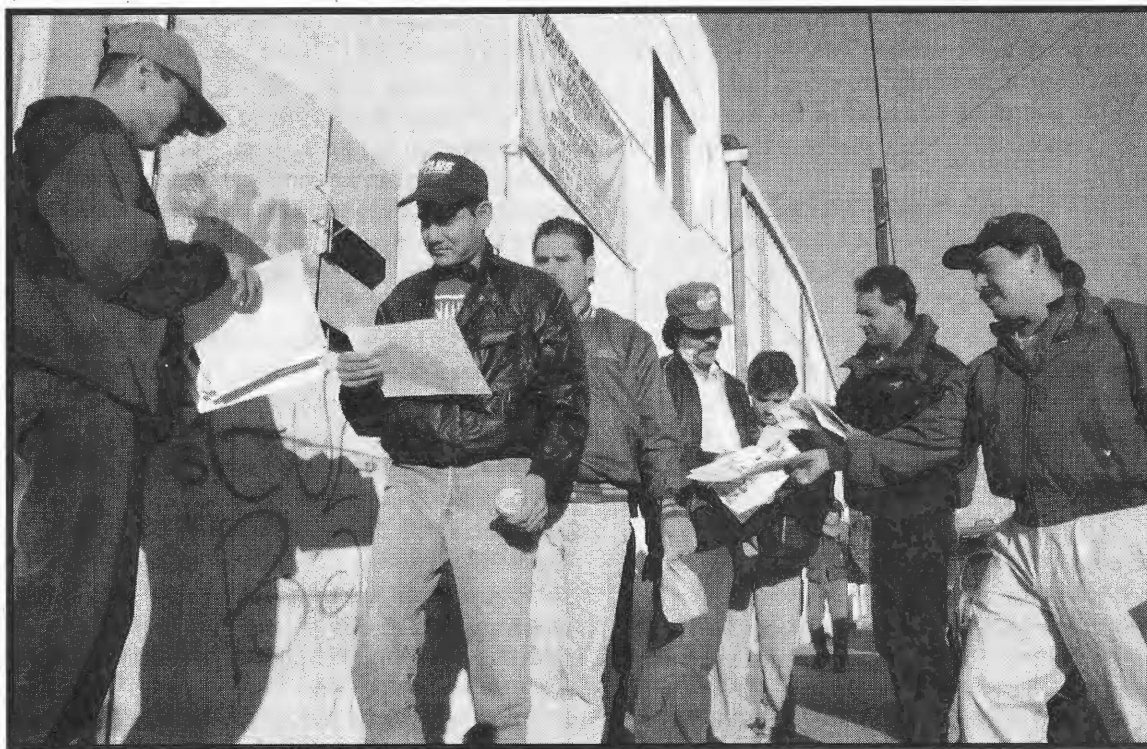
Any careful reader of the new *Workers Vanguard* will have noticed that the article doesn't provide any quote from the LTS saying any such thing. This is no accident. The LTS newspaper cited, *Estrategia Obrera* (May 1997), does not once mention the words "popular front." Nor is this to be found in its post-election supplement (July 1997). But perhaps the LTS said this somewhere else, or using other words. Where? When? The LTS does indeed capitulate before Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' PRD, and it does so in the classic manner, by calling for "Down with the PRI!" without mentioning the PRD in its demands. The LTS also spread illusions in the popular-frontist National Democratic Convention.

However, in accord with Morenoite tradition, one of the "favored devices" of the LTS to cozy up to the PRD is to *deny the existence of a popular front in Mexico*. Thus the magazine of its international tendency, *Estrategia Internacional* (No. 6, Winter 1996), reproduces an LTS document which says that "we are not yet fighting a Popular Front in the government," that "It's not even sure that such a government will be installed soon in Mexico," and that the capitalist alternative to PRI rule is "a coalition government among the various bourgeois forces."

As with all of the "proofs" by *WV* of its "discovery" that there is *no* popular front around Cárdenas and the PRD, just at the moment he was elected governor of the Federal District, its latest device is a *total invention* in the service of a policy of *abstention* from the struggle against the Cardenista popular front. ■

## Mexico

# Victory to Tijuana Maquiladora Workers



David Maung/Impact Visuals

**Maquiladora workers fight for independent union at Han Young subsidiary of Hyundai in Tijuana.**

Over the past seven months, workers at a steel manufacturing plant in Tijuana have waged a tenacious struggle demanding an independent union. Begun in June as a struggle against wage gouging, the fight at the Han Young metal plant quickly turned into a fight against firings, as union activists were summarily dismissed. On October 6, a union representation election was held at the plant under the auspices of the state Arbitration and Conciliation Board. After the workers voted almost unanimously in favor of the STIMAHCS, a metal workers union affiliated with the FAT (Authentic Labor Front), the company management brought in fictitious employees to cast votes for the supposedly existing "union," the CROC. The latter is one of several corporatist groups tied to the long-ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) which have straitjacketed Mexican labor for decades.

A number of international observers watched the voting in the election as a means of pressuring the arbitration board, which routinely favors management. This had no effect, however, and on November 10, the board ruled against the workers, saying that STIMAHCS could not legally represent them

since it organized steel, iron and other metal workers and they produced "auto parts" (the workers weld and assemble chassis for the nearby Hyundai tractor trailer plant)! Furthermore, the board cynically claimed that the overwhelming vote for the independent union only reflected the sentiment of the workers at the time of the election. On November 24, several workers fired by Han Young management went on a liquid-only hunger strike demanding that the vote recognizing their union be certified.

Meanwhile, lawyers with the National Association of Democratic Attorneys and associated with the opposition bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas appealed the government board's decision to the "National Administrative Office," a toothless body set up to oversee compliance with the labor provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Last fall, a number of groups in the U.S. involved in protests against sweatshop labor took up the cause of the Han Young workers. The case became a focus of opposition to the White House request for "fast track" authority to negotiate a hemisphere-



wide free trade zone without Congressional "interference." Appeals were made to Hyundai management, as the de facto bosses of the feeder plant, to live up to their "corporate responsibility." A consumer boycott of Hyundai automobiles was organized in a number of U.S. cities, with protests at dealers' showrooms.

Boycott organizers have focused their campaign on pressuring the capitalists as opposed to organizing the working people in defense of their own class interests. They have looked to one or another representative of the bourgeoisie (company management, government agencies, bourgeois politicians and media) to "support" the workers. This is not only futile but counterposed to the workers' interests. The capitalist rulers on both sides of the border are united in their efforts to squeeze profits out of the lifeblood of the workers. The only "corporate responsibility" they feel is to defend the interests of capital.

The Campaign for Labor Rights (CLR) focused its efforts on lobbying the U.S. Congress, amid the squabbling among the capitalist politicians over Clinton's defeated "fast track" free-trade bill. Rep. David Bonior of Michigan, the Democratic whip in the House, took up the Han Young case to build sentiment for *bourgeois protectionism*, such as pushed by Missouri Democrat (and presidential hopeful) Dick Gephardt. An appeal by 18 Democratic Congressmen called on President Clinton to raise Han Young in his talks with Mexican president Zedillo, which Clinton reportedly did. The *New York Times* got in on the act with an editorial.

The organizers of the Hyundai boycott figured they had the wind in their sails because of the great publicity around the case and the defeat of "fast track." Then in mid-December, Han Young agreed to new negotiations. The company demanded a new union recognition election, which was held on December 16, and again STIMAHCS won against the government-controlled "union," now the powerful corporatist CTM since the CROC bowed out. Management supposedly agreed to recognize the independent union. Newspaper articles announced a settlement. A CLR Labor Alert (17 December) proclaimed "Victory in Tijuana!!!" However, when the time came for the company to transfer the union contract to STIMAHCS, they didn't show. A new Labor Alert (20 December) declared: "Han Young: More Betrayals!!!"

The struggle at Han Young is a classic case of why liberal pressure politics is against the interests of the working class, and sets the workers up for defeat after defeat. The new CLR Alert acted shocked: "International supporters of the workers had been pressuring Zedillo to intervene as a positive force. The federal intervention on Tuesday was exactly opposite of what we had requested. The federal government stepped in on behalf of the government-controlled union. For the feds to come in supposedly as impartial mediators" and then to support the company's maneuver showed that "the feds are operating on behalf of management and the CROC/CTM...." Some revelation, that the capitalist government operates on behalf of the capitalists and their government-controlled corporatist "unions"!

This incident does dramatically show how dangerous lib-

eral and reformist illusions in the supposedly "impartial" character of the government can be. Yet the campaign organizers are still at it. The latest CLR communication says that "Han Young workers are putting their energy into pressuring various sectors of government in Mexico!"

Maquiladora and other workers throughout Mexico should be putting their energy into organizing class-struggle unions that are organizationally and *politically* independent of the capitalist rulers and their parties, and building a revolutionary workers party with a program to mobilize the class power of the proletariat on both sides of the border. In contrast to the liberals and labor bureaucrats, whose protests against NAFTA are based on protectionist poison, against "foreign labor," we fight against the "free trade" rape of Mexico in the name of proletarian internationalism and opposition to imperialism. Not appeals to Clinton and the capitalists, but powerful labor *action* in defense of the embattled Mexican unionists is what's needed. To lay the basis for this, Han Young workers should directly declare their solidarity with the struggles of U.S. and South Korean workers.

We print below a translation of an article on this struggle in *El Internacionalista* (October 1997), published by the Internationalist Group in Mexico.

The last years have witnessed the intensification of workers' struggles in the "free trade" maquiladora zone in Mexico's border area with the U.S. A new industrial belt has been consolidated in northern Mexico at an accelerated pace after NAFTA took effect, composed mainly of assembly plants, which are subsidiaries of large U.S. and Japanese "multinational" corporations. The number of workers in the maquiladoras is now over 800,000.

This young labor force, made up primarily of women, has given increasingly clear examples of its determination to fight for its rights. Mobilizations to commemorate May Day in the last three years have gone beyond the control of the corporatist CTM *charros*, and from Tijuana to Matamoros combative actions for better conditions have broken out. But at every point the struggle to organize truly independent unions confronts capitalist state power. Thus, the necessity to break with the bourgeois parties and to forge a revolutionary workers party that will be the tribune of all the oppressed is posed (see "Mexican Maquiladora Workers Fight for Their Rights," *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997).

In Tijuana, Baja California, the workers at the Han Young Plant, supplier of trailer chassis to the Korean company Hyundai, have started to organize. As a result, seven of the main organizers in the organizing drive have been fired over the last two months. It all began in June when 120 workers at the plant took management and the CROC by surprise—CROC is the government-controlled "union" which is paid directly by the companies. They stopped work in order to call attention to their economic demands (payment of profit-sharing in accordance with Mexican labor legislation) and to demand improvement in their working conditions.

Because many workers are exposed to toxic fumes and do not have adequate protective gear, they suffer skin burns and are gradually losing their sight. Also, the workers have no independent organization to fight for their interests. The majority of the workers in Han Young are unfamiliar with their work contract; they are also not aware of the "union" meetings organized by the CROC. As is the case in a large portion of the maquiladoras along the northern border of Mexico, the company directly contracts the services of the CROC or CTM (branches of the corporate control of the workers movement by the PRI, the ruling party for over sixty years), to block any attempts at independent organization.

This past June 2, immediately after the company administration found out that the workers were not going to come to work, they called the police. At the same time one of the CROC representatives arrived to try to calm down the workers. The workers rejected this attempt. The next day, as the factory remained shut down, elected workers representatives and company management began negotiations. Han Young promised to take action on all the demands, including recognition of an independent union. With these promises, the workers returned to work one day later.

It was immediately obvious that the bosses' promises would not be kept. The Conciliation and Arbitration Board (JCyA, government body that suppresses workers struggles) advised Han Young managers to hire an expert in "psychological conflicts," that is, a strikebreaking advisor. Han Young management followed this advice and from August 6 through 13 fired three out of thirteen workers who had been elected to the executive committee of the new union. Before firing them, management offered the three union members large sums of money to desist from their organizing efforts. They didn't accept the bribes and were thrown out without any compensation whatsoever.

On August 14, a new work stoppage was called in response to the firings. This time, one of the workers was physically attacked by a Han Young manager. On September 1, two days before the date announced for union elections, management threatened to close the plant if the independent slate won. When September 3 rolled around, the JCyA canceled the elections, claiming an error in the filing of legal forms. At the same time, a state government representative sent instructions to television stations not to mention what was happening at the Han Young Plant. The threats and repressive acts continued and on September 9 four more union activists were fired.

Meanwhile, in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, the management at the Delnosa plants, a General Motors affiliate, fired 33 workers because of a work stoppage on June 12. The movement spread to the majority of GM's six plants in that city, with the participation of over 400 workers. As at Han Young, the strikers demanded that profit-sharing payments be distributed in accordance with Mexican legislation. As in Tijuana, management agreed to pay up to 600 pesos (US\$75) in cash and coupons, and promised that there would be no repression. But ten days later, the firings began, including the entire committee elected by the workers.

Workers action is urgent on both sides of the border in order to win. The mobilizations at the Han Young Plant have been organized by the Frente Auténtico de Trabajo (FAT) and supported by the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers. These groups have filed several lawsuits against the Han Young company and the Hyundai corporation for illegal firings, nonpayment of salaries and physical attacks against workers. However, Mexican courts, like those in the U.S., are neither neutral, nor potential allies of the workers: together with the "conciliation" and arbitration boards, they are part of the capitalist state apparatus which represents the class enemy. Their purpose is to smash or tame any attempt by the workers to organize.

For this struggle to be victorious what is needed is the mobilization of the working class in international action. If the workers in each factory act separately, they will be weak compared to the powerful imperialist conglomerates. But, if the tens of thousands of workers in the maquiladoras unite their efforts, they may unleash an explosive workers movement that would shake this new industrial belt. In Tijuana, there are more than 700 maquiladoras, and there have been industrial conflicts in several plants contracted by Hyundai. In July 1996, 16 workers were fired at Daewon, and at Laymex, 90 workers stopped work in August 1996, joining Daewon workers in a march on the main Hyundai plant demanding better wages. There they were met by residents of the Maclovía Rojas neighborhood, who were threatened by Hyundai expansion plans (*San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 11 June).

Efforts are underway to organize workers in the maquila industry. In Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez and other areas, workers centers have been formed. Various organizations offer legal consultation. But above all it is necessary to forge a *revolutionary leadership* to mobilize the working class in action *against* the bosses and their state. Based on the Marxist program, this leadership would not limit itself to a narrow union focus, but rather would aim at a wide *class struggle*. Thus, it would struggle directly against women's oppression, demanding an end to pregnancy exams, defending the women workers who have been fired for being pregnant, while demanding the right to free abortion on demand and free child care centers, open 24 hours a day. A class-struggle leadership would also fight to form workers self-defense groups against the corporatist pseudo-union thugs.

Above all, there must be a struggle for the international extension of workers struggles. The combative strikes of South Korean workers a few months ago highlight this necessity (as well as the need to combat anti-Asian racism which is part of nationalist ideology). Backed in action by U.S., Japanese, and Korean workers, the maquiladora workers would gain strength to smash the capitalists. But this requires a struggle to throw out the current union leaderships, replacing them with a leadership forged in the struggle for a revolutionary workers party, a party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, animated by proletarian internationalism extending across the border into the heart of imperialism. ■



Brazilian Morenoites call for "Full Support to Minas Gerais Police Strike."



Mexican Morenoites call for "Freedom for the Jailed Rebel Police."

## Latin America: Opportunist Left Embraces the Cops

### Police Are the Armed Fist of the Bourgeoisie

For more than a month beginning in late June, Brazil was convulsed by a series of uprisings by armed police, led by the Military Police, notorious for their racist massacres of the oppressed. The cops were demanding higher pay for carrying out their dirty work for the capitalist rulers. Yet the top leadership of the CUT labor federation, in a case of suicidal reformist myopia, fulsomely *supported* this ominous cop mobilization. And, scandalously, so did most of the parties claiming to be socialist and even communist. In some cases, these pseudo-revolutionaries were sporting T-shirts with the likeness of Che Guevara as they demonstrated in support of the uniformed gun thugs of the bourgeoisie!

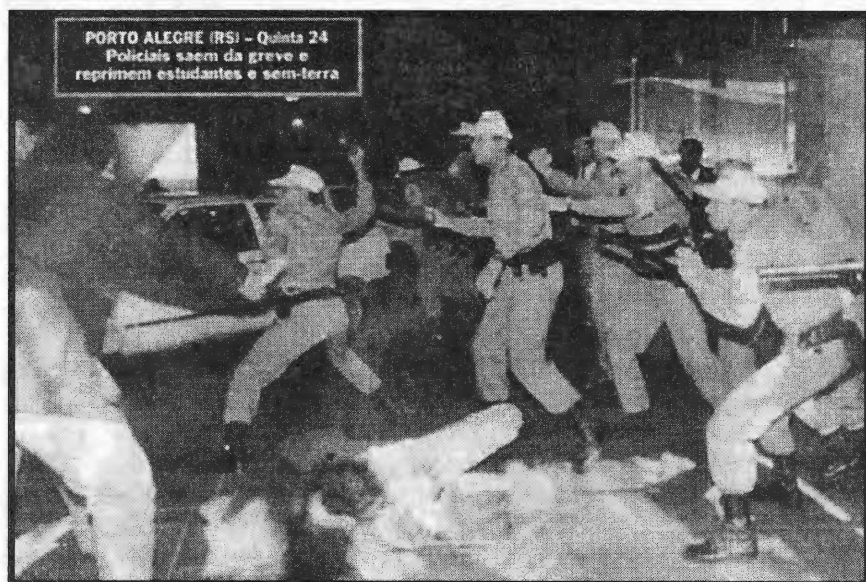
In Mexico, on the eve of the November 20 commemoration of the Mexican Revolution, an elite paramilitary police force (the *zorros*, or foxes) in the capital barricaded themselves in their barracks. The next day they clashed with a military column sent to dislodge them. The masked cops were resisting the arrest of 14 of their number implicated in the kidnapping and assassination of six youth on September 8. The Mexico City police are notorious killers and thieves, indicted by human rights groups for routinely using torture on "suspects." But last May when the cops mutinied, various self-proclaimed socialists actually hailed

these professional assassins and uniformed gangsters!

Our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have repeatedly warned that the cops are the *armed fist of the bourgeoisie*. In contrast to much of the left, which calls for "unionization" of the police, the LQB has waged a courageous and bitter fight to remove municipal *guardas* (police) from the municipal workers union of the steel city of Volta Redonda. In consequence, the LQB has been the target of sustained judicial assault, by the cops, the Popular Front city government and pro-police elements installed by the courts to seize control of the Municipal Workers Union. (See "New Repression Against Brazilian Trotskyists" on page 48 of this issue, and also "The Crisis of the Brazilian Capitalist State," in *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997, translated from *Vanguardia Operária*, newspaper of the LQB.)

Support for the cops is no special quirk of the Brazilian and Mexican left. Across Latin America, supposed "far leftists" have hailed "rebellions" by the various police and military forces, including by the officer corps of the capitalist armed forces. This is an accurate measure of the real politics of groups which claim to be Trotskyist but which actually range from centrist to outright reformist, with varying doses of nationalism and social democ-





Ronaldo Bernardes/Zero Hora

**Military police in Porto Alegre, Brazil come off strike in order to attack students protesting privatization and attacks on peasants, July 1997.**

racy. Behind their support for bonapartist cop mutinies is a frantic reformist drive to “unite” with *any* opposition to “neo-liberalism,” including forming “popular fronts” with the most reactionary right-wing forces. Yet such opportunist crime doesn’t pay, for as the cops get their 50-100 percent raises, they keep on beating workers and peasants, shooting Indians and black slum dwellers, and torturing leftists. In the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, the day after the police were paid off they brutally attacked an MST (landless peasants movement) occupation of land owned by General Motors.

In Mexico, the newspaper of the POS-Z (Zapatista Socialist Workers Party), *El Socialista* (No. 228, second half of May 1997) devoted its entire front page, including a big photo of a confrontation between cops and the military, to an editorial headlined “Freedom for the Jailed Police Rebels” and highlighting the slogan, “Police Have the Right to Unionization.” (As an afterthought, down at the bottom of the page was a tiny headline about the sit-downs by striking teachers that tied up the Mexican capital for days.) The military takeover of the Mexico City police is a dangerous bonapartist move threatening democratic rights and targeting poor and working-class neighborhoods such as Tlalnepantla in particular. Yet this police “rebellion” was no blow for “democracy”—it was a mutiny whose central demand was for untrammelled *cop power*.

The POS-Z is the main organization in Mexico of followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist caudillo Nahuel Moreno. With their latest show of confidence in the bourgeois state, the Mexican Morenoites lay bare the unbridgeable chasm that separates them from the program of revolutionary Marxism. In solidarizing with the cop “protest,” the POS-Z claims that “the police have been contaminated by anti-authoritarianism, because of their desire to have their labor and human rights respected”! This is a dangerous (not to say demented) lie. What *El Socialista* doesn’t mention in its article is that the cop “rebels” were protesting being removed

from “their” neighborhoods, where they regularly shake down and beat up anyone who crosses their path, terrorizing working-class and poor *colonias* (neighborhoods).

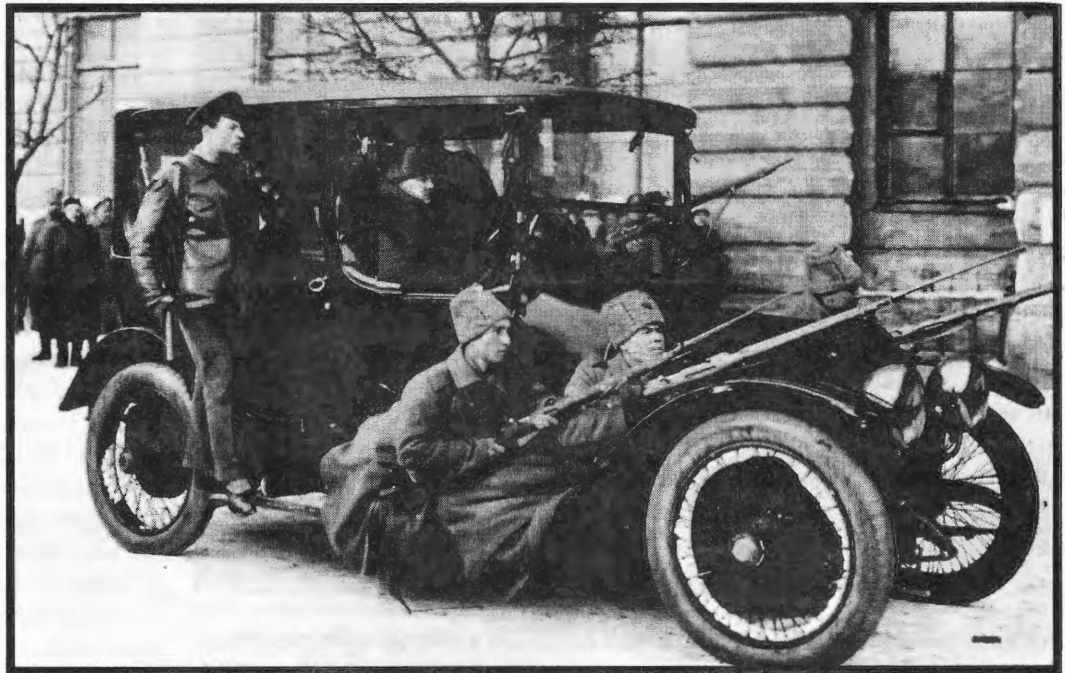
Police “strikes” for better wages and “working conditions” inevitably have a bonapartist content, that is, they are fighting for more power to the police. Better working conditions for these enforcers of capitalist law and order means increasing their capacity to persecute minorities, bust strikes and perpetrate provocations against leftists. To believe that the police could be an ally of the oppressed amounts to saying that the capitalist state can be reformed into socialism. Nothing could be more wrong. It is an elementary Marxist principle that the assassins whose guns are trained on the oppressed have no place in the workers movement.

This is also an inescapable lesson of the history of the class struggle. In Mexico, one only has to recall the massacre in June 1995 of 17 peasant protesters in the ravine of Aguas Blancas in the state of Guerrero at the hands of the motorized state police. Or the massacre of hundreds of courageous Indians in the state of Chiapas following the Zapatista uprising in January 1994. Or the more than 40 peasants tortured by the police in the state of Oaxaca since the appearance of the EPR guerrillas in June 1996. Or the brutal beating of Tarahumara Indians by state police in Chihuahua this past May. But according to the Morenoites, the brutal police thugs just want *their* “human rights” respected.

The recent wave of intense police repression in Mexico City began in the first week of August, as police staged 70 operations in a supposed crackdown on crime. There were four massive raids in five days in the *colonias* (neighborhoods) of Buenos Aires and Doctores, supposedly in search of stolen auto parts. More than 700 people were hauled in without warrants, yet all but a dozen were released because there was no basis for arresting them. The point was to intimidate the working-class and poor population. The September 8 police killings were part of this campaign. The six youths were seized in another cop sweep, as the *zorros* cruised through the Buenos Aires district, shooting up motorists and grabbing youths off the street. The bodies of the victims were later found dumped outside of town, shot in the back of the neck and with signs of torture.

Far from this being a “war on crime,” the cops run some of the biggest auto theft gangs. Instead, this is part of the government’s campaign to prepare to put down “urban insurgency,” for which the army and police have purchased large quantities of military hardware and received training from the U.S. (see “Mexico: Militarization Made in U.S.A.,” *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997). As the head of the human rights commission of the Assembly of Representatives of the Federal District noted, the practice of police indiscriminately arresting people on the street in “identification checks” began during the

**Marxists fight not for "unions" of capitalist cops but for red guards of revolutionary workers and soldiers! In 1917, soldiers in the Russian army rallied to the cause of workers revolution.**



Boris Yurchenko/Bettmann Archive

visit of U.S. president Bill Clinton, and now the police are "mobilizing as if we were in a *state of exception*" (*La Jornada*, 8 August). Some "anti-authoritarian" police!?

### Marxism on the Role of the Police

The support by leftists to police "strikes" goes straight to the question of the state, which is at the heart of Marxism. As Lenin stated in his work *The State and Revolution*, written in August and September 1917 as part of the preparation for the Bolshevik-led October Revolution:

"According to Marx, the state is an organ of class *rule*, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another; it is the creation of 'order,' which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, however, order means the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to alleviate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors."

The task of the police is to protect the interests and property of the bourgeoisie, that tiny minority which exploits and lives off the labor of the vast majority. The cops' daily duties consist of breaking strikes, throwing peasants off the land, terrorizing oppressed minorities, persecuting leftists, torturing and even killing anyone who is seen as a serious threat to the existing order. In Latin America, the cops are often the death squads in uniform.

In order to justify support to the police, Latin American leftists offer a variety of pseudo-Marxist arguments. The most egregious comes from Guillermo Lora, long-time centrist leader of the Bolivian POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), who argues that in Bolivia, "one can say that a soviet-type organization, an anti-imperialist front, could include the whole of the police, as an institution" (Guillermo Lora, *Respuesta al impostor N. Moreno* [1990]). This suicidal reasoning is a reflection of Lora's patented conception of an "anti-imperialist front" with sections of the lo-

cal bourgeoisie, which led to the POR's bloc with General Juan José Torres in 1971. While painting walls with slogans such as "For proletarian revolution and dictatorship!" the POR's actual politics consist of eternally seeking a popular front with the bourgeoisie, as dramatically shown in its position on the police and army.

A new bunch of centrist imposters is the Brazilian LBI (Internationalist Bolshevik League). The LBI recently claimed to be the most militant fighters for the "dissolution of the Military Police." However, following the outbreak of the cop "strikes" and unable to resist the whiff of a mass movement to tail after, they suddenly dropped this slogan from their press. Instead, the the LBI's paper, *Luta Operária* (July 1997), says it is "unconditionally for freeing all the arrested strikers," delicately neglecting to mention that this refers to cops, while in the next breath admitting that the head of the civilian police "union" in the state of Ceará (the main one arrested) had killed a civilian "in carrying out his police duties." The paper also calls for "no punishment" of the military police personnel who participated in the demonstrations—that is, they should be allowed to return to their "police duties"!

The LBI's article goes on at length about the importance of the police "strikes," saying that due to an "irony of History," in this "strange conjuncture" the "agents of state repression against the workers [were] acting as the vanguard of the struggle against wage cuts"! The centrist fakers of the LBI then try to cover up their outrageous defense of the cops by pretending to give "No Support to a Reactionary Strike of the Police" and even calling for the "Formation of Red Unions In the Troops of the Armed Forces and Military Police"! What cynicism. These charlatans appeal to the muses of History, who in their "strange" and ironic way turn the agents of state repression into the "vanguard" of the wage struggle, and then try to cover their rank opportunism with a fig leaf of deniability and a fantastical "red" slogan.

"Red unions" of the Military Police?! Such creatures have never been seen by man or beast, but only by pseudo-Marxist poseurs when they are in their cups. The LBI is calling here for "red unions" of the Brazilian bourgeoisie's counterrevolutionary white guards—the professional strikebreakers and racist murderers who are the guard dogs of capital. Naturally, the LBI never mentions the fundamental Marxist analysis of the role of the police as a pillar of the capitalist state. To do so would expose the utterly fraudulent character of their call. They might as well call for unionization of the Freikorps in Germany, the forerunners of the Nazi SA shock troops. Indeed, even as it argues that the cops were the "vanguard" of the wage struggle, the LBI admits that in the state of Pernambuco, the "vanguard" of the police "strike" was the notorious Shock Battalion of the Military Police!

Meanwhile, the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party—mainstream Morenoites in Brazil), writes that "The principal sector mobilized in the rebellion in Minas Gerais was the Shock Battalion, which is accustomed to breaking our strikes" (*Opinião Socialista*, 3 July). Their article calls for unity between "workers in uniform" (the Military Police!) and their "disarmed brothers." Evidently the PSTU has had some difficulty selling this line, commenting: "Various readers of this article have possibly already confronted or suffered repression by the police. The images of Diadema, of the homeless in São Paulo, of the police raids in the Rio slums are in our heads." A couple of issues later (*Opinião Socialista*, 31 July) they write:

"Many comrades ask themselves if we should support the demand of officials whose principal functions are to repress strikes, land occupations, the struggles of the homeless and popular demonstrations in general. Many think: can it be that after this whole movement by the police receives our support, the Military Police won't keep beating up strikers and other sectors, the landless, etc.?"

The PSTU answers with a dozen paragraphs of reformist nonsense when for any Marxist or class-conscious worker the simple answer is: "No, that is an illusion. Cops are cops, and therefore they will keep brutalizing the oppressed."

Like the rest of the social-democratized pseudo-Trotskyists who call for "unionization" of the police, the LBI tries to equate the cops with the army. In periods of revolutionary ferment and struggle, particularly at times of imperialist war, Marxists seek to build cells in the conscript armies, to mobilize the drafted soldiers against the bourgeois officer corps. As a revolutionary crisis comes to a head, soldiers committees may be formed, as occurred in Russia and Germany in 1917-18. This is quite distinct from workers' unions, and in any case such calls do not apply to the police who are the professional enforcers for the bosses, who voluntarily take on the "duties" of state repression.

The LBI is a gaggle of cynics, whose vermillion rhetoric serves only to cover their direct collaboration with the agents of the capitalist state. Meanwhile, the thoroughly reformist O Trabalho current of the Workers Party (PT) is actually organizing the cops. One of these followers of the French pseudo-Trotskyist Pierre Lambert is the leader of the "union" of the civilian police of the state of Alagoas, scene of a shootout

between the cops and the army in mid-July. This led the Brazilian news weekly *Veja* (23 July) to talk of "Trotskyist cops" and make fevered comparisons to the Bolsheviks in Russia: "Maceió [capital of Alagoas] in a way recalled the Russian Revolution of 1905: the state power was shaking, but the Bolshevik party was not yet strong enough to lead the downtrodden and lay hands on power, as it did in 1917."

The Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky have nothing in common with these consummate popular-frontists who join with and even are part of the capitalist police! In all his writings, Leon Trotsky clearly distinguished between the policeman and the soldier. The worker who dons a police uniform ceases to be a worker, Trotsky wrote, but a soldier conscript is a worker or peasant in uniform. In his magisterial *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), the Bolshevik leader vividly described scenes of the 1917 February Revolution:

"Toward the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers. Around the barracks, sentinels, patrols and lines of soldiers, stood groups of working men and women exchanging friendly words with the army men...."

"The police are fierce, implacable, hated and hating foes. To win them over is out of the question."

Yet the pseudo-Trotskyist imposters would "unionize" the killer cops that the revolutionary masses in Russia sought to smash.

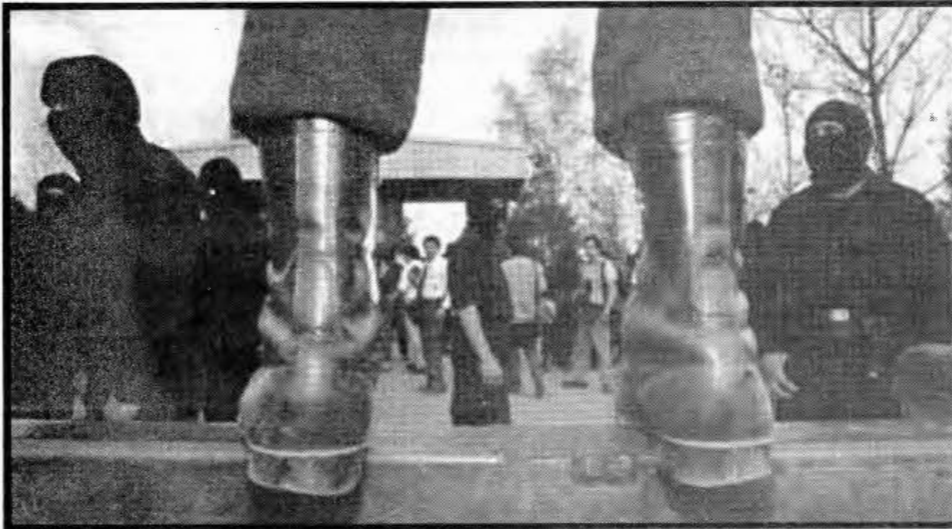
Look at the line-up: calls to include "the whole of the police, as an institution" in a "soviet-type organization, an anti-imperialist front" (Guillermo Lora of the Bolivian POR); talk of "anti-authoritarian" cops who "desire to have their labor and human rights respected" (Mexican POS-Z); fantasies about "red unions" of the Military Police (Brazilian LBI); references to the Military Police as "workers in uniform" (Brazilian PSTU) and actual police members of the O Trabalho current in Brazil. This is a rogue's gallery of Latin American fake-Trotskyists. Let the cops go on "strike," or have some general make a populist *pronunciamento*, and these pseudo-socialists reveal their nationalist and social-democratic colors. Usually alleging that the special conditions of Latin America (in particular, extreme poverty and imperialist domination) justify such class-collaborationist alliances, in calling to organize the police they show the hallmark of all reformists: the belief that the capitalist state is neutral and can somehow be influenced to serve the interests of the workers.

Already a century and a half ago, in drawing the lessons of the failed revolutions of 1848, Karl Marx wrote that the task of a future revolution "will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* [1852]). Drawing on these lessons, V.I. Lenin wrote in 1917 that the proletariat cannot "lay hold of" the state machinery but must smash it and substitute its own apparatus:

"The Soviets are a new state apparatus which, in the first place, provides an armed force of workers and peasants; and this force is not divorced from the people, as was the old standing army, but is very closely bound up with the people." —V.I. Lenin, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" (September 1917)



AP



**Mexico City paramilitary police mutiny against threatened arrest of killer cops.**

Not mythical “red unions” of capitalist cops, but *red guards* of revolutionary workers and conscript soldiers that will smash the tottering bourgeois state apparatus and its twin pillars, the police and the standing army: this was the program of the 1917 October Revolution. In the struggle for workers revolution today, the Internationalist Group and our fraternal Brazilian comrades of the LQB fight not to “union-

ize” the armed fist of the bourgeoisie but to free the unions from the control of the bourgeois state: *cops and courts out of the unions!* As Trotsky noted in the Transitional Program, *strike pickets* are the nucleus of the future proletarian army. We call for *workers defense guards* in strike struggles and demonstrations, leading to the formation of *workers militias*. These can spur the formation of and give aid to *landless peasant militias* in the countryside, thus making concrete the call for a worker-peasant alliance, in struggle for a workers and peasants government.

In all its variants, the call of Latin American leftists to join with the police comes down to a program of *nationalist class collaboration*. We fight instead for the program of *permanent revolution*, for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the extension of workers rule to the key imperialist centers, under the leadership of a world party of socialist revolution, a reformed and authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

## Mexico Regime of Death...

*continued from page 10*

uct not of “age-old Indian feuds,” “semi-feudal” social conditions or similar bourgeois/reformist nostrums, but of a decaying capitalist system that is overripe for revolution. Long gone is the myth of ever-increasing prosperity under capitalism. While workers in the U.S. have seen their real wages fall by more than 20 percent over the last quarter century, Mexican workers have been robbed of *three-quarters* of their income in the same period.

From the coffee plantations and land reform settlements of Chiapas to the congested capital of Mexico City, the largest metropolis in the world, to the hundreds of thousands of young workers in the “free-trade” *maquiladora* factories on the U.S. border, what is posed is not a return to the peasant-based Mexican Revolution of Zapata but going forward to world socialist revolution. While nationalist reformists complain of “globalization” of the economy, Leninist revolutionaries point out that from the beginning of the imperialist era the capitalist economy has been global in scope—indeed, a developing world market existed from the dawn of capitalism. At the same time, in defending workers’ organizations and gains under attack by the bourgeoisie, rather than pursuing social-democratic illusions of a “welfare state in one country,” we seize the opportunities to unite the international proletariat in struggle. The fight in Mexico must be for proletarian revolution, supported by the masses of the impoverished peasants and urban poor, which extends across the frontier into the heartland of imperialism. And that requires the building of Leninist-Trotskyist parties, national sections of a world party of socialist revolution.

The Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista seeks to build such parties in common struggle with our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in the fight to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. Class-conscious proletarians and revolutionary-minded youth in Mexico and the United States are potentially united by thousands of ties. Many Mexican workers are employed by U.S.-owned “multinational” corporations, and upwards of eight million Mexicans labor in the factories and fields of the *gran Norte*. Trotskyists in the U.S. fight the nationalist poison of protectionism tooth and nail, seeking instead to join hands across the border with our class brothers and sisters in common class struggle. Our opposition to NAFTA is on an *internationalist* basis, denouncing chauvinist garbage about “saving American jobs” as we oppose Wall Street’s rape of the Mexican economy. North American workers must be vividly aware that an expansionist U.S. robbed Mexico of half its territory in the last century.

We seek to reach the most conscious fighters for the workers and oppressed, the potential cadres who are key to building a Leninist vanguard party. We present a revolutionary program and perspective, intervening in the class struggle in accordance with our very limited forces, to present the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution and apply it to the events of the day. It is by assimilating the lessons of past historical experience that the future leadership of the proletariat will learn to lead and earn the confidence of the working class and oppressed. We affirm that, contrary to the bourgeois and reformist lies of the “death of communism,” communism lives in the workers struggles and the program of its vanguard, which we of the IG/LQB seek to build. ■



# Myra Tanner Weiss, Fighter for Socialism

By R. Titta

On 17 September 1997, Myra Tanner Weiss, revolutionist, workers leader, and three-time candidate for vice president of the United States on the Socialist Workers Party ticket, died at age 80 in Los Angeles, California. One of the most sterling revolutionary battlers to come out of the generation of the 1930s, she fought to defend immigrant workers, to mobilize the working class against American fascism and against the McCarthyite witchhunt, and later opposed the bureaucratic petrification of the SWP. She fought against male chauvinism from a class perspective and was an inspiration to young women revolutionaries long before women's liberation became a rallying cry in the 1960s. On 7 November, the eightieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, a meeting was held to honor her at the Tamiment Library at New York University. Organized by Myra's former comrades Vivian Strell and David Loeb Weiss (who was also her brother-in-law), the meeting was attended by 75 people, and was addressed by Dorothea Breitman, veteran SWP seamen Bernard Goodman and Henry Spiro, and many others. Tamiment archivist Peter Filardo welcomed attendees and invited those who were interested to return to the library to study Myra's papers, which are on deposit there.

Born into a prominent Mormon family in Salt Lake City, Myra attended the University of Utah, intending to study medicine. She was soon drawn into politics, however, and came to regard her desire to heal the sick as futile in light of the approaching second world war, which she saw clearly on the horizon. Racism, fascism, and in particular anti-Semitism aroused a deep revulsion in her at an early age. The depression of the 1930s fostered her belief that capitalism was incapable of solving the crises it created. In 1935, while president of the campus chapter of the American Student Union, she began to consider revolutionary socialism, studying the programs of both the Stalinized Communist Party, and the Trotskyists, then organized in the Workers Party, a forerunner of the SWP. In discussions with members of both parties, Myra learned that during Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the Stalinist German Communist Party (KPD) opposed united-front action with the German Social Democrats against the Nazis, and instead identified the socialists as "social fascists." She also learned that Leon Trotsky had tirelessly campaigned for a united front of the communists and socialists—who together commanded the allegiance of the German



**Myra Tanner Weiss**  
1917-1997

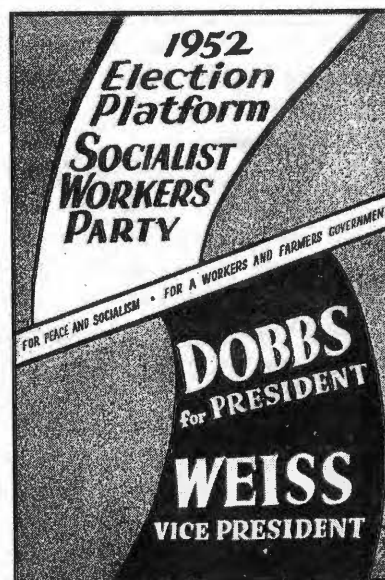
working class in their millions—to smash the fascists. Myra understood that only Trotsky's strategy could have averted the German catastrophe, and this was a key factor leading her to join the Workers Party.

## From the "French Turn" to the SWP

Myra was recruited to Trotskyism by Joseph Hansen, who was then the leader of the small Salt Lake Workers Party group. Hansen soon informed her, however, that the Workers Party was about to formally dissolve—across the country, all its members were in the process of joining the Socialist Party (SP). In a controversial tactic first introduced by Trotsky in France, the Trotskyists were entering the American Socialist Party—which, like many social democrats around the world following Hitler's seizure of power was adopt-

ing a more leftist posture—in an effort to break out of isolation and to recruit new members, especially young workers. Myra participated in the "French Turn" by joining the SP youth group, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), in 1936. She campaigned for Norman Thomas, the SP presidential candidate, and she enjoyed meeting the older SP members, who had been recruited to the party when Eugene Debs was its leader. Nevertheless, she was struck by the limited national character of the SP, which to her contrasted markedly with the revolutionary internationalist perspective of the Trotskyists.

**SWP 1952 election campaign brochure. Trotskyists courageously fought against McCarthyism and for socialism at the height of anti-Soviet Cold War witchhunt.**



In 1937, Myra moved to Los Angeles. There she encountered the remnants of an unemployed movement which, in the depths of the depression just a few years before, had organized hundreds of thousands. She went to work that summer in the walnut groves of Southern California, traveling with Mexican migrants, who taught her Spanish and made her an honorary member of the Mexican Agricultural Workers Union. She found the conditions of this work nearly intolerable, toiling from sun-up to sundown in order to fill a great sack with walnuts she had to peel herself. For this she received fifty cents. Children had to work in order for the migrant families to survive. While the men, women and children worked 14-hour days, six days a week, on Sundays the women again rose at dawn to do the washing and the cooking. Despite these hardships, Myra took great pleasure in the company of the pickers, and found time to organize a solidarity network for strikes, so that when any one of the separately organized Mexican, Filipino, and Japanese agricultural unions went on strike, their picket lines would be honored by all. The Mexican workers engaged in some successful struggles during Myra's time with them, and the legal support she also arranged during these strikes played an important role in the victories.

Though barely 20 years old, Myra was already acting as an outstanding workers leader. She was a moving mass speaker, and addressed crowds many times during her stays in the San Francisco Bay Area. On one occasion, as she recounted in a 1982 interview conducted by Jon Bloom of the Tamiment Library's oral history project, Myra helped organize a demonstration against the appearance in Oakland of a nurse who was raising funds for Franco. As usual, the police protected the fascists and attacked the anti-fascists. During the cop riot, Myra noticed that one policeman was giving a student a particularly vicious clubbing. The diminutive Myra vaulted over the crowd and tackled the cop attacker. The cops subsequently handcuffed her to a telephone pole, and charged her with assault and battery on five police officers, resisting arrest, and inciting to riot—charges that were later dropped.

In 1938, Myra was expelled from the Socialist Party by the party's right wing, along with hundreds of other SP members and the entire YPSL. The expelled revolutionaries, Myra among them, founded the Socialist Workers Party and the Young People's Socialist League (Fourth Internationalist). Myra was a delegate at the SWP's founding convention in New York. During this period she worked in a fish cannery at Terminal Island in San Pedro, port of Los Angeles. The 5,000 San Pedro cannery workers were organized in an old A. F. of L. union, the Fish and Cannery Workers. Myra became popular among the multinational work force, and was soon elected as a shop steward and to the union negotiating committee. She militated vigorously for affiliation with the Sailor's Union of the Pacific, which had just gained an AFL char-



Courtesy of Carmen Bernal Escobar

**Women workers at California Sanitary Canning plant in Los Angeles, around 1936. A 1939 strike by Cal San Workers sparked union organizing among southern California cannery workers. Myra Tanner Weiss fought for unity of Filipino, Japanese and Mexican workers in San Pedro cannery in this period.**

ter as the Seafarer's International Union (SIU), and which had gained the allegiance of cannery workers in San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco. San Pedro workers easily understood that if they struck separately, the employers could shift the work to their facilities in the other ports up and down the coast—unless, of course, all the cannery workers were in one union. Myra won her fight, and was a delegate to the founding convention of the SIU in 1939.

In the 1940 crisis in the Socialist Workers Party, Myra stood fast with Trotsky and the party majority led by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, which included the great majority of the SWP's working-class members. Always a staunch defender of the Soviet Union, despite its Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration, she had no sympathy for the petty-bourgeois opposition, centered around two of the initial American Trotskyists, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern, and NYU professor James Burnham. The Shachtmanites split from the SWP, rejecting dialectics, the philosophical underpinning of Marxism, and abandoning unconditional military defense of the USSR. Soviet defensism was a cornerstone of the Fourth International, which insisted on the need to defend historic gains achieved by the October Revolution despite the Stalinists' betrayals which Trotsky warned would set the stage for capitalist counterrevolution unless the parasitic bureaucracy was ousted by a workers political revolution.

### The Second Imperialist World War

Myra was still working in the cannery on 7 December 1941, when the United States government declared war on Japan. She was accustomed to uniting workers of different nationalities to fight the class enemy, but now at a meeting of her own union, a motion was put forward to expel the many

Japanese workers from the cannery. Myra took the floor to oppose the motion, and, as she later recalled, was booed for the first time by fellow workers. With difficulty, she led a successful fight to defeat the motion. Thereafter, however, whenever she walked over to the Filipino side of the cannery, these workers, whose anti-Japanese sentiments were strongest, banged their knives and drove her out. The Filipino shop steward, who was a friend, told her he could not guarantee her safety and recommended that she stay away. Soon the employers banned the Japanese Americans (Nisei) from the factories, under pressure from the Filipinos, who threatened bloodshed. Not long after that, Myra witnessed the Japanese workers and their families being carted off under guard to U.S. government concentration camps.

It was the most difficult moment of her life. There were machine gun nests on the street corners and the Japanese workers were packed into trains. Myra later recalled hearing that the camps to which they were being taken were originally built for opponents of the impending war. In the event, however, only the Trotskyists opposed the war and denounced the racist round-ups—the Stalinists were four-square for the Roosevelt government at this point, supporting FDR's internment of Japanese Americans (even dropping Nisei comrades from party membership!) and pushing a nationwide no-strike pledge. The government "took care" of the Trotskyist "problem" by imprisoning 18 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party, including national chairman James P. Cannon and Minneapolis Teamster Union leader Farrell Dobbs. To the cheers of the Stalinists, they were charged under the newly minted Smith Act, for supposedly advocating the overthrow of the government by "force and violence." After the war, the same anti-communist Smith Act was used to jail CP leaders.

Around this time SIU president Harry Lundeberg offered Myra a well-paid post as international organizer for the canneries, but she refused—the union was supporting the United States government in the war, and the Socialist Workers Party, as a genuine Marxist organization, was opposed to American imperialism. Myra knew that if she accepted Lundeberg's offer he would soon be firing her, for insubordination. In 1942, Myra Tanner married Murry Weiss, the SWP leader with whom she would be personally and politically linked until his death in 1981. The two were already leaders of the SWP's Los Angeles local, which they eventually built into the largest in the party, with five branches. Myra went to work for the party full-time. As local organizer she developed a model Marxist education program for workers, and directed the party's industrial work. Eventually the L.A. local had a solid presence in the cannery, auto, garment, shipyard, maritime, and longshore unions. In 1944 she was elected to the SWP's National Committee—a step Cannon had recommended at the 1942 SWP convention. She ran for mayor of Los Angeles in 1944, at the age of twenty-seven.



National Archives

**Japanese Americans lined up at Santa Anita race track to be transported to concentration camps in early 1942. SWP denounced FDR's racist internment policy while Communist Party applauded it. Myra courageously fought against exclusion of Japanese workers in San Pedro cannery.**

### Workers Victory in Los Angeles

Perhaps Myra's greatest political contribution to the workers movement was the role she played in driving American fascist Gerald L. K. Smith out of Los Angeles, and ultimately out of politics. In 1945, Smith began having meetings in L.A., and as these grew larger local leftists began organizing protests. Relying on the roots the SWP had developed in the unions under her leadership, Myra sought to transform a planned protest into a powerful workers march on the fascist meeting. She nearly succeeded in foiling the Stalinists and Shachtmanites who were organizing a meek rally on July 20, that was held a mile away from where Smith was speaking. That demonstration drew 17,000, but Myra's motion that the rally be "short and followed by a dramatic but peaceful march" to the site of the fascist provocation was turned down (*Militant*, 28 July 1945). Unfazed by the impotent protest, Smith arranged a rally three months later, but this time it was the SWP that prevailed.

Myra Tanner Weiss was instrumental in bringing about the greatest labor demonstration in the city's history on 17 October 1945. Even before Smith's plans were announced, the SWP had sent telegrams to local labor and left organizations calling for a picket to stop the fascists. The Trotskyists put out tens of thousands of leaflets, rallied rank and file unionists, and forced the Los Angeles industrial and trade union organizations to sponsor the anti-fascist call. On October 17, some 20,000 workers of all ethnicities, including African Americans, Jews, Japanese, Filipinos and Mexicans surrounded the fascist meeting at Polytechnic High School. Myra appeared at the demonstration with a body-



guard of uniformed demobilized soldiers. The workers drove Smith and his entourage of thugs out of town for good, but their victory did not stop there. When at a planning meeting a Stalinist labor leader denounced the SWP as "super-militants who play into the hands of the fascists," Myra took the floor:

"The chairman attempted to suppress Myra Tanner Weiss of the SWP on the pretext of pressing business.... upon protests from the audience, however, she was granted an opportunity to partially reply. Referring to the bitter lessons of the fight against fascism in Europe, she emphasized the need for militant struggle and introduced a motion to picket all of Smith's meetings in the L.A. area, which was adopted by general agreement."

—*Militant*, 20 October 1945

And, in fact, when Smith came back to Polytechnic on November 3, the left and labor unions mobilized an even larger number—25,000 to 30,000 according to the SWP's *Militant*—formed a picket line around the building and sent hundreds in to break up the fascist event. Everywhere Smith went—Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Oakland—the SWP organized labor actions against him. Thus hounded, this pathetic would-be Hitler soon crawled out of public life for good.

### The "American Century" and the Witchhunts

The Socialist Workers Party reached a high point in its membership and influence in the working class in the immediate post-war period, as American workers unleashed a huge wave of strikes. This in part reflected pent-up discontent over the wartime no-strike pledge, and went against the Stalinist CP, which rabidly pushed that anti-working-class measure and sought to continue it after the war, denouncing anyone who struck (such as the coal miners) as pro-Nazi "fifth-columnists." Cannon's "Theses on the American Revolution" (1946), written at the height of this strike wave, overestimated the scope of the working-class radicalization and viewed it from a national perspective, underplaying the need for an international vanguard party. The American ruling class at this time was proclaiming the "American Century," having emerged victorious and virtually unscarred from a war which weakened its capitalist allies and ruined its enemies. The Soviet Union had borne the brunt of the war against Nazi Germany, suffering fearsome losses (some 27 million dead), but had been the decisive military force in smashing Hitler's fascist regime and in consequence the Soviet Army now occupied most of East Europe. The U.S. rulers wanted to finish what the Nazis had started. They launched the



Above: Labor demonstration of 30,000 against Gerald L.K. Smith's fascists, 3 November 1945. Below: SWP's *Militant* reports on mass labor mobilization against Smith two weeks earlier. Myra Tanner Weiss led fight to bring out Los Angeles working class to stop the fascists.

NEW N. Y., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1945 —*Militant*, 27 October 1945

## 20,000 Workers In Los Angeles Picket Fascist Smith's Meeting

**Hoodlum Attacks Arouse Detroit Labor Movement**  
DETROIT, Oct. 26.—The entire Detroit labor movement has been aroused by the gangster assault upon Omeria Dellinger, a leading woman militant in CIO United Automobile Workers Branch Local 215. Mrs. Dellinger, prominent for years in the struggle of the auto workers, is in the Roosevelt Hospital here after suffering severe head and other injuries inflicted by two unidentified hoodlums who broke into her home at dawn on October 18. She was aroused from her sleep by blows from either blackjacks or sharp clubs. Her cries woke her husband but, who sprang from bed at the assault. They quickly fled after hitting him on the head when

**Picketing Against The Fascists**  
Los Angeles labor united on the picket line to show fascist demagogue Gerald L. K. Smith that the workers don't want fascists in America.

**Giant Labor Demonstration Biggest In City's History**  
Secret to THE MILITANT By Mac Patrick and J. Blake  
LOS ANGELES, Oct. 18—More than 20,000 workers, veterans, servicemen, and youth of every race, creed and color, last night picketed fascist Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith's meeting here at the John H. Francis Polytechnic High School for three hours in the most powerful demonstration of anti-fascist solidarity in America since the Trotskyist-led 1939 action against the Nazi Bund rally at Madison Square Garden in New York.

**GM Head Wants Destruction Of 40-Hour Week**  
DETROIT, Oct. 21.—As 225,000 General Motors and 90,000 Chrysler auto workers were preparing to vote this week for the union's new contract, GM President Walter P. Reuther, GM Vice President Charles E. Wilson, and

Cold War against the USSR, and the anti-communist witchhunts of the American labor movement at home.

The SWP was seriously affected by the witchhunts. Its milieu shrank, some of its members abandoned the party; others saw in McCarthyism the advent of American fascism, and advocated that the SWP dissolve itself and go underground. One of those who quit was Grace Carlson, who had been imprisoned during the war. As the only woman among the convicted SWP leaders, she was separated from her comrades and had to serve her sentence without their supportive companionship. Upon her release, she was blacklisted as an ex-convict by employers. Carlson endured these hardships, and was the party's vice presidential candidate in the 1948 election. She was slated to run again in the 1952 elections, when she left politics.

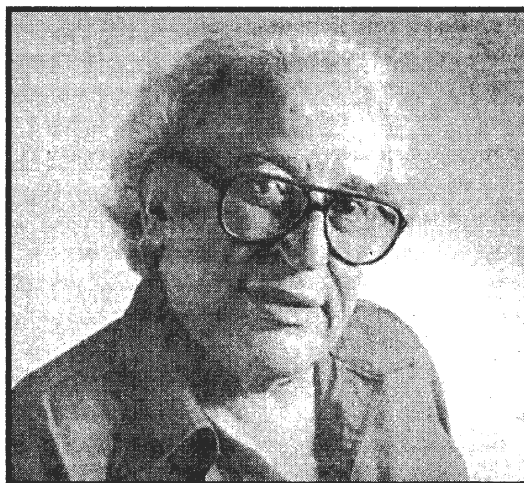


SWP leader James P. Cannon insisted that one of the candidates on the party's national ticket be a woman. He had by then been spending a lot of time in Los Angeles, and was impressed with Myra and Murry's work there. Myra especially won his admiration for her struggle in the Los Angeles branch to reverse the traditional role of women party workers as secretaries, and to bring them forward as organizers and leaders. Cannon therefore advanced Myra's name for the vice presidential slot, and despite the objections of presidential candidate Farrell Dobbs and his cothinker Joseph Hansen, Cannon won the fight. The Farrell Dobbs-Myra Tanner Weiss ticket campaigned not only in 1952, but in the 1956 and 1960 elections as well.

The 1952 elections took place at the height of the anti-communist hysteria, with the Korean war raging. The SWP candidates, staunch opponents of U.S. imperialism, were able to get on the ballot in only a few states. They were often barred from speaking at union halls and other meeting places. Campus tours were difficult, as red-baiters ranging from college Republicans to Shachtmanite youth would heckle them. Inside the SWP, the relentless pressure of the witchhunts caused a serious fissure in the party's proletarian core, a key government target. A liquidationist faction developed around Bert Cochran and George Clarke, which advocated that the SWP abandon the Leninist notion of the indispensability of a revolutionary party, in favor of seeking opportunistic lash-ups with more moderate groupings.

The Cochranites were heavily proletarian, and particularly concentrated in the Detroit and Flint branches, the center of the party's auto work (and of the House Un-American Activities Committee witchhunts). Adherents included workers leaders such as Ernest Mazey, Cochran, and Sol and Genora (Johnson) Dollinger, as well as scores of other active trade unionists. There were important differences within the Cochran-Clarke group. The Michigan-centered Cochranites proper wanted nothing to do with the Stalinists, who were deeply discredited and the main targets of the HUAC witchhunters. On the other hand, the New Yorkers George Clarke and Mike Bartell wanted actively to seek alliances with the CP. This misalliance was united, however, in the desire to "junk the old Trotskyism," as Clarke frankly summed up their program.

Under the influence of Clarke, the faction aligned itself with Fourth International leaders Michel Raptis (Pablo) and Ernest Mandel (Germain), who were fundamentally revising (negating) Trotskyism in the post-war period. Reflecting a Cold War impressionism, Pablo wrote that the problem of workers revolution was now reduced to the struggle between the socialist (read: Stalinist) camp and the capitalist camp, which would lead to a third world war. As this cataclysm approached, the Stalinist "camp" was supposedly thrust by history into leading a worldwide revolutionary struggle. Pablo's thesis of "war/revolution" called upon Trotskyists to eschew the fight for an independent Leninist-internationalist vanguard and instead wherever possible enter the Stalinist parties. Pablo justified this anti-Trotskyist policy with the argument that "the whole historic period of the transition from capitalism to so-



Murry Weiss

Anne Sarason

cialism," a period that could last for "centuries," would be filled by "workers' states that are not normal but necessarily quite deformed." Pablo's opponents rightly characterized this revisionist perspective as "centuries of deformed workers states"—that is, decaying capitalism would not be overthrown by international socialist revolution but replaced by bureaucratic Stalinist regimes sitting atop collectivized property forms.

The murder of Trotsky in 1940 had obviously gravely diminished the Fourth International's ability to rearm theoretically in a new period, and the decimation of FI cadres in Europe by Nazi extermination and Stalinist murder took its toll. Still it took some time for theoretical mistakes and inexperience of the new leaders to combine with opportunist impulses to result in a full-blown revisionist program. As party-minded as he was, even Cannon did not contest Pablo's new theories at first, and supported in a general way the decisions of the Third World Congress (1951). Cannon also tended toward American exceptionalism and a federalist conception of the International. Thus he refused to follow the spirit of the Third World Congress policies in the United States, where the Stalinists had supported the Democrats during World War II and amid the witchhunt were supporting the Democrats during the Cold War. He briefly held that Pablo's strategy might be appropriate in certain European countries, but in the U.S. he would pursue only episodic united fronts with the Stalinists, proceeding from classically Leninist premises. He also could not stomach Pablo's forecast of centuries of Stalinism. Finally, when Pablo supported the Cochran-Clarke faction, Cannon declared that "we are at war with this new revisionism."

The Fourth International, which was founded as the world party of socialist revolution, was destroyed by Pabloist revisionism, which denied the very need for this independent Trotskyist vanguard. To defend Trotskyism, Cannon initiated the International Committee, comprised mainly of the SWP, erstwhile Pablo lieutenant Gerry Healy's *Socialist Outlook* group in Britain, and the majority faction of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste in France, led by Bleibtreu-Favre and Pierre Lambert. However, the International Committee existed mainly on paper. Declaring that "We are finished and

done with Pabloism forever, not only here but on the international field," Cannon failed to take the fight to the Pabloists' strongholds in Europe or to develop the understanding of the nature and origins of Pabloism. The Internationalist Group stands solidly with Cannon and the others who fought against Pabloist liquidationism when this crucial fight came to a head in 1951-53, but this must not make us blind to their weaknesses, which would soon redound upon the SWP itself.

The Cochranites had not won a majority of the SWP's proletarians; the majority still looked to Farrell Dobbs. Cannon's problem in fighting the Cochran-Clarke opposition, however, was that the Dobbs group in the central party leadership was essentially standing aside. Many of those around Dobbs had been inactive as trade unionists for a long time, and some were now party staffers. They nevertheless regarded the oppositionists as the party's lifeblood, and refused to criticize them. In the face of the neutrality of Dobbs and his following, Jim Cannon turned to Murry and Myra Tanner Weiss to fight the liquidationist threat, a collaboration that is reflected in Cannon's book, *Speeches to the Party*. Ultimately, the Cochran group—about a quarter of the SWP membership—was expelled for infractions of discipline. The truth about the Cochranites was that they mainly wanted out of politics.

### The "Weiss Clique" in New York

In 1953 Cannon encouraged the Weisses, both now on the Political Committee, the SWP's leading body, to move to New York. It was a transfer that Cannon felt would revitalize the center, but that Dobbs looked upon as a direct threat to his own position as Cannon's impending successor. The Dobbs group thus introduced the term "Weiss clique" into the political language of the period. Indeed, Myra and Murry and brother David Weiss did gather around them some of the more dynamic and youthful party members, and they engaged in low-level conflict with the Dobbs group for the next ten years. For example, in 1954 in the party newspaper the *Militant*, Joseph Hansen wrote some outrageously puritanical articles against cosmetics and women's fashions, favoring the "look" of the "hardy, ax-swinging pioneer women of America." Not surprisingly Myra, and some of the women from the Los Angeles local, fought against the reactionary implications of Hansen's attitude (which was nevertheless adopted by many in the Dobbs leadership).

Although the "Weiss clique" was dynamic when compared to the conservative, office-bound Dobbs group, they also displayed rightward political appetites. In fact, the Weiss group recapitulated the Cochran-Clarke pattern, after a delay of a few years. Like Cannon and Hansen as well as many of the Cochranites, Murry Weiss tended to equate McCarthyism with American fascism, despite the absence of an organized mass fascist movement, and even when McCarthy's fortunes were waning. In reality, McCarthy was the right-wing cutting edge of the anti-Soviet Cold War drive which encompassed both Democrats and Republicans. Both Myra and Murry

also favored opportunistic lash-ups. In 1948, they advocated entry into Henry Wallace's bourgeois Progressive Party, and had to be pulled back from blocking with it. Later they flirted with the notion of supporting "progressive" black Democrats. The Weisses never attempted to express their theoretical views in a systematic way, and did not identify the reasons for their conflict with the Dobbs group, or attempt to explain the conflict to the ranks. Instead, during the late 1950s, they consistently substituted activist political tactics for a discussion of Marxist theory, just when a theoretical understanding of the nature and basis of Pabloism was crucial in order to combat and defeat it.

It is true at this time that the American political landscape was loosening up. The worst years of McCarthyism were over—though mainly because it had succeeded in driving the reds out of the unions. The American Communist Party was disintegrating, having been the main target of the witchhunts. Furthermore, in 1953 Stalin died, setting off a period of internal tumult in the Soviet bloc, which culminated in the events of the year 1956. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev spoke against Stalin's "cult of personality," the Hungarian Revolution broke out and was crushed by Soviet tanks, and the CPUSA split into an orthodox reformist Stalinist majority and a sizable, more liberalizing minority, led by *Daily Worker* editor John Gates. Other opposition groups followed the Gatesites, all of which eventually exited the party.

It was natural for the SWP leadership to seek to intersect defecting Stalinists, but the Weiss group on several occasions demonstrated their willingness to water down the revolutionary Marxist program to accommodate the Stalinist milieu. In-

creasingly, Murry and Myra were moving away from Trotskyism, with its central concept of the need for revolutionary leadership in the epoch of capitalist decay, and were instead adopting an accommodationist approach in seeking regroupment with the rightward moving ex-Stalinists. This orientation was shared by the Dobbs group, and even for a time by Cannon, until the single-mindedness with which regroupment was being pursued at last led him to identify it as a dangerous form of liquidationism. Meanwhile, the Weisses wooed in turn the Democratic Party-bound Gatesites, and then "progressives" of the *National Guardian* group (leftovers from Wallace's Progressive Party). For the 1958 New York State elections, the SWP even went so far as to build the "Independent Socialist Party" with a more or less Stalinist-reformist program, which ran a

slate of candidates comprised entirely of "progressives" from the *Guardian* group.

### The Youth and the End of the "Weiss Clique"

In one instance, however, the Weisses' activism proved fruitful: Murry and Myra were instrumental in recruiting a left split from the Shachtmanite youth. This was the "Left-Wing Caucus" led by Tim Wohlforth, Shane Mage, and James Robertson. The Weisses won them to Trotskyism, an effort



Farrell Dobbs

SWP

that led directly to the founding of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) in 1960, the first real Trotskyist youth organization since the defection of the YPSL (4th) in the 1940 split with the Shachtmanites. The Weisses' political coup made the more powerful Dobbs group take notice. Dobbs moved fast, and relieved Murry Weiss of his duties of officially overseeing the youth work in 1957, replacing him with his own ally Tom Kerry. Nevertheless, throughout the early years of the new youth work, Murry and Myra remained the real mentors of the new recruits, and followed their political development closely.

In 1960 Murry Weiss penned an article called "Trotskyism Today" for the *International Socialist Review*, in which he bluntly stated that "Trotskyists have never claimed a franchise on revolutionary theory and practice. On the contrary, all of our work is directed towards convincing the working class and its parties to take the revolutionary road." This quotation aptly characterizes the Weisses' thoroughly Pabloist outlook, seeking to push the existing reformist workers parties to the left. This was the very outlook they had once opposed. At this point, Cannon was 70 years old, and was no longer leading the SWP. In his absence (and with his tacit support), both the Dobbs-Kerry leadership and the Weiss group steered the party on an essentially Pabloist course, whose ultimate objective was reunification with the Pablo/Mandel International Secretariat (I.S.) of the Fourth International. Reunification was accomplished in 1963, and the cornerstone of unity was SWP-I.S. agreement hailing Castroism.

While the SWP greeted the 1959 Cuban Revolution with unanimous enthusiasm, Murry Weiss for the Weiss group, and Joseph Hansen for the Dobbs leadership soon articulated a political analysis of these events that was clearly at odds with Trotskyism and the theory of permanent revolution. From a Trotskyist standpoint, what was needed, along with the staunchest call for defending the Cuban Revolution against the U.S. imperialist butchers, was workers councils and a revolutionary workers party in Cuba, which would supplant the consolidating bureaucracy and consciously and actively fight for proletarian revolution internationally. Weiss and Hansen essentially identified themselves *politically* with the nationalist Castroite leadership, their few meekly expressed caveats intended only to camouflage their capitulation. They hailed the July 26th Movement uncritically, as being "objectively" Trotskyist. They did not attempt seriously to explain how a petty-bourgeois movement could have led a healthy workers revolution, or, if this were true, why the Cuban Trotskyists were now in jail.

To the YSA leaders Mage, Robertson and Wohlforth, whom the Weisses had so recently recruited to the SWP, the party's response to the Cuban Revolution was seriously flawed, and represented an abdication of the historic necessity of a



**James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism.**

Pathfinder Press

revolutionary party. As it turned out, the Trotskyist party to which they had been recruited was in the throes of abandoning a Trotskyist perspective in favor of Pabloism. The three youth leaders formed an opposition faction of about 60 called the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), which attempted to advance a critical, revolutionary Marxist analysis of the Cuban Revolution. This led them to ally with the recently founded Socialist Labour League in Britain, led by Gerry Healy, in opposing Pabloism. In the ensuing faction fight in the SWP and YSA, it became clear to the minority that the SWP leadership was intent on reunifying with Pablo. The political identification of the majority with the Pabloist outlook was clear not only on the Cuban question, but on the black question as well: the SWP leaders rejected the theory of "revolutionary integrationism" advanced by Richard Fraser, in favor of

uncritical support to black nationalism and Malcolm X (and even black liberalism, as represented by Martin Luther King), a stance that effectively blocked the party from playing an independent, revolutionary role in the American civil rights movement.

It was Weiss supporters who most energetically defended the majority's pro-Castro policies against the Revolutionary Tendency. (Murry himself had suffered a serious stroke in 1960, which greatly curtailed his own activities during this period.) In late 1962, at Gerry Healy's behest, Wohlforth precipitated an unprincipled split in the minority. Healy wanted unconditional obedience, and to get RT members to renounce their views in order to use the RT in his maneuvers to induce Hansen and Dobbs not to reunify with Pablo. The majority of the RT, led by Robertson and Mage, had abided by SWP discipline yet refused Healy's demand that they individually sign statements avowing that the SWP was a revolutionary and not a centrist party; Wohlforth took his small group out of the RT, and constituted the Healy-allied "Reorganized Minority Tendency." The leaders of the RT were bureaucratically expelled by the Dobbs regime in December 1963, its supporters shortly thereafter. They had violated neither the spirit nor the letter of the party's organizational statutes, and were guilty only of holding positions differing from those of the Dobbs leadership. This purge of the revolutionary minority solely for their political views was contrary to the entire tradition of Trotskyism, and no one was more aware of this fact than Myra Tanner Weiss, who was then still on the SWP's Political Committee.

Myra had a special, lifelong hatred of bureaucrats and bureaucracies, whether these existed in the agencies of the capitalist state, in the trade unions, or in the Soviet union. She had serious political differences with the RT, but in the Dobbs regime she saw an incipient bureaucracy—a party machine seek-

ing organizational solutions to political questions. At the November 1963 Political Committee meeting she put forward a resolution opposing the report of Dobbs's factionalized Control Commission, which recommended expelling the oppositionists for their "disloyal attitudes." The expulsions were carried out at the National Committee plenum the following month. Myra took the floor in defense of the RT, asking all in attendance to "listen carefully to what to me is the most important speech I have ever made in the Trotskyist movement." She took the floor knowing that as a penalty for supporting the RT's rights, the Dobbs group had already blocked her vice presidential candidacy in the 1964 elections. Her speech was impassioned, and in it she pointed out that Robertson and the RT comrades had bent over backwards to accommodate the demands made on them by the Dobbs-Kerry regime. Unable to expel the RT within the confines of Leninist norms, the regime blatantly went outside those norms, expelling the RT "because of their violations of party loyalty." Myra protested:

"We've always spoken of violations of party discipline, and now we have to determine loyalty and that's an idea. Don't you know what an idea is? You can't touch it. Turn and twist as you like, you will not be able to measure it, because it is a thought, a feeling, an emotion. Do I have to tell you that, comrades? And yet the majority of the PC voted to suspend comrades because of their violation of loyalty. Shame! Shame on you! And Dobbs can get away with it here? Maybe, and he did get away with it in the PC. But will you get away with it before the eyes of the radical public? I say you will not and you will have destroyed a great tradition fought for by Trotsky and all of us at one time, at least."

The Dobbs regime turned its back on Trotsky's tradition and expelled the Revolutionary Tendency. Myra was the only National Committee member to vote against the expulsions, and she paid dearly for doing so. Not only was she removed from the SWP's national electoral ticket, but she was subsequently isolated from playing any meaningful role within the party leadership. Furthermore, despite the role that the youth around the Weisses had performed for Dobbs in combatting the RT, they were soon removed from most of their posts, and most eventually left the SWP. Murry and Myra Tanner Weiss quit the SWP in 1965. That same year, in direct response to Myra's challenge to the expulsions of the RT, the Dobbs group adopted its notorious resolution on "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party," which declared that "disloyal people" could be expelled for holding "anti-party" views.

Ironically, the Dobbs group was eventually destroyed by the very elements they had fostered. The bureaucratic strangulation of the SWP, codified in Dobbs's 1965 resolution, went hand-in-hand with its descent into reformism. The resolution itself became an extremely useful tool in the hands of the explicitly anti-Trotskyist gang led by Jack Barnes, which used it in the early 1980s to get rid of the remaining longtime SWP cadres.

Murry and Myra remained political for many years after leaving the Socialist Workers Party, but they were only sporadically active. They had both been students, and then teachers, at the SWP's rigorous "Trotsky School" in the 1940s and 1950s, and so in the late-1960s and 1970s they began to teach

again. While Murry taught a course on the Russian Revolution, Myra became known to individual leftists as the creator and teacher of a profound course on Marx's *Capital*, which proceeded chapter by chapter through the first three volumes of that great work. The Weisses' classes provided the basis for the formation of the New York School for Marxist Education. Most importantly, they had abandoned the Leninist conception of the indispensability of a conscious, revolutionary party to lead the working class in its struggle for socialism. They were tired of party politics. Yet they remained Pabloists without a party, a not-uncommon condition for the followers of Pablo-Mandel, particularly in the U.S.. For the Weisses, as for Pablo and Clarke, the victory of socialism was now somehow guaranteed by the objective conditions of history—an objectivism which reflected Cannon's failure to carry the struggle against Pabloism through theoretically.

Thus the Weisses' post-SWP activities were characterized by a kind of eclectic radicalism. In the later 1970s, Murry and Myra were active in the "Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party," a regroupment effort sponsored by the Freedom Socialist Party. Murry wrote long articles in the FSP's paper proclaiming that the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-76 pointed the way forward. (In classic Pabloist centrist fashion he hailed the "revolutionary" officers of the Portuguese Armed Forces movement, allied with the Stalinist Portuguese Communist Party. The long-since reformist SWP was on the other side of the barricades, arm-in-arm with the CIA-funded Portuguese Socialist Party!) Although Murry joined Clara Fraser's FSP shortly before his death, Myra never did. In 1987 Myra published the pamphlet *The Bustelo Incident: Marxism & Feminism*, about Joseph Hansen's 1954 anti-cosmetics articles (which he had written under the name "Jack Bustelo"). In it, she argues that male chauvinism played an important role in the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party.

In 1989 Myra Tanner Weiss sent the following greeting to the memorial meeting for Richard Fraser, who pioneered the strategy of revolutionary integrationism in the struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution. Her greetings clearly indicated that she remained committed to revolution as she understood it:

"Dick Fraser lived his whole life as a socialist. However important the differences we had between us, we shared the desire for a socialist society and Dick struggled always to organize the working class and to raise its political consciousness.... Dick was always certain of the socialist victory for which he devoted his life. And so are we."

In fighting to build the Leninist world party of socialist revolution, to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, we seek to learn from and stand on the achievements of our predecessors. Despite the many political differences the Internationalist Group had with Myra Tanner Weiss, we honor her as one of the most outstanding workers leaders of her generation. New generations of revolutionary fighters will be inspired by her fortitude and commitment to the cause of the proletariat and all the oppressed, and will learn from her struggle, as we have. ■



## Legal Lynching Bill Narrowly Voted Down

# Defeat Racist Death Penalty in Massachusetts!

BOSTON—The state which in 1927 became notorious for the judicial murder of framed-up immigrant anarchist workers Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti has been at it again. Seventy years after that infamous deed, leading politicians have set their sights on making Massachusetts the 39th state to resurrect the barbaric death penalty. Acting Governor Paul Celluci (Republican) and a host of reactionaries from both parties of the capitalist ruling class want to bring Massachusetts “in line” with states such as Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Virginia, where the *legal lynching* of disproportionately black and Hispanic prisoners is routine.

On November 1, some 150 death penalty abolitionists gathered on the steps of the State House in Boston to oppose the drive for capital punishment. Supporters of the Internationalist Group were among them, with signs demanding, “*Down With the Racist Death Penalty!*” and “*Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*” The radical journalist, former Black Panther and supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization Jamal is the foremost death row political prisoner in the United States and the focus of the international campaign against the death penalty.

During the previous week, Massachusetts’s House and Senate had approved separate death penalty bills, setting the stage for a vote on a “compromise” bill demanding death by lethal injection for 15 capital crimes, including the killing of cops. While the move was identified with Republican Celluci, the bill was supported by 55 House Democrats, almost twice the number of the entire House Republican minority. Additionally, seven Democrats and one Republican who had voted against the death penalty on previous occasions voted in favor of the current bill. With a great public show of “anguished” handwringing and soul-searching, these bourgeois politicians scrapped their “principles” at the first sign of being bullied as “soft on crime.”

Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, who plans to run in

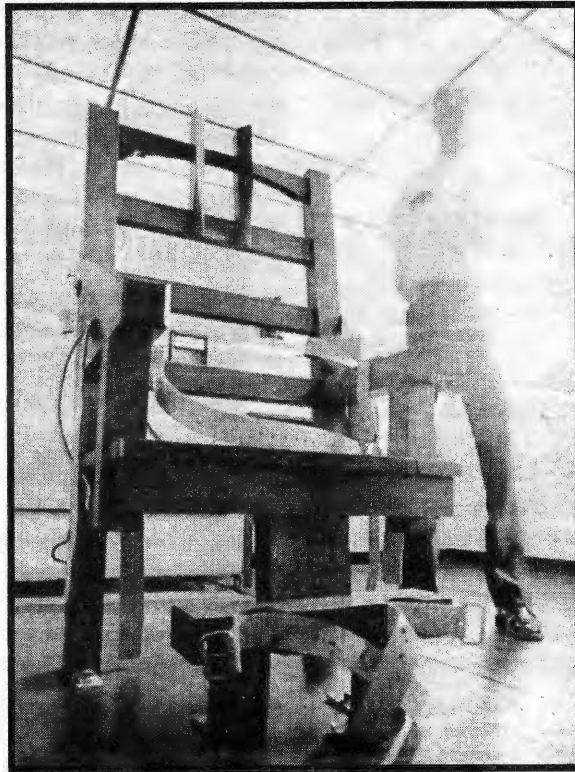
next year’s Democratic gubernatorial primary, vowed to enforce any death penalty legislation in spite of his opposition to capital punishment as “bad public policy.” Bragging that he’s put more people behind bars “than anyone in this state,” Harshbarger’s “alternative” to the death penalty is simply more jail cells and longer sentences. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for liberal Democrat Patricia McGovern, a likely rival of Harshbarger’s who spoke in opposition to the death penalty at the November 1 rally, has said that McGovern also planned to “uphold the law” if elected.

Unexpectedly, on November 6, the joint bill was defeated in the House by a one-vote margin. Nevertheless, Cellucci and his cohorts are fuming, and the death penalty promises to be a central issue in the 1988 elections, when capitalist politicians will rush to out-demagogue each other on the issue. This last time around their attempt failed, but the would-be hangmen will be back. It is necessary to mobilize all defenders of democratic rights, minorities and the working class to defeat them.

### Democrats, Republicans Say “Long Live Death!”

The Massachusetts death-penalty debate takes place in the national context of an all-out racist “law and order” campaign spearheaded equally by Clinton’s Democrats and Gingrich’s Republicans. After Republican Bush won the presidency in 1988 over former Massachusetts governor Dukakis by vituperating against escaped black murderer Willie Horton, in 1992 Democrat Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, tried to outdo Bush in cynically playing the “race card” by making a special point of executing a brain-damaged black man, Ricky Ray Rector, in the middle of the campaign.

Since the Supreme Court’s 1976 lifting of a brief (four-year) ban on capital punishment, the exercise of this barbaric practice has grown alarmingly, with the total number of judicial murders in the last two decades now more



Mark Foley/AP

**“Old Sparky”: Florida’s execution chair. Death penalty is capitalist barbarism.**

than 420. Over a hundred of this number were slaughtered in 1995-96 alone, and so in 1997 74 inmates were put to death, considerably exceeding the previous record of 65 executions in 1957. In the past year, Oregon, Kentucky, and Colorado have all held their first executions in decades, and many states, including Virginia and Pennsylvania, have been setting up multiple execution dates, even for inmates whose appeals process has not been completed.

Across the country, capitalist politicians North and South have been vigorously pushing the death drive. In 1996, Congress eliminated funding for death penalty resource centers, which had handled most appeals for death row inmates, who are overwhelmingly poor and unable to afford competent defenders with experience in death penalty cases. Also in 1996 Congress passed Clinton's grisly "Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act," which restricts federal review of appeals and cripples *habeas corpus* protections against wrongful imprisonment. Wrong verdicts are very much at issue when it comes to the death sentence in America's "justice" system: since 1973, at least 66 death-row inmates have been released after having their guilty verdicts overturned.

In Massachusetts, concerns about the arbitrariness and fallibility of convicting and sentencing in death penalty and other cases led Democratic state representative John P. Slattery to change his vote at the last minute, scuttling the death-penalty bill. Slattery cited the much-publicized case of Louise Woodward, the 19-year-old British *au pair* who had recently been convicted on second-degree murder charges and sentenced to 15 years to life in prison for the death of an infant in her care. The presiding judge reduced the conviction to manslaughter and released Woodward after an outcry in Britain and as polls showed that a big majority locally considered the young woman to have been excessively charged, wrongly convicted, and grossly over-sentenced.

### A Legacy of Slavery

In the racist, capitalist U.S., where blacks represent an oppressed race-color caste at the bottom of bourgeois society and where the ruling class assiduously manipulates the poison of racism in order to divide the multiracial working class, the death penalty necessarily falls heaviest on blacks and Hispanics. Over half of the 3,200-plus inmates who crowd the nation's death-row hell-holes are members of racial minorities, as are 43 percent of those put to death in the last two decades. The Death Penalty Information Center reported in 1996 that "since the death penalty was reinstated, 90 black men have been executed for the murder of a white victim, while only 4 white men have been executed for the murder of a black victim." In the 1987 *McCleskey v. Georgia* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that, in the face of overwhelming evidence of the death penalty's racially discriminatory character, defendants would still have to prove specific racist *intent* on the part of the state in their particular cases to stop execution.

In fact, the U.S. death penalty is the foul descendant of chattel slavery, whose codes decreed that only the lives of whites counted. This disdain for black life is still at work today, whether the enforcers wear the white robes of the Klan or the black robes



Internationalist photo

### Internationalist Group supporters at Boston demo against death penalty.

of Supreme Court Justices. It is part of a wholesale assault on ghetto residents, including street executions by racist cops, the criminalization of an entire generation of young blacks as part of the state's phony "war on drugs" and "war on crime," and the malign neglect of minority people with AIDS, all of which betray an appetite for genocide. As a result of mandatory sentencing laws, the real prospect for one out of every three young black men in this society is the criminal "justice" system, a conveyor belt running at top speed from the city streets to the vast prison network that has doubled in size in the last decade to 1.5 million inmates, 54 percent of them black.

And for every Rodney King, the black motorist savagely beaten by LAPD thugs in 1991, and Abner Louima, the Haitian immigrant brutally tortured by sadistic NYPD cops in Brooklyn last summer, whose cases reach the public spotlight, there are hundreds of blacks who are terrorized and murdered by the police in the state's *open war on blacks and immigrants*.

### Sinister Witchhunt Against NAMBLA

In Massachusetts, the most reactionary forces cynically seized upon a recent spate of grisly killings to whip up a racist death penalty hysteria. Black people are not their only targets. As part of the recent campaign, a sinister persecution was launched against an organization called the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). Following the murder of a Cambridge boy, Jeffrey Curley, the media viciously and slanderously tried to implicate NAMBLA in this heinous crime. All defenders of fundamental democratic rights must oppose this crude victimization of NAMBLA, a political advocacy group that supports the rights of gays and youth and calls for the repeal of the state's reactionary age-of-consent laws.

In the over two decades of its existence, NAMBLA has been the target of non-stop bigoted attacks and slanders, as

part of the puritanical, homophobic "family values" campaign. Even "mainstream" gay rights organizations have shunned NAMBLA in a desperate attempt to achieve respectability with bourgeois politicians and public opinion. Today, reactionary forces such as the anti-abortion bigots who claim to defend the "right to life" (while harboring killers who gun down clinic personnel) seek to instigate an atmosphere reminiscent of the Salem witchcraft trials so that they can start up their machine of state murder. As always, the most unpopular and isolated groups are singled out for victimization as the "thin edge of the wedge" in the all-sided attack by bourgeois reaction.

From the Clinton White House to the Massachusetts state house, the "family values" crusade targets women, gays, lesbians, youth, anyone considered deviant by a ruling class that wants to use sexual norms to regiment the population amid the rot of decaying capitalism. Thus a Dominican immigrant, Jesús Collado, was jailed for over half a year as the INS tried to deport him for a "statutory rape" conviction from 1974, when as a 19-year-old youth he was tried and found guilty for having consensual sex with his 15-year-old girl friend. As opposed to reactionary "age of consent" laws, which seek to criminalize youth sexuality, we hold that the only legitimate standard in sexual matters is whether there is *effective consent*. We demand: Government out of the bedrooms! At the November 1 rally against the death penalty Internationalist Group supporters carried a sign demanding: "*Down With the State & Media Witchhunt Against NAMBLA!*"

### Death Penalty: Face of Capitalist Barbarism

In the face of the bipartisan drive to legalize state murder, some reformist groups on the left seek to pressure the capitalist Democratic Party to lead the fight against capital punishment. The Workers World Party (WWP) blames the death-penalty hysteria in Massachusetts on "rightwingers," and their only complaint about the Democrats is that House Speaker Thomas Finneran "did nothing to mobilize the many groups that oppose the death penalty" (*Workers World*, 6 November 1997). Likewise, WWP's answer to the police torture of Abner Louima was to call for a vote in the NYC mayoral primary for Democrat Al Sharpton—who once wore a wire for the FBI and spied on black leaders for the "black desk" of the NYPD—and to call on cops to "take off their uniforms" and "toss away their badges"!

Meanwhile, on October 3, the WWP-led National People's Campaign sponsored a speakout on cop brutality to which they invited two black federal marshals to attend and speak! To bring these cops into such a meeting is to target those in attendance, particularly minorities and immigrants, for state repression.

If the WWP wants the cops to cease acting as cops, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) wants to unionize them. The ISO supports the unionization of prison guards, including hailing a strike by brutal prison guards at New York City's notorious Rikers Island holding pens. At the Boston rally against the death penalty, these social democrats trundled over from a pro-capitalist demonstration at Harvard against Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Under the cover of its front group, the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, ISO supporters' signs included, "Death

Penalty = Murder, Jiang Zemin = Murder, Paul Cellucci = Murder." Equating the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state with capitalism, these social democrats' calls for "democracy" are really a call for counterrevolution.

Whether they are dyed in the wool Stalinoids like the WWP or certified social democrats like the ISO, the 57 varieties of reformists are united in looking to reform the capitalist state. They seek to use "democratic" issues like opposition to the death penalty in order to offer their services as the "best builders" of popular-front protests that in fact build the Democratic Party of yuppie racist Clinton. They deny the fundamental Marxist understanding that cops, courts and prisons, the entire racist "justice system" and its personnel are the cogs and levers of the capitalist state machinery, whose job is to keep the oppressed down. What is needed in the fight against the barbaric death penalty is a class-struggle fight against the capitalist system that fosters it. The killer cops and the capitalist state cannot be reformed; they must be *smashed* by a victorious workers revolution.

Death penalty abolitionists and fighters against racist oppression can place no faith in the bosses' political parties, cops, and courts. Freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolishing the racist death penalty will require a militant mobilization of the social power of the working class and its trade union organizations. This was the program advocated by James P. Cannon, leader of the once-revolutionary Communist Party's International Labor Defense (ILD) and later a founder of American Trotskyism. Referring to a previous death penalty hysteria in Massachusetts, in 1927 Cannon wrote in the ILD's bulletin, *Labor Defender*:

"In the Sacco-Vanzetti case, the I.L.D. brought out with cameo clearness the main lines of its program. The first of these was unity of all working class forces. In the Sacco-Vanzetti conference it initiated could be found an all-embracing reflection of all elements in the labor movement: Communists, Socialists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, members of the American Federation of Labor and of the I.W.W. and other independent unions, and scores of fraternal organizations. Even when slanderous attacks were launched against the I.L.D. and attempts made to split the united movement, the International Labor Defense continued to forge forward with patient persistence for unified action.

"Secondly, the reliance upon the class movement of the workers. We pointed out incessantly that the Sacco-Vanzetti case was an instance of class persecution and not an accidental case of the 'miscarriage of justice.' We drew therefrom the conclusion that only the class action of the workers for whom Sacco and Vanzetti were being groomed to die could save them from such a fate. The history of the many Sacco-Vanzetti cases of the past decades in this country confirmed our belief that militant workers could expect no 'justice' from capitalist courts and judges, and that their vindication could be guaranteed only by the workers' movement."

Cannon concluded with a resounding call that still holds true today: "Let the working class of America ring with our fighting slogan: Build a wall of labor defense against the frame-up system!" The recent Teamsters strike against UPS gave a

*continued on page 32*

## Drop Charges Against Plymouth Protesters!

### Thanksgiving Day Cop Assault on Native American Protest

PLYMOUTH—When the death penalty bill failed in the Massachusetts legislature last November, the racist cops were furious. Three weeks later they took their revenge. On November 27, a phalanx of 150 cops—including state troopers as well as local police and sheriffs—waded into an annual Native American Indian demonstration and began beating protesters, spraying them with pepper spray, and throwing them to the concrete before dragging them into waiting paddy wagons. In all, 25 protesters were arrested.

The demonstration, called by the United American Indians of New England in observance of the National Day of Mourning, began at noon when several hundred protesters gathered near the statue of Wampanoag tribal leader Massasoit to protest Plymouth's annual "Pilgrim's Progress" procession from Plymouth Rock to the center of this tourist town which advertises itself as the birthplace of the "Thanksgiving" holiday. American Indian speakers and other supporters debunked the racist myths surrounding the Thanksgiving holiday, which obscure the genocide of indigenous peoples which the landing of the Mayflower inaugurated. The protestors then set off on a peaceful march along the route of the "Pilgrim's Progress," only to be ambushed within a block by the waiting forces of the bosses' state.

This was a premeditated police assault. Some of the cops were in plainclothes, others were on horseback, still others were decked out in riot gear. Even though the Day of Mourning protests had been taking place peacefully since 1970, the cops obscenely demanded a "permit" for these Native Americans to walk on land stolen from their ancestors. Moonanum James of the United American Indians of New England said, "The racism and cruelty of 'America's Hometown' were on display for the world to see. We had women and children grouped at the front of the march to make it clear that we did not want a confrontation. The cops did not care" (*Boston Globe*, 29 November 1997).

Witnesses say that the cops singled out protest leaders and racial minorities for especially brutal treatment. Police pepper-sprayed a black child and a Latino boy, and ripped dreadlocks from a young man's scalp. Two black women among the arrested were kept in handcuffs for an hour longer than the other women. The 25 arrested protesters now face trial on outrageous charges ranging from "disorderly conduct" to "assault and battery on a police officer"! The Internationalist Group demands: Drop all charges against the Plymouth protesters! ■



Boston Herald/Mike Adaskaveg

**One of more than two dozen arrested in Plymouth, Massachusetts protest, November 27.**

### Mass. Death Penalty...

*continued from page 31*

taste of labor's power, but to achieve real victory requires above all a revolutionary leadership to oust the present pro-capitalist misleaders of labor and minorities. In seeking to build a revolutionary workers party, the Internationalist Group follows the example of the Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, who insisted that such a party must be a "tribune of the people," opposing every form of social oppression. The fight against the death penalty must be linked to a struggle against all forms of racism, against the oppression of women and homosexuals, in the fight for a socialist revolution that can liberate all of humanity. Lenin's Bolsheviks fought against the death penalty of the tsarist autocracy and abolished it upon taking power. It was Stalin's political counterrevolution that restored this relic of capitalism, just as it rolled back gains of the October Revolution in many spheres, ultimately preparing the way for capitalist counterrevolution.

At the end of the 20th century as at the beginning, the fight against the barbaric death penalty poses starkly the central choice of this era: socialism or barbarism! Join the Internationalist Group in the fight for international socialist revolution! ■



# SL Leadership Now Says No Popular Fronts in U.S. So How About the NPAC Popular Front?

First, to recapitulate: Last spring, comrades of the Internationalist Group in Mexico noticed that the latest publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) wrote about the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas without saying a word about the *popular front* around the PRD. Was this a change in the position of the Spartacist League and the International Communist League (SL/ICL), of which the GEM is the Mexican section? At the May Day march the IG comrades asked, and were told that, indeed, the GEM now denied that there was a Cardenista popular front in Mexico. The Internationalist Group wrote an open letter to the GEM on "The ICL's New Line—To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists" (5 May 1997), printed in *The Internationalist* No. 3 (September-October 1997). At a GEM public forum our comrades pointed out that this revision of a longstanding ICL position was full of implications. Eventually, the SL's *Workers Vanguard* (No. 672, 8 August) came out with a lengthy article on Mexico devoted to "answering" the IG, after a fashion. That is to say, in what has become the distinctive style of the new *WV*, the article strung together distortions, inventions, speculations and all kinds of sleight of hand in order to waffle around the fact that the ICL had changed its line.

The *WV* article argued essentially that there could be no popular front in Mexico, at least not now nor in the past, for lack of a mass workers party to be part of it. Nor, for the same reason, could there be such a class-collaborationist coalition in the U.S., they argued. We replied: So what about the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), an "antiwar" front in the '70s that in the past the SL/U.S. had always called a popular front? Well, that was then, it turns out. Now we have it on good authority (see page 56) that the SL considers NPAC only to have been "popular-frontist," which SL leaders insist is a different animal. After those who went on to found the Internationalist Group were expelled in 1996 from the ICL in the U.S. and Mexico, where they had been leading cadres for many years, we warned that the reconstituted ICL leadership was beginning to revise key Spartacist positions from the past: first, declaring that the Stalinists "led" counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, then declaring there was no popular front in Mexico. Now NPAC has ceased to be a popular front by a wave of *WV*'s magic wand.

But let's go back to the beginning. The question of the popular front in Mexico is no third-rate question. A popular front is a coalition binding working-class organizations and

## When the Spartacist League Fought NPAC Popular Front

### SPARTACIST

SUPPLEMENT

JULY 1971

Against NPAC Pop Fronts:

## FOR CLASS ACTION AGAINST THE WAR

The "Spring Offensive" is over, but the Vietnam war drags on. The Mayday Tribune's threat to "Stop the Government" if the government did not stop the war only demonstrated with what ruthless efficiency the government handles radicals who talk about stopping the war.

of the U.S. and international working class unprecedented since World War II. One of the most important episodes of this strike wave was the nationwide teamster wildcat. In Ohio during April-May 1970 twenty thousand teamsters went out, joining with the trucking union in calling on right-wing Governor

July 1971

## That Was Then...

SL Leaflet, 3 July 1971

The SWP in the NPAC Conference:

### POP FRONT SEALED IN BLOOD!

The forcible and brutal expulsion of the Spartacist League and Progressive Labor-SDS from the Friday night session of the NPAC conference—carried out principally by the Socialist Workers Party—writes a new chapter into the SWP's history of betrayal. Escalating the struggle against political opponents on its left to physical violence, the SWP has now attempted to seal its anti-war bloc with bourgeois politicians in the traditional Stalinist manner—the bloodletting of the left wing.

SL's  
Workers  
Action,  
September  
1971

## SWP SEALS ALLIANCE WITH BOURGEOISIE IN NPAC — REVOLUTIONARIES BEATEN

...the SWP...  
...the SWP...  
...the SWP...

SEPTEMBER 1971

## NPAC: FAKE TROTSKYISTS AID SWP IN POP FRONT BETRAYAL

The Workers League has rendered all former anti-Trotskyism invaluable service by its conduct at the NPAC Conference. Many would-be revolutionary youth honestly believe that Trotskyism equals class-collaboration. That they believe so is only partly due to decades of Stalinist slander. In recent years the prime responsibility rests squarely on the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), particularly its conduct in the anti-war movement. It no longer requires any Moscow Train-style slander to convince radicals of what the SWP is.



Vance Hartke



Tim Wirth



Harry Ring

position to defend the SWP any where...  
...the SWP...  
...the SWP...

the left to the bourgeoisie, or a section of it. Such a bloc serves as a straitjacket to hold the proletariat, as well as other oppressed groups such as the peasantry, in check by formally chaining them to the class enemy. The capitalist rulers and their reformist labor lieutenants typically resort to such coalitions of class collaboration in times of great social unrest, out of fear that the exploited masses might "get out of hand" and embark on struggle against capitalism itself. The popular front serves to dissipate the militancy of the working masses and demoralize them, thus preparing the way for the subsequent victory of bonapartist military dictatorships or outright fascism. Leon Trotsky, the co-leader of the Russian October Revolution and founder of the Fourth International, wrote that fascism and popular fronts were "the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution."

This was the counterrevolutionary role that the original "People's Fronts" played in the 1930s in Spain, where it led to the victory of Franco in the Civil War, and in France where it defused a general strike and paved the way for the Nazi-allied Vichy régime. This was also the function that popular fronts played subsequently, from Indonesia in 1965 (where it led to the massacre of over a million Communists and workers at the hands of the CIA puppet General Suharto) to Chile in 1973, where Allende's Popular Unity regime hogtied the workers and prepared the way for the bloody victory of General Pinochet, who still controls the Chilean military today. In the 1970s and '80s, while most of the left—including a host of groups claiming to be Trotskyist—capitulated in one way or another to popular fronts, precisely because they were popular, the Spartacist tendency (which later became the ICL) uniquely upheld the Trotskyist position of no political support "to" any popular front, calling instead for the revolutionary class independence of the proletariat and its allies. We fought bitter fights with pseudo-Trotskyists over Chile, over Portugal and the Union of the Left in France, as well as over "antiwar" popular fronts in the U.S.

In Mexico, the ICL warned from the very beginning of its work there (led by the comrades who were later expelled and founded the

IG) that a popular front was coming together around the 1988 presidential bid by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a former high-ranking leader of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) which has run the country in the interests of domestic and imperialist capital since 1929. While PRI leaders were embracing Washington's "free market" brand of capitalism, selling off state-owned industries wholesale to their cronies, Cárdenas and other PRI dissidents worried that the combination of unbridled enrichment for those at the top and brutal austerity for those at the bottom could provoke an upheaval by the millions-strong Mexican working class and the huge discontented peasantry. So the dissidents left the PRI in order to rein in the burgeoning independent unions and the organizations of the urban and rural poor, as well as to put a leash on the ostensible left. The vehicle for this

## From the Young Communist Bulletin No. 3, 1976

### What Was NPAC?

NPAC was a bloc (*not* a united front) between the SWP and certain bourgeois politicians on a program and tactics congruent with bourgeois liberalism in the 1969-71 period. Thus NPAC was a non-electoral "popular front" quite parallel to those set up by the Stalinists "against war, fascism," etc. in the 1930s. In terms of actual organizational power, NPAC was an SWP front group, that is, the activists and apparatus were effectively controlled by the SWP/YSA so that other political forces, including the liberal bourgeoisie,

### The "People's Front"

It is important to answer certain questions that have arisen on the left concerning the relation between the popular front, which generally takes the form of a parliamentary bloc, and class-collaborationist non-parliamentary movements, like the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC). This question obviously has disturbed enough members of the SWP/YSA for the organization to issue an "Education for Socialists" pamphlet entitled *Alliances and the Revolutionary Party: The Tactic of the United Front and How It Differs from the Popular Front* by Les Evans, and another pamphlet in the same series which

The Trotskyist movement has long held that the application of the popular-front policy in the U.S. has always taken the form of "single-issue broad-based coalitions" against war, fascism, racism or some other injustice. The application of the "People's Front" strategy formulated at the Second

## The People's Front in the United States

*from The People's Front: The New Betrayal, James Burnham,  
Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1937*

**T**he People's 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 "People's 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 is Spain. Though the historical issue for the United States, as is the case for every

a staunch and outstanding defender of capitalist democracy, nor that the bulk of the proletariat, the farmers, and the lower strata of the rest of the middle classes, were solidly behind him. Thus the upholders of the People's Front ideology found themselves, willingly or unwillingly, driven into the Roosevelt camp: either openly, as was the case with many, or, like the Communist Party itself, through a back-

operation was a popular front around Cárdenas and the PRD, the bourgeois nationalist party which he founded in 1989.

For almost a decade the ICL and the GEM repeatedly warned of the danger represented by the Cardenista popular front and called on Mexican workers to break from it. After being robbed of victory in 1988, Cárdenas lost in the next presidential vote six years later. But as Mexico has continued to boil after the New Year's Day 1994 revolt by Zapatista Indians, and as the semi-bonapartist PRI regime has been coming apart at the seams, support grew for the PRD. In elections last July, Cárdenas was elected governor of the federal district (Mexico City), far out-scoring his rivals. Yet precisely at this moment, when illusions in Cárdenas were growing rapidly, the ICL leadership suddenly decided there was no need to fight against the popular front and simply declared it non-existent. How convenient. While still ritually referring to the bourgeois character of the PRD, the GEM has nowhere fought against the subordination of "independent" unions and the Mexican left to the popular front, even though its sole focus of activity (the National University) is a hotbed of Cárdenas support. In fact, the GEM didn't even bother to put out a single piece of propaganda for the July 6 election.

In justifying its new line, which it euphemistically called "sharpening" and "clarifying our past propaganda," *Workers Vanguard* came up with several threadbare arguments. First, *WV* claimed, you couldn't have a popular front in Mexico, because, "As in many semi-colonial countries, Mexico has not seen the development of even a reformist mass party of the working class," and instead the unions have been directly tied to bourgeois nationalism. Since when does this make a popular front impossible? We pointed out in our article, "Mexico Elections: Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism" (*Internationalist* No. 3), that these arguments would deny the existence of a popular front in India in the 1930s, in El Salvador in the 1980s, where militant unions and the left were tied to tiny bourgeois liberal parties, or in Indonesia today where unions are in the tow of the bourgeois nationalist party (also called the PRD) of Sukarno's daughter, or in Bolivia or any one of a number of countries where the ICL has always denounced popular-frontism.

It was not only in semi-colonial Mexico that *WV* denied "the supposed existence of a 'popular front' around the PRD," but there could also be no popular front in the United States, where there is also obviously no mass workers party. In our article, we responded by quoting how the Trotskyists in the 1930s wrote that there was a popular front around Roosevelt's New Deal Democratic Party. We also cited the example of "antiwar" popular fronts during the Vietnam War, in particular the National Peace Action Coalition sponsored by the SWP. We pointed out that the Spartacist polemics against the SWP's vaunted "peace coalitions" centered on denouncing these as popular fronts. We noted that in 1973, the SL's youth group put out a whole bulletin, titled *On the United Front* (recently reprinted in an attractively designed pamphlet), to explain this position historically.

So far, the ICL press has not responded to our polemic,

but on two different occasions, SL members from Boston and New York have replied to questions from supporters of the Internationalist Group with identical responses: NPAC, they now say, was not a popular front but a "popular-frontist formation." In New York, this was repeated to us by two members of the SL's central committee. One of them later came back to make sure that we got it straight, that NPAC was a "popular-frontist formation," which, he emphasized, is not the same thing as a popular front.

Digging itself in deeper and deeper, the ICL leadership is now turning its back on one of the key political battles that won revolutionary minded young cadres to the SL's ranks in the early 1970s. It was over the SWP's popular-front coalition with "antiwar" bourgeois politicians as early as 1965 that the SL declared the SWP to be reformist. By 1970, the SWP was so deeply wedded to its alliance with Democratic Party "doves" that its marshals were linking arms to keep radical youth with Viet Cong flags out of their marches. And in July 1971, when the Spartacist League and supporters of the Progressive Labor Party-led Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) protested the presence of Democratic Senator Vance Hartke at an NPAC meeting, the SWP drew the class line in blood. With the SWP's chief goon Fred Halstead leading the charge, the protesters were physically expelled, a PL/SDSer was heaved through a plate glass window and an SLer's nose was broken.

The Spartacist League emphasized over and over that this gangster attack was the direct consequence of the popular front. A leaflet issued on 3 July 1971 was headlined "The SWP in the NPAC Conference: Pop Front Sealed in Blood!" This leaflet was later included in the first bound volume of *Spartacist*. Two articles in *Workers' Action* (September 1971), the predecessor to *WV*, were headlined: "SWP Seals Alliance with Bourgeoisie in NPAC—Revolutionaries Beaten," and "NPAC: Fake Trotskyists Aid SWP in Pop Front Betrayal." Already before the SWP attack, a July 1971 *Spartacist* supplement was headlined, "Against NPAC Pop Fronts: For Class Action Against the War." The lead article stated: "The SWP has put itself on record that henceforward class collaboration with the imperialist liberals within the present Popular Front will be maintained at all costs: the initiation ceremony has been consummated by an act of shameless violence against revolutionaries."

Article after article in *Workers Vanguard* over the next two years denounced the NPAC popular front. An article on a student "peace" conference explained, "A popular front is a coalition of nominal socialists with the bourgeoisie; its program must be limited to the bourgeoisie's program as long as the 'socialists' desire the bourgeoisie's participation" (*WV* No. 7, April 1972). The question of the popular front character of this "antiwar" coalition with liberal Democrats became a major issue of debate with the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP brought out a special "Education for Socialists" bulletin titled, *Alliances and the Revolutionary Party: The Tactic of the United Front and How It Differs from the Popular Front*. That bulletin published the first two chapters of a 1937 SWP pamphlet by James Burnham, *The Popular Front: The New Betrayal*.

Partly in response to this, the Spartacist League youth



group at the time (the Revolutionary Communist Youth) published the special bulletin *On the United Front* devoted to explaining why NPAC was a popular front. The SL/RCY bulletin reprinted the last chapter of the Burnham pamphlet describing how the popular front was applied in the U.S. in the absence of a mass workers party and a developing revolutionary crisis:

"Most significant of all is the application of the People's Front policy to 'anti-war work.' Through a multitude of pacifist organizations, and especially through the directly controlled American League against War and Fascism, the Stalinists aim at the creation of a 'broad, classless, People's Front of all those opposed to war'."

—*The People's Front: The New Betrayal*

Other articles in the SL/RCY bulletin hammered away at the same theme. *Nowhere* did it say that for a popular front to exist there had to be a mass workers party. On the contrary, the whole point of the polemic was that even at a lower level of development there were popular fronts. A July 1973 statement by the RCY National Bureau declared: "The popular front is a political bloc, which may or may not take the form of a governmental coalition, in which the politics of the working-class component of the bloc are subordinated to the politics of the bourgeoisie, to the defense of the bourgeois state and capitalism." An article by Joseph Seymour in the same bulletin summed up: "Thus NPAC was a non-electoral 'popular front' quite parallel to those set up by the Stalinists 'against war, fascism,' etc. in the 1930s."

While there are numerous references to the NPAC as a popular front throughout this pamphlet, today, grasping at straws to justify their new revisionism, the SL leaders evidently seized on the single reference in the bulletin to NPAC as a "popular-frontist formation." But even that contradicts the SL's new line. The RCY document states that "A descriptive distinction can be drawn between popular-front alliances among two or more separate political parties (e.g., the French Union of the Left) and popular-

frontist groups" such as NPAC. Not only does this emphasize that there is only a "descriptive" difference, the document goes on to emphasize: "The attitude of Trotskyists, of course, is no different toward these socially weaker popular-frontist formations." Yet today the SL/ICL leaders make a *political* distinction between a popular front and a "popular-frontist formation" in order to insist that there can't be a popular front in the U.S. because there is no mass reformist workers party.

This is far from terminological hair-splitting. In Mexico, where this is an immediate, burning question, the ICL leadership insists on the absence of a popular front precisely because they want to have a different policy than in the past—they don't want to fight the Cardenista popular front, they don't call on workers to break from it, and so they say it doesn't exist. In order to justify their generalizing policy of abstentionism, they are renouncing their own past positions, one after another. Or did the senior leaders of the SL/U.S. who told us this just make it up in order to wiggle out of a tight spot? We doubt it, but let's hear it from the horse's mouth. Where does the SL/ICL stand today: was NPAC a popular front, or what? ■

#### "New Popular Front"

The political basis for the SWP's participation in the anti-war movement was soon evolved—the concept of a "single-issue" movement. This "new" theory strikingly parallels the "peoples front of all democratic forces" developed by Stalinism in 1935, and is predicated on the illusion that a large multi-class peace movement, with no specific program, can "pressure" the imperialist government of the U.S. into ending the Vietnamese war or, by logical extension, *any* war....

Part of the problem for a centrist organization like the SWP in maintaining a "Popular Front" coalition is that it must openly sacrifice for 'unity' the one weapon with which it can combat political opponents—its principled program.

—"Anti-War Sellout," *Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967

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## Jobless Sit-Ins, Minority Youth Fury Over Killer Cops

# Truckers Blockade France

Popular Front  
Government  
Engineers Sellout

Key Battle  
Against  
Boss's Europe

During the past several years, France has been repeatedly convulsed by struggles of workers, immigrants, students, minority youth and other oppressed sectors. In November-December 1995, up to a million people poured into the streets in massive demonstrations and a public workers strike that put the country on the razor's edge. While the reformist misleaders of labor managed to dissipate that movement, the most powerful working-class mobilization since May-June 1968, the conservative government's plans to slash pensions and health care were stymied and a stand-off ensued. Regularly over the next year and a half, new struggles broke out in defense of immigrants and against the fascist National Front, as well as the dramatic national truckers strike of November 1996 and the resistance last spring to a plant closure by Renault auto workers in Belgium which reverberated through West Europe.

The burgeoning unrest led to the election last June 1 of a coalition of the "plural left," headed by Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin. The task of this bourgeois government of the parliamentary left was to overcome resistance to the anti-working-class "reforms" that the previous right-wing cabinet had tried but failed to ram through. This was to be accomplished by chaining the organized workers in the unions and

reformist workers parties to bourgeois coalition partners in a "popular front," such as held office in France in the late 1930s and late '40s, and most recently during the '80s under "Socialist" president François Mitterrand. But while seeking to defuse protests through negotiations and promises of a rosy future in the year 2000, this has failed to halt the roiling discontent at the base. This led to the spectacle in early January of squads of paramilitary riot cops, carrying out orders from the popular-front cabinet, dragging out protesters from unemployment offices they had seized. But this was only the latest chapter in an on-going story.

For eight days in November, a nationwide truck drivers strike brought over-the-road freight traffic in France to a standstill. Close to 200 blockades by long-distance truckers tied up traffic at key intersections and toll booths on the *autoroutes* (superhighways), outside regional freight terminals and fuel depots. Twelve out of 13 refineries in the country were blocked as strikers parked their rigs around the entrances. Fed up by the duplicity of the wage-gouging trucking companies, the "*forçats de la route*" (roughly, slaves of the road) became road warriors for the second time in two years. Last time around, they won some limited gains, but this time the striking truckers were sold out for practically noth-

**For a Socialist United States of Europe!**

ing by their reformist union and party leaders, in a deal engineered by the Socialist (PS) and Communist (PCF) ministers of the popular-front government. The role of the reformist social-democrats and now ex-Stalinists was summed up long ago in the famous comment of Maurice Thorez at the time of the 1936 general strike when the PCF leader declared, "It is necessary to know how to end a strike."

But barely a month after the truckers walkout was squelched, a new round of social struggle broke out, this time by a coalition of organizations of the unemployed and union federations, whose political tendencies ranged from the PCF to the "far left." Beginning in the days before Christmas, these groups occupied offices of the unemployment agency, Assedic, demanding a year-end bonus. With unemployment in France officially at 12.5 percent, but in reality much higher, there was widespread sympathy for the occupations. And since the agency is a tripartite government/labor/employer operation, the sit-ins challenged not only the government but also the social-democratic union tops. The president of Assedic, Nicole Notat, who is head of the CFDT labor federation, fumed about "manipulation" of the protests. The conservative *Le Figaro* (7 January) headlined gleefully, "Jospin Embarrassed by His Left." With a sense of history, Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement declared, "It is necessary to know how to end an occupation." The next day he sent in the CRS riot cops.

Meanwhile, although the left coalition was elected following massive protests early last year against the right-wing government's anti-immigrant laws, Jospin has just pushed through an immigration law that *maintains* the Pasqua law while modifying a few of its provisions—and making some worse, such as increasing the amount of time the police can hold those "suspected" of being "illegal" immigrants. And in the barren

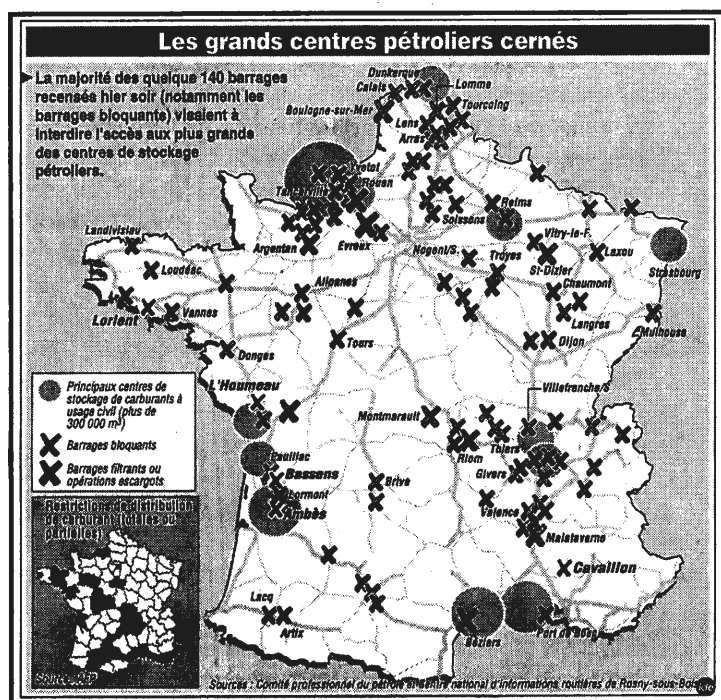
public housing projects of the workers suburbs, racist police have been enforcing a reign of terror, repeatedly *executing* youths with point-blank shots to the face and back. In 1968, student demonstrators scrawled CRS=SS on the walls, protesting the brutal paramilitary cops. In the past two months, the popular-front government has sent in the CRS against striking truckers, unemployed protesters and minority youth outraged over police murder. We say to working people and the oppressed: it is necessary to break from the *popular front* of killer cops, technocrats and bureaucrats, to build a *Trotskyist party* that fights for international workers revolution!

### "Stop Living Like Galley Slaves"

In November 1996, when a truck drivers stoppage spread like wildfire along the highways, there was a conservative government in office, headed by the Gaullist right-winger Alain Juppé. In the face of widespread support for the strikers, who work an *average* of 60 hours a week for miserable wages, the government maneuvered rather than cracking down hard. Truckers won the right to retire at age 55 after 25 years on the job, the government promised to order pay for "dead time" (the wait between runs and for loading and unloading) and the companies promised a 3,000 franc (roughly \$500) bonus. A year later, truckers bitterly complain that they still can't retire at age 55, most receive no pay for down time and the bosses reneged on the bonus.

Unlike the 1996 strike, which snowballed from one area to another, this was a conflict that was entirely expected. The union tops thought they had a deal on October 31. The association of small and medium-sized trucking firms agreed to introduce a monthly wage of 10,000 francs (\$1,800) for 200 hours work a month. PCF transport minister Jean-Claude Gayssot promised to enforce the settlement by decree. This was touted as great "progress" even though it wouldn't take full effect until the year 2000, would only apply to a small minority of drivers, and amounted to a *50-hour workweek!* For most workers in the industry, the "deal" meant their hourly pay would still be close to or *below the minimum wage*. The accord was signed by the CFDT, the main union in the industry, and the other social-democratic union federation, Force Ouvrière (FO), while the PCF-led CGT (General Confederation of Labor) was mildly critical. But the ranks weren't buying it.

Blockades sprang up across France on Saturday morning, November 1, manned by drivers from all five union groupings. Defying their union leaders and a government order to keep fuel moving over the weekend, CFDT truckers in Rouen jumped the gun and shut down three refineries. In Le Havre, the port area and Total, Mobil, Esso and Shell refineries were sealed off. By Tuesday there were 191 blockades at key nodal points, most of them *filtrants* (letting passenger cars through). There were fewer tractor-trailer rigs than in 1996 as companies pulled their trucks in, and many drivers had to use their own cars. But the economic effect was no less than in 1996. After a week 40 percent of the service stations in France ran out of gas. Production lines stopped repeatedly at Renault auto factories at



Le Figaro

Map of truckers' blockades around France last November.



Sandouville, Cléon, Maubeuge, Batilly and Douai. Fresh produce deliveries to the wholesale food markets of the major cities were cut off.

"We have got to stop living like galley slaves," said Héléne, a feisty 52-year-old trucker in the department of Isère (*Le Monde*, 5 November). Quite a few of the drivers are women, along with a number of blacks. A sign of the popularity of the strike was the large number of individuals and union delegations who came out to the blockades with food and warm drinks. Parents held classes along the side of the road explaining about unions and labor struggle (see photo). It was significant that many members of other unions helped man the blockades. North of Toulouse the prefecture complained that "certain blockades are being held by trade-unionists outside the profession."

With the sympathy and eager support of wider sections of the working class, the truckers strike had the potential of going beyond an action by one sector—albeit one with tremendous power and pent-up grievances—to becoming a broader struggle against the bourgeoisie. It could have sparked struggles against the mass unemployment and attacks on workers gains throughout Europe as the 1998 deadline for the common European currency (the *euro*) looms. Confronting fascist assaults on strikers, here was a chance to use union power to wipe the floor with the racist union-busting thugs, and to show active solidarity with the immigrants who are the priority target of the chauvinist terrorists. But this required extending the struggle to other key sectors of the French working class, ripping control of the strike from the hands of the reformist bureaucrats, taking a clear stand against the "left" government, and raising an internationalist program attacking the rule of capital in the fight for a workers government.

With "socialist" Jospin as prime minister and Gaullist Jacques Chirac as president, class collaboration in France today is capped today by "cohabitation" between the left and right. The fact that the reformists sold out the struggle is par for the course: they are simply acting as the administrators of capital now that they have the "responsibilities of office." The most notable aspect of the truckers strike is that there was no significant challenge to the class collaborators. In fact, some of the several large organizations of the former "far left" openly declared their intent to "help" the Jospin coalition in hopes that this capitalist government would "succeed." As the truckers strike showed again, a genuine fight against the labor traitors can only be undertaken by building a revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat, forged in the heat of the class struggle.

### **"Plural Left" Carries Out Capitalist Cutbacks, Anti-Immigrant Attacks**

In the aftermath of the counterrevolution that destroyed the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the Soviet Union and East Europe, the capitalists sharply intensified their attacks on the unions and workers' gains worldwide. The intensification of the anti-Soviet Cold War in the 1980s was ac-



AFP/Jean-Loup Gautreau

### **School children get lessons in strike near Toulouse.**

companied by intensification of union-busting in the capitalist West (notably Reagan's destruction of the PATCO air controllers strike in 1981 and Thatcher's smashing of the 1984-85 British miners strike). In the '90s, the collapse of Stalinism and of its illusory dogma of building "socialism in one country" has been followed by a concerted assault on the "welfare state," instituted by social democrats and capitalists following World War II in order to ward off the "red menace."

But right-wing free-marketeers have not had a smooth ride. In Italy, a 1994 attempt to roll back pensions by a right-wing coalition that for the first time since WWII included the fascists provoked a series of one-day "general strikes" that brought hundreds of thousands into the streets and which the reformist union and party leaders used to form a popular front that replaced the government of the sinister media mogul Berlusconi. The following year in France, the rightist government of Chirac/Juppé announced plans to "reform" (i.e., to gut) the social security system beginning with government workers. But even though Chirac was elected president the previous May and the right had an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, spreading strikes by rail, postal and other public sector workers brought hundreds of thousands into the streets week after week.

The social unrest continued throughout 1996, including the November 1996 truckers strike, mass mobilizations in defense of immigrants and protests against the fascists in the spring of 1997. So Chirac decided to call a snap election for last May. In the campaign, Jospin put together a coalition of what he called the "plural left." This was to distinguish it from the "Union of the Left" under François Mitterrand during the 1970s and early '80s, which was based on a reformist Common Program agreed to by the PS, the PCF and the tiny bourgeois Left Radical party. But the real program of this popular front was Cold War anti-Sovietism, anti-working-class austerity and anti-immigrant racism. After a couple of years of defi-

cit financing, the Socialist technocrats reversed previous nationalizations and decreed a brutal austerity program that sent unemployment soaring into double digits. Someone had to do the "dirty job," said PS prime minister Laurent Fabius.

Jospin's solution was to promise as little as possible. He signed a joint memo with the PCF that aside from fantasy talk of producing 700,000 jobs makes virtually no specific commitments. The program of this government is signaled by the presence of three small bourgeois parties in the cabinet: the left-over Radicals, the eco-conservative Greens and the French chauvinist Citizens Movement of Chevènement. In analyzing the original People's Fronts of the 1930s in France and Spain, Leon Trotsky emphasized that however numerically insignificant the bourgeois formations may be, they are the axis of the coalition by serving as explicit guarantors of the binding commitment to defend the capitalist system against the workers and oppressed who voted for them. While the reformists hail the popular front, painting up its bourgeois figureheads as "progressives," and various centrist left groups tail it under such slogans as calling for a "fighting popular front" (*front populaire de lutte*), we warn that popular fronts aid the most counterrevolutionary forces by blocking revolutionary struggle by the workers. This was what paved the way for Franco in Spain and for Pétain in France in the 1930s, and for Pinochet in Chile in the '70s. Genuine Trotskyists fight for the revolutionary political independence of the working class from *all* bourgeois political formations, including the popular front.

Trotsky called the popular front "the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch" and "the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism" ("The Dutch Section and the International," July 1936). Mass reformist workers parties (what Lenin called "bourgeois workers parties") have a contradiction between their professed program and proletarian base, on the one hand, and the actual support for the bourgeoisie by their leaders. To exploit this contradiction, revolutionaries can on occasion use the tactic of critical electoral support to reformist and centrist working-class parties, calling for votes for their candidates while sharply denouncing their sellout policies. But by joining with direct representatives of capital in a coalition, whose class character is necessarily *bourgeois*, the contradiction is suppressed: the reformists can claim that they can only carry out the program agreed to by their bourgeois "allies." Trotskyists thus oppose voting for any candidate of any popular front (see "Popular Front Chains the Workers," *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997).

Following the May-June 1997 parliamentary elections, PS leader Jospin formed a cabinet including two PCF ministers (for transport and youth), Green leader Voynet holding the ecology portfolio and Chevènement (a former defense minister) in charge of the ministry of the interior, i.e., the police. Jospin immediately turned around and knifed the working people and oppressed who voted him into office. In the election campaign he denounced the "pact for stability" as a "super-Maastricht" straitjacket which would choke off economic growth. Yet on June 15 in Amsterdam Jospin committed his government to abide by the terms of that pact for mass unem-

ployment even as thousands of workers were protesting outside. On March 16 Jospin marched with the workers of the Renault auto plant in Vilvorde, Belgium protesting the announced closure of the factory. During the campaign Jospin said he would review the decision by the company, which is 46 percent owned by the French state. But on June 28, Renault president Louis Schweitzer (a member of the PS) declared that the shutdown would proceed as scheduled.

That same day, the Socialist mayor of Paris' 18th arrondissement (district) dispatched hundreds of CRS cops to brutally remove demonstrators occupying city offices to protest threatened deportations. At the same time as they were reaffirming the Renault plant shutdown at Vilvorde, the Socialists were acting like their conservative predecessors on immigration. Interior minister Chevènement issued a circular in June calling on local prefects to reexamine "the situation of certain foreigners, with a view towards eventual regularization" of their legal status. Over 150,000 applied by the October 31 deadline, yet barely 10,000 have received residence papers. The rest are subject to deportation, and as a result of Chevènement's ploy, the authorities now have their addresses to make a pick-up list.

At the beginning of September, the Jospin government's policy on privatization of state-owned companies came to a head over Air France and France Télécom. PCF transport minister Gayssot declared that the "plural left" had "expressed their determination to put a stop to the process of privatization." This led to the resignation of the Socialist Air France boss Christian Blanc (a follower of the leader of the PS right wing, Michel Rocard), who wanted to cash in after having "cleaned up" the airline for privatization by layoffs, strikebreaking, etc. But barely a week later, the government announced that both Air France and France Télécom would be "opened" to a minority "participation" by private capital, while the state-owned insurance company GAN would be sold off entirely. At the annual Communist Party fair, the Fête de l'Humanité, many PCF members sported badges proclaiming their opposition to any kind of privatization. Workers gave "comrade minister" Gayssot a hard time over his support for private capital, and PCF leader Robert Hue was met with a chorus of derisive whistles when he defended this "left realism."

After repeatedly disappointing its supporters, the Jospin government tried to recoup with an elaborately staged show over the 35-hour week. On October 10, an official conference was held on reducing unemployment by shortening the workweek. At the end, Jospin announced that the government would introduce an enabling act (*loi cadre*) to institute a 35-hour workweek...by the year 2000. This would be sweetened by tax breaks for companies that cut hours, while unions were told that pay raises would be sharply curtailed ("*maîtrisés*"), there must be "flexibility" on work rules, and part-time work would be encouraged. Employers federation head Jean Gandois resigned in protest, saying that his successor would have to be a "killer" to fight the 35-hour week. But this won't begin to create enough jobs to eliminate mass unemployment.

In December came the finale of the debate over immigration policy. In the election campaign, the PS program called for



abolition of the racist Pasqua-Debré laws that sharply restricted legal immigration. But once in office, Jospin turned around, appointing the "Weil Commission" to recommend that the government adopt a "firm" and "effective" immigration policy by "modifying" (but not replacing) the right-wing legislation. The plural left claimed to favor replacing the openly racist "blood right" (citizenship based on ethnic origin) with "territorial right" (citizenship based on being born in the country). However, the Guigou citizenship law provides that "immigrant" youth born in France will not have the right to citizenship before the age of 18. Various Green, PCF and "Socialist Left" deputies cast symbolic votes against this, but abstained on (or even voted for) the final bill. Similarly on the accompanying Chevènement immigration law (some of whose provisions for undocumented immigrants are even worse than previous laws).

And as the left government enacts laws denying rights to immigrants, the racist cops keep executing "immigrant" youth in the working-class suburbs with impunity, setting off night after night of fiery outrage in the working-class suburbs of Strasbourg, Lyon, Paris and other major cities. Socialist politicians and pro-PS newspapers blame the media (!) for these outbursts of fury. While many left groups call for "papers for everyone" (i.e., residency permits for the undocumented), Trotskyists call on the working class to mobilize in defense of immigrants, demanding full citizenship rights for *everyone* in the country.

### Turn Defensive Struggles Into a Fight Against Capitalist Rule

In short, Jospin's government of the "plural left" is dutifully carrying out the task conferred on it by the French bourgeoisie. The truckers strike offered a key opportunity to *mobilize the workers against the popular front in office*. The strike itself was an impressive display of working-class power: when the wheels of transport stopped turning, the gears of industry began grinding to a halt. Ultra-modern plants quickly shut down for lack of components to assemble. But the strike remained limited to the trucking industry, and no organized opposition arose to wrest control from the hands of the union bureaucrats. So after wearing the strikers down through long days and nights in their cabs and clustered around bonfires in the freezing cold, the labor fakers were able to call off and effectively shut down the struggle. In the end they settled for no more than the initial agreement with the small and medium-sized trucking firms.

What should the policy of revolutionaries have been in such a battle? It was necessary, first of all, to be clear on who is the enemy. Early on in the strike, Interior Minister Chevènement sent gendarmes to protect refineries and riot cops to break up truckers' blockades on France's borders. "It's a stab in the back of the



France-Soir

**Massive blockade on second day of truckers strike.**

workers fighting for their wages," said a disgusted CFDT unionist after a tense stand-off with helmeted CRS paramilitary police on the Spanish border. "Think about it, this is a government of the left which got into power in part based on the strength of our movement in 1996!" (*Le Monde*, 4 November 1997). Here was a concrete proof of what a popular front means in practice, of how it subordinates the workers to the bourgeoisie. This example could be used to puncture the demagoguery of the "Communist minister" Gaysot, who turned up at a blockade at midnight to show he was with "the guys," while during the day he was enticing the trucking bosses into a deal he would then shove down the strikers' throats. For the companies, Jospin provided tax breaks of over 300 million francs (\$50 million); for the workers, the government had...police batons.

To mobilize the workers' strength in a powerful strike required a political battle against various left-posturing reformist bureaucracies. The largest truckers union, the transport workers division of the CFDT, headed by Joël Le Coq, is the bastion of the "Tous Ensemble" (All Together) opposition to CFDT leader Notat. Yet here were the "militants" acting as the privileged partners of the Jospin government. Force Ouvrière cynically struck a combative pose, calling for strikes after signing the initial accord. Later they refused to sign the final agreement, as did the PCF-led CGT, even as the PCF transport minister put together the sellout. The party's paper *L'Humanité* (8 November) hailed the agreement as a "breakthrough," while PCF leader Hue praised Gaysot, saying: "The usefulness of Communists in the government of France has been demonstrated." Useful...for the bosses.

While the reformists and their bourgeois allies use every

trick in the book to "end a strike," revolutionary Trotskyists seek to demonstrate to the advanced layers of workers how to wage the battles of the workers and oppressed in order to *prepare the working class for the struggle for socialist revolution*. This is the strategy laid out in the Transitional Program of the Fourth International. In the French truckers strike, it was necessary first of all to call for the formation of *elected strike committees*, as a means to seizing control of the struggle from the pro-capitalist bureaucrats. The union tops were in mortal fear of such a development. CFTD leader Le Coq remarked: "This year, the position of the unions is more delicate than in 1996. On the blockades, people are very angry, because they have the accumulated frustrations resulting from promises not kept. That could get out of hand at any time, like in 1992." *Le Monde* (5 November) commented: "That year, the unions lost control of the movement to spontaneous coordinating committees and '*jusqu'au-boutists*'" (those who want to "go all the way").

The coordinating committees, bringing together unionists from different federations, were often influenced by "far leftists." But they remained informal groupings that sought to *pressure* the bureaucracies rather than defeat them. In this case, strike committees elected by the ranks and recallable at any time could have helped to block the bureaucrats' move to stampede truckers into ending the action, by allowing a real debate about the content of the pact and more generally of the different programs for the working class. They would also provide a framework for forging militant industrial unionism. One of the trumps in the hands of the French bosses is the division of the labor movement into several competing federations, all of whose leaders are dyed-in-the-wool reformists.

In the truckers strike, strike committees could have served to rouse the more backward elements among the truckers, as well as to integrate the many unionists and other militants who came out to the blockades to show solidarity. If the strike had developed into a full-scale showdown with the government and the employers, such bodies could have developed into the *nucleus of workers councils*, organs of dual power at the local level, deciding what moves on the highways of France and what doesn't. The bosses were certainly aware of this potential. The right-wing budget minister in the last Juppé cabinet, Alain Madelin, denounced the truckers for blocking fuel supplies: "Today this isn't a strike, it's an insurrection," he fumed.

A second key task was to *extend the strike* to other related sectors, particularly transport. This was a very real possibility. Every day, 2,600 truckers make "just in time" deliveries to Renault auto factories around the country. Not only were many plants repeatedly shut down for lack of parts, auto workers actively helped the striking truckers. At the Cléon Renault plant, a CGT delegate reported that "the plant employees' support consisted in setting up the first truckers blockade" at a nearby strategic traffic circle (*L'Humanité*, 5 November 1997). The CGT union of Paris subway and bus workers wrote to the PCF transport minister that it was "scandalized" by the use of CRS cops against the truckers, adding "RATP workers are also discontented" and "other conflicts could break out" (*Figaro*, 4 November). The potential was clearly there to spread the strike—what was needed was the core of class-conscious militants to take up this fight.

To turn defensive battles into a struggle against the bourgeoisie and its government requires the leadership of a revolutionary workers party, one built on an *internationalist* program. A key way in which the strike should have been extended was internationally. Even by itself, the French truckers strike had an international impact. The *New York Times* (5 November 1997) worried: "Because France is a major north-south crossroads for the European Union's single market, blocked traffic here could soon force factories in Germany to stop producing automobiles and machine tools if they can't ship them west, and grocery stores in Britain could soon begin running out of vegetables and fruit from Spain...." French truckers are fighting the effects of the wholesale assault on union rights and gains accompanying the introduction of a single European currency. As of 1 July 1998, the whole sector of road transport is to be "liberalized," which will produce a tremendous downward pressure on wages and upward pressure on hours. A class-struggle leadership would have sought to incorporate fellow truckers around Europe in the struggle.

Another important element revolutionaries should have raised during the strike was the need for *workers self-defense groups* to defend the strikers against attacks by the bosses' thugs and anti-union repression. This was posed sharply on the third day of the strike when a *fascist commando* set upon strikers at Vitrolles, outside Marseille in southern France. Vitrolles is where a candidate of the fascist National Front, Catherine Mégret, the wife of FN's second in command Bruno Mégret, was elected mayor last February, sending shock waves around the country. On the night of November 6, a gang of 20 thugs wearing hoods and wielding tire irons and baseball bats assaulted strikers outside the TFE refrigerated transport depot, injuring several of the strikers. The next day there should have been an assembly of thousands of militant workers and immigrants from the Marseille area, forming workers defense squads to deal decisively with the racist terror squads. There was no doubt where to find the attackers: a license plate was traced to top officials of the National Front city government. Here was a time to drive home Trotsky's call in the Transitional Program:

"The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army.... In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defense*."

In Vitrolles, also, the connection could have been dramatically made to the defense of immigrants, who are presently the fascists' principal targets, at the same time as the "mainstream" right-wing parties and the left-wing government have attacked immigrant rights. In 1995, the union tops (as well as the more militant-talking "new bureaucrats" and their centrist tails) consciously limited the strike to public-sector workers, from which non-citizens are excluded. This divided the proletariat, and ensured that the struggle would not be extended to the industrial proletariat with its strategic component of immigrant workers. In order to extend the '95 strike, a conscious struggle against the government's racist

**Fascist attack on pickets:**  
**(Below)** One of the victims of assault by masked goon squad on striking truckers at Vitrolles on night of 4-5 November 1997.  
**(Right)** Demonstration the next day by some 60 unionists. Attack underlined need for workers defense guards to crush fascist vermin.



“Vigipirate” police sweeps targeting North African immigrants and minority youth was necessary. But that would have meant a confrontation with the bourgeois state apparatus, which the opportunists fear like the plague.

In November 1997, at the same time as Chevènement was sending gendarmes and CRS cops against the striking truckers, the police were carrying out bloody repression against “second-generation” youth in the housing projects. On November 11, cops in La Seyne-sur-Mer in southern France gunned down a youth on a motor bike for alleged traffic violations. The next weekend the area was rocked by pitched battles between youths with rocks and bottles and the heavily armed police. In mid-December, cops in a suburb of Lyon murdered a 24-year-old father of three, blasting him in the face with a pump shotgun at point-blank range while he was being interrogated, handcuffed, inside the police station! The night before, cops in the department of Seine-et-Marne killed a youth of North African origin with a bullet to the back of the head in a car chase. It’s utterly understandable when immigrant neighborhoods explode in outrage over these cold-blooded cop *executions*. But what’s needed is *worker/immigrant mobilizations* to bring the power of the working class into action against racist attacks and cop terror.

It is also necessary to address the social conditions which spawn racist reaction, in particular mass unemployment. Housing projects with largely “immigrant” populations frequently have 30 percent unemployment, and over 50 percent among the youth. But high levels of long-term unemployment affect youth of all ethnic groups, as well as numerous older workers hit by mass layoffs in the ’80s. While social democrats and ex-Stalinists along with a number of pseudo-Trotskyist groups have made the 35-hour workweek their banner, such a measure will hardly affect mass unemployment. Even less will be

the impact of a 3,000 franc “bonus” for every unemployed person, such as was demanded in demonstrations this Christmas by various organizations defending the jobless. Trotskyists raise the demand for a *sliding scale of wages and working hours*, to divide the available work among all those seeking jobs and protect against the ravages of inflation.

Such a demand means going beyond minimal reforms and charity handouts to pose an attack on the capitalist system of production for profit. It points to the need for a planned economy producing to fill human needs. Taken together, a program of *transitional demands* leads from the present needs and struggles of the working class to the fight for socialist revolution, for a *workers government* that would expropriate the bourgeoisie and a Socialist United States of Europe that would lay the basis for achieving a classless communist society of genuine liberty, equality and fraternity which are impossible under capitalism. The watchword of the Russian Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in 1917 was world socialist revolution. The Stalinists long ago betrayed the program of the October Revolution, brandishing instead their anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country.” The nationalist bureaucracy undermined the basis of the Soviet workers state, leading to its degeneration and preparing the way for its ultimate collapse under the pressure of world imperialism.

The bankruptcy of Stalinism can be seen in the rubble of the former deformed workers states in East Europe, where for millions life has become pure hell. Demonstrating their undivided loyalties to “their” bourgeoisies, ex-Stalinist and social-democratic nationalist reformists today continue to derail and betray the struggles of the workers. To prepare the way for new socialist revolutions it is necessary to forge revolutionary workers parties on the *internationalist* program of Trotskyism.

## "Far Left" Adjutants of the Popular Front

At present, social democrats are in office (alone or in coalition) almost everywhere in West Europe (13 out of 15 countries). At a conference of European social democrats in Malmö, Sweden last June, much was made of differences between "Tory" Blair, who called for "flexibility in the labor market" and "competitiveness" rather than "rigid regulation," and Jospin who called for "regulation" and "control" of market forces in a "social Europe." The essential difference is that Blair's "New Labour" is based on Thatcher's smashing of the militant British miners in 1985, while Jospin fears a showdown with French workers. But *all* the social-democratic parties, without exception, are implementing slightly repackaged versions of the programs of their conservative predecessors.

We have quoted before Engels' dictum that France is the country in Europe where historic class battles have been fought out to the end. This remains true today, which is why developments in the class struggle in France have a particular resonance throughout the continent and the world. It is therefore striking that in recent decades, the French bourgeoisie has sought to *avoid* a decisive showdown, to temporize and look to the reformist misleaders of the workers movement to come to its aid (as they always do). While the explosive struggles of May 1968 were stopped as a result of the PCF's treacherous role in the June '68 general strike, it took the government of the Union of the Left in the 1980s to dissipate the legacy of the worker-student radicalization. Instead of *lendemain qui chantent* (tomorrows that sing—Mitterrand's campaign slogan), the popular front in power produced growing disenchantment among the workers, paving the way to victories by the right.

But as soon as the conservative governments tried to capitalize on their electoral victories, they ran up against heavy resistance from workers, youth and immigrants in the streets. Protests against privatization of Air France, against a sub-minimum wage for youth, against racist police attacks boiled over in the working-class mobilizations of November-December 1995. That powerful movement was again blocked by the betrayals of the reformist misleaders (aided by their centrist tails), who dutifully called off the strikes at the point when they threatened to escalate into an actual general strike, which poses a showdown over which class shall rule. Nevertheless, new struggles have continued to break out with a regularity that is disconcerting to the capitalist rulers.

The Jospin government of the "plural left" was brought in to put a stop to all this, to demobilize and demoralize the working class the way Mitterrand's Union of the Left did. So far, the popular front in office has been fulfilling its ministerial mandate from the bourgeoisie. But it can be fought and defeated. The key is forging a revolutionary party that can seize on the acute contradictions that continue to wrack French society and effectively intervene in the succeeding class battles, which have continued without interruption, fighting for the internationalist program of Bolshevism-Leninism.

The workers and oppressed of France urgently need a real Trotskyist party. Yet what passes for Trotskyism in France to-

day is an anemic social-democratic parody. The ostensibly Trotskyist left in France is far larger than anywhere else in the world, including three parties with over 1,000 members and a variety of smaller centrist groupings. In the 1995 presidential elections, Arlette Laguiller, the perennial candidate of Lutte Ouvrière (LO) bragged of receiving more than 1.6 million votes, some 5.3 percent of the total, compared to a little over 9 percent for the candidate of the PCF. In the May 1997 legislative elections, the various candidates of the so-called "far left" received a little over half a million votes, far less than two years earlier but still a substantial number. Closely related to their electoral scores is the fact that the political *program* of the principle groups—Laguiller's LO, Alain Krivine's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) and Pierre Lambert's Parti des Travailleurs (PT)—is today *reformist* through and through.

The aging "'68ers" have long ago made their peace with the Communist and Socialist parties, and are looking for their niche as pressure groups in the framework of the "plural left." This is also widely understood, at least implicitly, for many of those who vote for Laguiller and the other formations do so precisely to put pressure on the PCF and PS to put on slightly more left airs. During recent struggles such as the truckers strike, the "far left" groups offered no program to fight the pro-capitalist union bureaucracies, which is hardly surprising since in many cases they are part of the lower and even upper levels of those bureaucracies.

The largest of the pseudo-Trotskyist parties is Lutte Ouvrière. LO has a crude workerist posture—often boycotting demonstrations in defense of immigrants, for example, saying that the real battle is "at the factory gates," and even whipping up chauvinist reaction over high school girls of North African origin wearing head scarves. At the same time, it is deeply *electoralist*. In its coverage of the May/June legislative elections, LO's theoretical magazine, *Lutte de Classes* (Summer 1997) published 15 pages of analytical articles, eight pages worth of LO electoral propaganda followed by ten pages of LO's vote totals district by district, and another nine pages with a département by département breakdown of the vote for the other "far left" parties!

The electoral cretinism is shown not only by the sheer quantity of pages, but also by the content of LO's campaign, which centered on the demand to "force the big bosses to give up part of their profits" through higher corporate taxes. In its usual shell game, LO did not formally call for votes for PS or PCF candidates on the second, decisive round of voting. A statement by Laguiller said: "Now we do not say to vote for the left, because we don't want to spread illusions. For our part, we will abstain. If the working people vote for the left, if they do so without illusions, that won't be a big deal" (*dramatique*). And in a May 1997 editorial, LO stated: "In cases where there is a duel between a candidate of the National Front and a candidate of the PC or PS, one must not let the FN win" (quoted in *Révolution Internationale*, July-August 1997). Lutte Ouvrière *never* calls for *opposing* or *refusing* to vote for candidates of the popular front.

Far from representing a revolutionary or even pseudo-revo-



lutionary opposition to class collaboration, LO wants at most a slightly more left version. Thus Laguiller wrote in a revealing editorial in *Lutte Ouvrière* (11 July 1997):

"The working people would prefer a government of the left, but a left government that fights against the bosses and supports the working people.

"If, among the ministers of this government, and among the Socialist and Communist militants there are some who sincerely want to change the situation of the working classes, they can't ignore the fact that in order to do so they will have to take away from the bosses' profits.

"The government can't do everything and we must help it, say the leaders of the PCF? Why not! But not passively, that's the point!"

Later on in the same editorial she repeats, "So, help it [the government]? Why not, if it needs it, but above all, push it!" When a week later the Jospin government raised the tax on corporate profits from 36 percent to 42 percent, Laguiller responded: "Finally! It's not a moment too soon!" (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 25 July). LO's program is in total contradiction to the program of Trotsky and Lenin, who called for workers revolution, not a populist tax revolt; who fought to bring down class-collaborationist coalitions, not to push them to the left!

Alain Krivine's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire has placed itself to the right of LO in recent years, assiduously trying to form a coalition with different groupings that have split to the right from the Communist Party in the direction of social democracy. Krivine was enchanted to be asked to join a line-up of the popular-front left called by PCF leader Hue at Bercy in 1996 (see "France: Ex-Far Left in the Reformist Swamp," *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997). During the 1997 legislative elections, the LCR ran on a program of "ten propositions" for a "100 percent left." This laundry list included an enabling act for reducing the workweek to 35 hours with no loss in wages (the same program as Jospin), increased pensions, radical tax reform, catching up with the loss in purchasing power, public control of the banks, and abolition of the Pasqua-Debré anti-immigrant laws. This program was "in no way revolutionary," as LCR candidates in the Loire-Atlantique département Jean-Yves Le Goff and Christophe Gilbert frankly admitted (*Ouest-France*, 2 May 1997). As its own candidates received some 70,000 votes, less than a sixth of LO's score, the LCR's emphasis was on pushing the popular-front coalition to the left: "The useful vote, in this election, is to affirm without reservations the need to beat the right...but at the same time to demand a truly left-wing policy," that is, a policy which "in case of a popular victory will put the left 'under control'" (*Rouge*, 18 May 1997).

When after the elections LO openly called to "help" Jospin's bourgeois government of the left, the LCR was delighted, declaring that "one can only greet this evolution" (*Rouge*, 17 July). Krivine tried to outdo Laguiller in rhapsodic support to class collaboration. At the LCR's "summer university," he remarked that the Ligue was "not part of the governmental majority," first of all "because we weren't asked," adding that in any case it was opposed to the framework of the Maastricht treaty. Nevertheless, he added, "We aren't waiting around licking our chops wait-

ing for this government, made up of social democrats and Communists, to betray." No, indeed. The LCR, said Krivine, was part of "this left which contributed to beating the right," and he hopes that the government majority "will succeed" (*Le Monde*, 2 September 1997). So LO wants to "help" the bourgeois government of the left and the LCR wants this popular-front coalition to "succeed." Some "Trotskyists"!

But what about outside of the electoral framework? In the recent truckers strike, the LCR's coverage consisted mainly of reportage, plus a friendly interview with CFDT transport union leader Le Coq. This was *after* he had signed the rotten deal with small and medium trucking concerns which was overwhelmingly *rejected* by the ranks. And a couple of days later this same bureaucrat called off the strike, shoving the same deal down the strikers' throats. As if this wasn't bad enough, the LCR's main programmatic "demand" was that "the government must very well ensure that the agreements are enforced by law," and that there should be "increased forces of inspectors to watch over work conditions" (*Rouge*, 6 November 1997). In everything from the truckers strike to fighting unemployment to dealing with the National Front, the LCR's entire "strategy" consists of pressuring the capitalist state. No wonder Krivine et al. are preparing to drop "communist" from their name.

Not to be outdone, in LO's coverage of the strike, in addition to raising no demands for the strikers, they published a sympathetic interview (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 14 November) with a government "labor inspector"! Meanwhile, Laguiller and her party continue to claim that the National Front is *not* a fascist party, but rather a party of the "far right" which could act as a "amalgamator of a right that is today rent by clan feuding" (*Lutte de Classe*, Summer 1998). In LO's coverage of the truckers' strike, there is no mention of the fascist character of the squad that attacked strikers in Vitrolles. While the workerist-electoralists of LO turn a blind eye to the fascist shock troops, most of the reformist and centrist left calls on the government to dissolve and disarm them. This appeal reveals dangerous illusions in the capitalist state, which has always used such laws to go after the left. The truckers strike was an excellent opportunity to organize workers defense groups to crush these fascist vermin.

The third major component of the pseudo-Trotskyist left in France, Lambert's Parti des Travailleurs (Party of the Working People), has been totally consumed in its French chauvinist campaign against Maastricht. The PT's main vehicle for this campaign has been a lash-up of trade-unionists and Stalinist hard-liners called the Manifesto of the 500 for Trade-Union Independence. This, in turn, has been the launching pad for a National Committee for the Abrogation of the Maastricht Treaty, populated with representatives of Chevènement's bourgeois Citizens Movement, Stalinist leftovers such as Rémy Auchède, the PCF leader from Pas-de-Calais, and Jean-Jacques Karman (Communist Left), deputy mayor of the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers. The Committee is dedicated to a defense to the bitter end of "the Republic 'one and indivisible'." In the 1995 presidential election, the PT's Manifesto called

for "A Sovereign Constituent Assembly" and "A Government of the People, by the People and for the People" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 22 February 1995).

What a spectacle! "Help the government," says LO's Laguiller. Hopefully the "plural left" majority will "succeed," says the LCR's Krivine. "The Republic 'one and indivisible,'" declares one of the endless fronts for Lambert's PT. What a travesty of Trotsky's Fourth International, which proudly proclaimed itself the party of intransigent opposition to all forms of class collaboration! The Transitional Program declares, "There is not and there cannot be a place for it [the Fourth International] in any of the People's Fronts." The leader of the LCR remarks wistfully, "we weren't asked" to join the Jospin government, adding quickly that they really didn't want to come to the ball anyway. Such policies, common to all the main groups of the French "far left," are the *antithesis* of genuine Trotskyism—and antithetical to real class struggle. Trotskyists fight for a government of workers councils, against capitalist governments of both the "left" and right.

The increasingly rightist character of the programs of the different parties of the "far left" has led to the sprouting of various left-wing oppositions within the different main groups. Both the LCR opposition (the Révolution! Tendency) and the minority faction in LO (L'Étincelle) want to get closer to the ranks of the PCF. (In part, they seem upset that Lambert's PT got the jump on them in rushing to embrace the "orthodox" Stalinist opposition to Hue.) While there is plenty of turmoil in the Communist Party rank and file over privatization, Maastricht, participation in the government and other issues, the program of the LO and LCR oppositions is one of adaptation to the PCF. Thus the former proposes to "address also the leadership of the PCF" on behalf of "the far left," with such proposals as calling for trade-union demonstrations outside Jospin's October 10 conference on employment. "What better way to put pressure on the bosses and the government," they ask (*Lutte de Classe*, October 1997). Pressure politics?

Another product of turmoil in the French left is a coterie of centrist groups, particularly in the Rouen area. This region was a center of labor militancy in the 1996 truckers' strike and before that in several rail walkouts. So in forming a lowest-common-denominator coalition, the several ostensibly Trotskyist, Maoist and diverse left groups did so on a *syndicalist* basis. Earlier this year, this conglomeration (including the Association pour le Rassemblement des Travailleurs, la Commune, Gauche Révolutionnaire-JCR, Groupe Socialiste Internationaliste, Union Ouvrière Communiste) issued an "Emergency Plan for the Workers," modeled on a similar plan put forward by LO's Laguiller in the '95 presidential elections. The demands are overwhelmingly economic and legalistic, such as calling for outlawing layoffs, raising the minimum wage to 8,500 francs a month, a 1,500 wage raise for everyone, retirement at age 55, etc., with a figleaf of broader issues, such as papers for everyone, abolition of racist laws and free abortion. Naturally there was not a word about the need to build a revolutionary workers party: among other reasons, how could this lash-up agree on the program of such a party?

And when the truckers strike broke out, several of these groups—the ART, GR-JCR and Voix des Travailleurs (VdT, a group expelled from Lutte Ouvrière last spring)—put out an even more minimal minimum program in a 4 November leaflet ending with a series of entirely economist slogans: "go to the highway blockades to show we are on their side," "massive reduction of the workweek," "no to part-time work," a "ban on layoffs and massive hiring," and a "1,500 franc raise for all." No mention of a program or any demands at all for immigrants, defense against fascist and police attacks, opposition to the popular-front government, or anything other than strictly wage and job demands. And these were not transitional demands joined together in a program for a fight against the rule of capital, but traditional trade-union slogans. How should this panoply of reformist nostrums be achieved? Harking back to the '95 strikes, they call for "A Struggle of Everyone Together," and a "general strike." Not a word about how to get to a general strike or what to do if one were called, naturally, for this is just play-acting, a fake-militant cover for trying to pressure the bureaucrats.

### Build a Genuine Trotskyist Party in France

What is urgently needed in France today is a fight to build an authentically Trotskyist party, intervening in the struggles of the workers and oppressed on the basis of the revolutionary program. The one organization that in the past has put forward such a program is the Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League. However, in the recent period the LTF and ICL have increasingly withdrawn into a policy of abstention from the class struggle. At the time of the November-December 1995 strikes and mobilizations against the Juppé plan to roll back pensions, the LTF leadership completely collapsed. Now, in consonance with the ICL's new international line that sees the post-Soviet period as one of global defeat, a line which was elaborated in the fight against the expelled comrades who formed the Internationalist Group, the abstentionism and even treacherous flight from the class struggle (as in Brazil) is coming directly from the international leadership.

In a post-strike, *Workers Vanguard* (No. 678, 14 November 1987) did not present even retrospectively a program that should have been raised to mobilize the strikers and their supporters consciously against the popular-front government and the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats. It mentions in passing the attack on strikers by hooded thugs in the fascist stronghold of Vitrolles, but says nothing about the need for workers defense groups. It talks of the truckers' 60-hour workweek and criticizes the economist demands of various left groups, but does not call for a sliding scale of wages and hours to fight mass unemployment. The one concrete demand it does raise, quite correctly, is for full citizenship rights for immigrant workers, but it does not call for worker/immigrant mobilizations to defend immigrants against fascist and racist police attacks.

The *WV* article says that "the strike remained firmly under the control of the reformist union bureaucrats from begin-

ning to end," yet two sentences later admits that "wildcat roadblocks were thrown up around Paris" which were put down by the cops. It says that after the sellout deal was announced "many workers were disgusted" and some tore up their CFDT union cards, "but they complied and removed the barricades." Yet nowhere does the article call for any measures (such as formation of elected strike committees and extension of the strike to related sectors) to enable militant workers to fight the bureaucrats' betrayals. All of these demands mentioned above are points that were raised in LTF propaganda at the time of the 1995 strikes and mobilizations, yet today these elements of a transitional program for workers revolution are a dead letter for the ICL leadership.

Moreover, the *WV* article outrageously claims of the massive 1995 strikes that "That upsurge paved the way for the election of the popular front"! In fact, the class-collaborationist coalition government was installed with the approval of the bourgeoisie in order to contain the continuing outbreaks of class struggle.

As for the ICL's French section, the lead article of the October issue of the LTF's paper, *Le Bolchévique*, does recognize that "the strikes of December 1995 were the starting point of a radicalization in this country." Not only is this fact in flagrant contradiction to the ICL's overall analysis of the "post-Soviet period" of all-round defeats, one also has to ask: if youth and workers in France are becoming radicalized, what is the LTF doing about it? The abstentionism and passive commentary of the LTF is not a peculiarity of the French section of the ICL. In a strikingly similar manner, *Workers Vanguard* published a major supplement on the UPS strike last August only *after* the strike was over, and again presented no program of demands to be raised by revolutionaries in the strike. Thus when *WV* writes in its article on the French truckers strike of the need "to introduce in the working class the consciousness of its interests and historic tasks," a fundamental tenet of Leninism, it separates this from intervention to draw those lessons in the course of the class struggle. And that is contrary to everything Lenin and Trotsky wrote.

In France today, the central task that is posed is to forge an authentically Trotskyist party, a party that acts as a "tribune of the people" as Lenin taught, championing the cause of all the oppressed, particularly of the embattled immigrant population; a party that intervenes in the struggles of the working class to demonstrate in action how the reformists betray those struggles on the altar of the popular front, seeking to win the most advanced workers to the revolutionary program; a party that by upholding genuine Trotskyism and demonstrating what it stands for in practice can win a core of cadres from among class-conscious workers, radical-minded youth and resolute fighters for the oppressed. While the opportunists join the popular front or, like the ex-"far left" seek to "peddle their wares in the shadow of the popular front" (Trotsky), authentic Trotskyists are the party of intransigent opposition. It is to building such a party in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International that the Internationalist Group directs its efforts. ■

## Defend Salvador Phone Workers!

As part of a wave of privatizations of telecommunications throughout Latin America, a union-busting assault is under way against phone workers union leaders in El Salvador. The Salvadoran phone system was modernized under military control during the 1980s civil war, and plays a key role in transmissions between North and South America. On December 29, the Salvadoran telecommunications network was turned over to the newly created private company CTE. On the next regular work day, January 2, the CTE proceeded to fire all 72 members of the joint executive council of the four unions representing Salvadoran phone workers.

In a phone interview, Jorge Portillo, education secretary of ASTTEL (the Salvadoran Telecommunications Workers Union), told *The Internationalist* that the firings are aimed at breaking the unions completely and have been followed by "a wave of pressure by supervisors against the workers, telling them they will be fired if they organize themselves." San Salvador's *Diario de Hoy* (4 January) reports that CTE executives say the unionists' "actions create doubts among international investors regarding possible labor flexibility at the phone company" and quotes general manager Carlos Medina: "These people were a threat to the privatization process."

The fact that "privatization" means a subsidized bonanza for imperialist bankers and Wall Street speculators was further underlined by a recent letter from Morgan Stanley Citibank, which openly urged CTE to fire at least 1,500 unionists to head off resistance to the privatization.

ASTTEL has been a focus of government attacks since the time of the civil war, when it led a 51-day strike in 1986 under the guns of military repression. Ten years later, ASTTEL spokesman Wilmer Erroa was one of two unionists attacked as "traitors" and "inhuman" by Salvadoran president Armando Calderón Sol for denouncing conditions in free trade zone sweatshops. Solidarity action by the international workers movement—in particular phone workers who have the power to "flip the switch" on CTE transmissions as part of concerted protest actions—is key to fighting the union-busting assault.

The Salvadoran phone unionists plan to hold workplace rallies and marches over the coming days in conjunction with other unions. ASTTEL is calling for protest letters to be faxed to Dr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of El Salvador (fax 503-271-0950), CTE President Juan José Daboub (fax 503-281-0017) and General Manager Carlos Medina Novelino (fax 503-221-2122), with copies to ASTTEL (503-271-8056).

*For international workers solidarity with Salvadoran phone workers!*

# New Repression Against Brazilian Trotskyists

## **AÇÃO DE BUSCA E APREENSÃO**

em face  
do **COMITÊ DE LUTA CLASSISTA - CLC**, na pessoa de seu  
Representante legal, situado à Rua Lorival de Freitas, nº 95 sala  
401, Bairro Alameda, Volta Redonda - RJ (em cima da Casa  
Gomes) e de **GERALDO RIBEIRO NEVES**, brasileiro, casado,

Eighth court action against class-struggle unionists in Volta Redonda, Brazil in the last two years. This case (No. 183/97) calls for the "search and seizure" of leaflet issued by the Class Struggle Caucus.

The following is a translation of Bulletin No. 3 (September 1997) of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class Struggle Caucus, initiated by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil), calling for solidarity with the Brazilian comrades in the face of the latest repression against them. On September 5, a Volta Redonda court ordered the seizure of the CLC's previous bulletin, exposing the attempt to loot workers' pension funds and the role of the pro-police group of Artur Fernandes, who was the instrument of a judicial coup last year against the elected leadership of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union. The court order against the CLC was issued at the request of a lawyer employed by the Fernandes clique, Vanise Alves de Carvalho. This is the *eighth* legal action against LQB supporters in the last two years.

### **ALERT!**

**To the workers**

**To the unions**

**To all opponents of repression**

### **The Bourgeois Courts of Volta Redonda Attack the Workers' Democratic Rights**

**Down with the witchhunt against the Comitê de Luta Classista  
for denouncing the theft of public workers' pension funds  
by the federal government, the popular front and the  
judicial mafia instigated by Artur's pro-police clique**

Yet another attack against the class-struggle unionists who fight for the class independence of the unions from the bourgeois government and the bosses! On Friday, September 5, the Fifth Civil Court (Volta Redonda district) of the Rio de Janeiro state judiciary issued a court order for the "seizure" of bulletin No. 2 of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC), by means of "police force" if necessary. It personally names Geraldo Ribeiro Neves, the legitimate president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SPPMVR). It threatens to seize the belongings of the CLC and

This repression is coming from the popular front city government of Volta Redonda. The demand for an injunction was filed on Alves de Carvalho's behalf by one João Silvério Neto, a management-level city official who was chief of staff of the former mayor and Secretary of Public Services at the time of the previous barrage of repression against Geraldo Ribeiro, the elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union. Ribeiro, a supporter of the LQB, was the only person named in the suit against the CLC. Evidently deciding that this was too obvious a connection to the local authorities, now a new lawyer has been substituted. And in a November 14 filing, the individual targeted has been switched to Jorge Oliveira, a retired black steel worker.

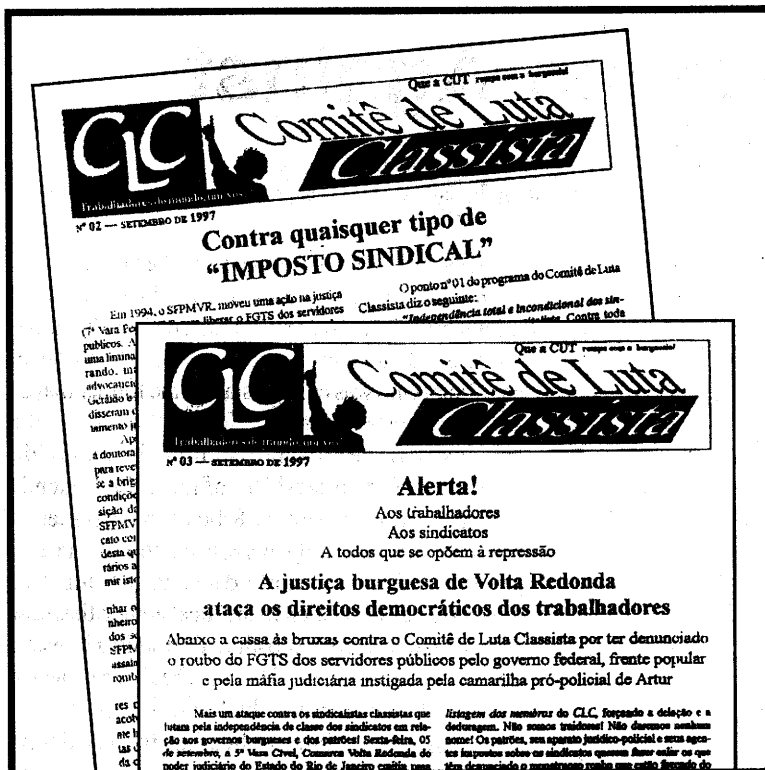
At the same time, indicating the escalating threat, the authors of the court action against the class-struggle unionists ominously describe the CLC as "one of those clandestine factions which hiding under the cover of anonymity seek to flee from confronting the law for the consequences of their acts." In addition to calling for "search and seizure" of the CLC leaflet, these flunkies for the popular-front regime demand a list of the names of the members of the Class Struggle Caucus! We demand: *Hands off the CLC!*

comrade Geraldo. The original call for the injunction (which the judge has not yet fully approved) also demands the names of the CLC's members.

This witchhunt attempts to shut the workers' mouths using laws from the Getúlio Vargas "New State" dictatorship (Civil Code 1940) and the era of the *military dictatorship*! They want to suppress militant workers' right of expression, demanding the "search and apprehension" of leaflets as if these were "public enemies." Will the pro-police gang also ask the courts to use police force to go to every city worker's house to carry out the "search and apprehension" of CLC bulletin No. 2, which each city worker received and which simply tells the truth?

The clique of pro-police intriguers around Artur Fernandes uses the hand of the bourgeois state to grab the workers' money. This is trampling on the principles of the working class. Artur, as a union "leader" for the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista, even signed the "theses" the LBI presented at the Sixth Congress of the CUT (labor federation), as a "so-





The leaflets they want to suppress by court action. Top: CLC Bulletin No. 2, headlines "No to Any Kind of 'Union Tax!'" opposing looting of pension funds and state control of union finances. Bottom: CLC Bulletin No. 3 alerts against the new judicial witchhunt.

cialist alternative" for the workers movement. This is the height of cynicism! The LBI thus stands behind a figure who constantly deals with differences in the workers movement by using gangsterism and treating them as "police cases." Defending the rights of the CLC means defending the rights of all the workers and oppressed!

They want to attack the right of assembly by demanding that the CLC name names and finger people by providing a *list of the members* of the CLC. We are not traitors! We will not provide a single name! The bosses, their judicial-police apparatus and their agents imposed on the unions want to silence those who have denounced the monstrous theft being carried out against Volta Redonda city workers' pension funds. For several years the Popular Front city government refused to deposit money in the pension funds. When even the courts ruled that now the city has to pay, a ridiculous maneuver is arranged so that the lawyers will rake off 15 percent of the total.

The national CUT told the workers: "you do not need to pay" for this rip-off. But when the CLC warns the workers in Volta Redonda that their pension funds are being robbed, fierce repression is unleashed against us. Why is this?

This is not the first time the comrades of the Comitê de Luta Classista have been the targets of judicial-police repression. This is the eighth judicial action against us since Geraldo Ribeiro took office as the legitimately elected president of the SFPMPVR.

They attack the CLC because we defend the independence of the unions from control by the capitalist state, whether by

the courts, government or police, and we oppose the unions' bureaucratization by sell-out leaders. Last year the commander of the Municipal Guard sued comrade Geraldo when, as class-struggle leader of the SFPMPVR, Geraldo carried out a campaign to separate the *guardas* (municipal cops) from the union.

For the same reason, they repeatedly sent police to intimidate the workers who were holding union meetings where the disaffiliation of the *guardas* was discussed. On 19 June 1996, the courts issued an injunction, requested by the pro-police clique, to shut down the union meeting where the disaffiliation of the *guardas* from the SFPMPVR was going to be voted. The injunction also called for the judicial ouster of Geraldo Ribeiro, the union's legitimate president, under the pretext of an investigation into misuse of union funds by Geraldo. Without a shred of evidence, this inquiry has gone nowhere, while under the Fernandes clique 8,032 reais [one real is roughly equivalent to a U.S. dollar] disappeared from the SFPMPVR's savings and the union's van and telephone were lost.

They use the bosses' courts against the CLC because we fight racism. Another court suit was launched against comrade Geraldo on the charge that he "defamed" the city by defending Regina Célia, a black woman who was the victim of a racist firing.

With the union under judicial intervention, they imposed the pro-cop front man Artur Fernandes, who is going to court once again, this time using the law-

yer Vanise Alves de Carvalho, employed by the SFPMPVR, to try to suppress the protest against the theft of the pension funds.

But this could backfire, because it will not be enough to try—unsuccessfully—to silence the CLC. They will have to attempt to shut the mouths of all the members of the SFPMPVR who want to defend themselves and are fighting against this attack. And they will fail in their attempt, just as they failed when they tried to stop the ranks of the SFPMPVR from voting on 25 July 1996 to reaffirm Geraldo as president and disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from the union. *Courts and cops hands off the union!*

Make no mistake: this attack is directed against *all* those who fight to defend the workers' interests. This time they want to "search for and apprehend" CLC bulletin No. 2 against the theft of the pension funds. Next time, will they want to "apprehend" Geraldo's declarations No. 1 and 2, which talked about the need for a massive struggle against the layoffs of city workers, CSN (National Steel Company) workers and others?

Remember: an attack against one is an attack against all. If they succeed in outlawing protests by Volta Redonda city workers, tomorrow they will launch new attacks against the oil workers, the dockers, the landless peasants, the homeless and others. *Everyone* must join the struggle to demand that all charges be dropped against Geraldo Ribeiro and the Comitê de Luta Classista.

The Comitê de Luta Classista fights for the complete and unconditional independence of the unions from the capitalist *continued on page 57*


# International Outcry Against Brazil Witchhunt

Unionists and defenders of workers' rights from five continents have reacted with outrage to a Brazilian court's order for "search and seizure," including the use of "police force," of a leaflet by the Class Struggle Caucus (CLC-Comitê de Luta Classista). The CLC was initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and includes members of several trade unions in the city of Volta Redonda, site of Latin America's largest steel mill. The program of the Caucus is printed on page 51 of this issue.

The injunction against the CLC also specifically named Geraldo Ribeiro, who since being elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMMVR) in late 1995 has been the object of a vendetta by the capitalist courts and cops. The reason: Ribeiro and other class-struggle activists led a fight to remove police from the unions, resulting in the union meeting of 25 July 1996 voting to disaffiliate "municipal guards" from the SFPMMVR. Ribeiro was also prosecuted by the Popular Front city government for leading a campaign against the racist firing of a black woman worker.

The latest repression is an attempt to stop the CLC from denouncing the looting of workers' pension funds by a "legal mafia" in a country where wages and retirement benefits are at starvation level for huge parts of the working class, including municipal workers (see article on page xx). When the court injunction issued in early September lapsed, the lawyers who launched the attack on the class-struggle unionists obtained another "search and seizure" court order against the CLC, and are now threatening criminal action as well as a civil suit.

This juridical assault on class-struggle unionists has been met with an outcry of protest from Brazil to South Africa, El Salvador and the U.S. In Volta Redonda itself, the hotel and restaurant workers union noted "the deliberate intention of infringing on workers' organization as occurred for several years under the Military Dictatorship."



**International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union**

**Local 10** 400 NORTH POINT, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. 94133 • 776-8100

**Lawrence Thibaux**  
PRESIDENT

**Tony Winstead**  
VICE PRESIDENT

**Dale Kelly**  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

November 8, 1997

**Mr. Geraldo Ribeiro**  
Luta Metalurgica/SFPMMVR  
Av. Lucas Evangelista No. 418, Sala 308  
Bairro Alameda - CEP 27 295-320  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

**Dear Brother Ribeiro:**

We are greatly concerned that government repression in Brazil is continuing against you and activists in your union, the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union. After a visit this summer by stewards union representatives for the port of Santos, it became apparent to us in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union that workers who dare to defend their unions and social conditions are being targeted by the Brazilian government.

Last year we wrote a letter to governor Alencar protesting the government's intervention to remove you as president, even though you were democratically elected by your membership. Why? Because you played a central role in carrying out the will of your membership to disaffiliate the guards (police) from your union. As we stated then and reiterate now, we support your principled struggle. Police have been banned from membership in our union since they killed workers in the 1934 Maritime Strike. And today, the brutal killings of street children in Brazil by police don't go unnoticed here.

Witchhunt, using laws from the 1940 Class Struggle

VIA FAX:

November 14, 1997


**To: Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC**

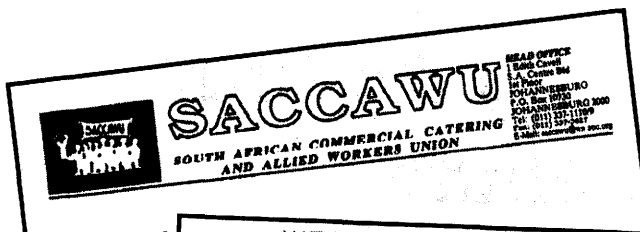
SEIU Local 399, representing 16,000 workers, sends its solidarity against the new state repression directed against you. A year ago we declared our solidarity with your fight for a union independent of the state, and pointed out that we have had our members attacked by the police at union protests and know the police are not neutral in these issues. We also joined in your struggle against racism, which our union, largely composed of immigrant workers, has also experienced first hand.

Now you are under attack once again in the eighth legal action against you. This is an attempt to use laws from the military dictatorship to censor and silence the voice of union activists, including the legitimate elected president of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union who has been the victim of court intervention, armed police shutting down union meetings and repeated acts of repression because of the struggles he has lead.

We protest the court order to seize your leaflets, which is a clear attack on the rights of all workers. We further protest the treat to seize your belongings and the outrageous threat to demand the names of all the activist who exercised their rights by publishing leaflets to inform the workers and defend their interests. All workers must stand together against such attempts to intimidate and silence those who fight for the rights of labor.

**We join in demanding. No to anti-union repression! Unconditionally drop all charges against the CLC and Geraldo Ribeiro! Courts hands off the workers' rights!**





30 October, 1997

GERALDO RIBEIRO  
CLC - COMITE  
C/O THE INTER  
NEW YORK

FAX:

Dear Cde Ribeiro

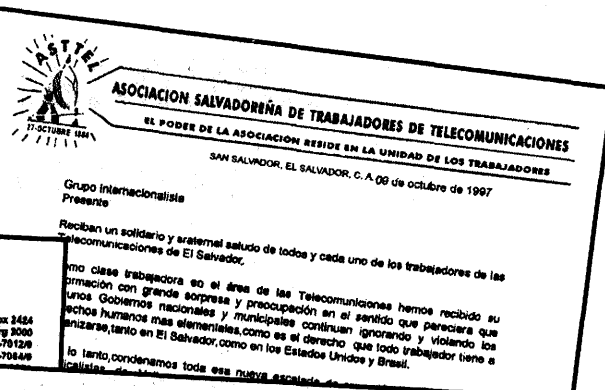
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organisationThese attac  
sufficed in

## NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS



HEAD OFFICE

URGENT!!!

7 Riverside  
Chr. Frederiks  
Johannesburg  
2000P.O. Box 2484  
Johannesburg 2000  
Tel: (011) 833-7012/9  
(011) 833-7084/9

## Centro Independiente de Trabajadores Agrícolas

Independent Farmworkers Center

P.O. Box 78, Florida, New York, 10921  
Phone/Fax: (914) 681-5570

Octubre 6, 1997

do Ribeiro  
Comite de Luta Classista, Brazil  
The Internationalist Group  
New York, NY

dos Colegas,

Uma cordial saudação do Centro Independente de Trabalhadores Agrícolas (CITA).  
Amamos nossa solidariedade por sua luta sindical, e nos juntamos com outras organizações ao nível que não está a favor da repressão policial, e ações judiciais formuladas nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil.To: Abram Negrete, for Volta Redonda municipal workers  
**South African Municipal Worker's Union**  
HEAD OFFICESALWU  
Trade Union House  
8 Jewellery Street  
Abidjan 7764  
Cote d'IvoireTel: 021 697-1151  
Fax: 021 696-3172  
Email: salwu@net.az.net  
Website: http://www.salwu.org.za/salwu/SALWU:  
Private Reg N°9  
Abidjan  
7764  
Cote d'Ivoire

Dear Comrades,

Warm and militant greetings from the 120 000 members of the South African Municipal Workers Union to the anti-racist union militants of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union!

SAMWU salutes your struggle against Brazil's bourgeois government and the fascist bosses. Not only are you waging a courageous war against racism, you are also fighting for your right to publish information vital to the workers of Brazil particularly, and the world in general.

For many years, as municipal workers we fought, with others, a brutal racist regime here in South Africa. The apartheid regime was only overcome after many years of vigilant struggle, and the labour movement has suffered many losses at the hands of the brutal police and state machinery. Now your struggle against the forces of evil will become our struggle as workers of the world.



October 30, 1997

VIA FAX and Regular Mail

Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC  
c/o Internationalist Group  
P.O. Box 3321  
Church Street Station  
New York, NY 10008

Dear Comrades:

Although we are angered to hear of the attacks against the CLC, we are heartened to know of one more group that ardently fights against racism, classism, police brutality, in short, against capitalism. Immigrant workers in New York City and across the nation are also under attack. Consequently, we understand only too well the brutal methods utilized by the police and the state when their interests are threatened. This is why our community in New York City wishes you all the strength and tenacity needed to succeed in the struggle against the tyranny of capitalism.

We very much believe in the power of international solidarity, so please keep us posted on any new events as well as any ways we can be of further assistance.

We, the Latino workers of New York City:

- Condemn the brutally repressive actions of the Popular Front government against the CLC and the working class!!
- Demand the complete and unconditional independence of unions from the capitalist government!!
- Demand that ALL charges against the CLC and comrade Ribeiro be dropped right away!!!



## NATIONAL UNION OF METALWORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA

8th / 9th Floor  
York House  
46 Kerk Street  
Johannesburg 2001  
E-mail: numsa001@pixie.co.zaP.O. Box 280483  
Exoom 2023  
Tel: 011-8322030/9  
Fax: 011-8336408  
011-8336330The President  
Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union  
Caixa Postal No. 84027  
CEP 27260740  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Attention: Comrade Geraldo Ribeiro

15/10/97

Dear Comrade

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa wish to add its voice in condemning the

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Oscar Parades

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Luisa Heister  
Celine Gonzalez  
Oscar Parades  
Tania Conde

Their statement says "the day will come when nobody can succeed in silencing the roaring voice of the streets" and ends with the demand "Down with intervention!" A solidarity statement from the Volta Redonda Domestic Workers Union denounced "repression, intervention and any other violent means preventing the workers from freely expressing their political thought in their union organizations," while the construction workers union added its voice denouncing "dictatorial methods" against the working class and demanding the "withdrawal of the court action" against Ribeiro and the CLC.

Brazilian workers are facing a brutal austerity plan ordered by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso at the instiga-

tion of the International Monetary Fund and Wall Street bankers in response to the crisis sweeping world financial markets at the end of 1997. Cardoso's plan to fire tens of thousands of government workers has provoked plans for nationwide strike action in December. The capitalists can rely on Cardoso to step up anti-labor repression to impose this starvation plan; after all, it was the former "anti-imperialist" Cardoso who sent tanks and troops to crush a national oil strike two years ago.

The one refinery the army did not occupy in 1995 was the plant at Duque de Caxias (in Rio de Janeiro state), because of Caxias workers' reputation for organized and militant resistance. However, the labor court "intervened" the local and seized con-



Sindicato dos Trabalhadores nas Indústrias da Construção Civil, de Ladrilhos Hidráulicos, Produtos de Cimento, de Mármore e Granitos, de Montagens Industriais, da Construção de Estradas, Pavimentação e Obras de Terraplanagem em Geral e do Mobiliário de Volta Redonda, Barra Mansa, Resende, Itaíia, Rio Claro, Quatis e Porto Real.

### Moção de repúdio à intervenção do estado no direito de organização dos trabalhadores

Sindicato dos Trabalhadores nas Indústrias da Construção Civil, de Ladrilhos Hidráulicos, Produtos de Cimento, de Mármore e Granitos, de Montagens Industriais, da Construção de Estradas, Pavimentação e Obras de Terraplanagem em Geral e do Mobiliário de Volta Redonda, Barra Mansa, Resende, Itaíia, Rio Claro, Quatis e Porto Real.

### Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos de Volta Redonda

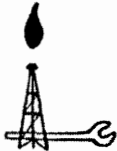
### MOÇÃO DE REPÚDIO À INTERVENÇÃO DO ESTADO NO DIREITO DE ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS TRABALHADORES

A direção

### SINDICATO DOS EMPREGADOS EM HOTÉIS, BARES, RESTAURANTES, COZINHAS INDUSTRIAIS E SIMILARES DE VOLTA REDONDA E REGIÃO SUL FLUMINENSE

SEDE: Rua Jaime Paribolão de Moraes, 53 - Sala 70 - Alameda - CEP 27293-210 - Volta Redonda - RJ - CGC(MF) 31.847.106/0001-69 - TEL/FAX: (024) 347-4192  
SUB SEDE: Av. João Ferreira Pinto, 69 - Sala 105 - Centro - CEP 27510-070 - Resende - RJ - CGC(MF) 31.847.106/0002-30 - TEL.: (024) 354-7013  
BASE TERRITORIAL: VOLTA REDONDA, BARRA MANSA, BARRA DO PIRAI, PIRAI, VASSOURAS, VALENÇA, RESENDE E ITAÍIA.

### Moção de repúdio à intervenção do estado no direito de organização dos trabalhadores.



### Sindicato dos Trabalhadores na Indústria de Destilação e

### Refinação de Petróleo de Duque de Caxias

C.G.C. 26.392.897/0001-80  
RECONHECIDO EM 26 DE MARÇO DE 1982  
SEDE PRÓPRIA: RUA JOSÉ DE ALVARENGA, 888 - TEL. 771-2951  
DUQUE DE CAXIAS - RIO DE JANEIRO  
CEP. 26.000.

### Moção de repúdio à intervenção do estado no direito de organização dos trabalhadores

A direção do Sindicato dos Petroleiros de Duque de Caxias (Sindipetro-Caxias) repudia veementemente a intervenção do estado na liberdade de organização dos trabalhadores. Referimo-nos à decisão judicial de recolher o boletim do Comitê de Luta Classista, que externava opiniões críticas à atual direção do sindicato dos servidores municipais de Volta Redonda.

O direito à livre organização e à liberdade de expressão não deve em hipótese alguma ser violado. Entendemos ainda ser uma postura antidemocrática a deposição e a cassação dos direitos do presidente eleito do sindicato. Tais fatos despertam uma grande preocupação, já que a perseguição a lideranças e a intervenção, de várias formas, em sindicatos combativos têm sido uma constante nos últimos anos, especialmente no governo Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Tais fatos representam, a nossa ver, a inaceitável e deliberada intenção de atingir a organização dos trabalhadores. Abaixo a intervenção!

Nilson Viana Cesário  
P/direção do Sindipetro-Caxias

trol of its bank account. Protesting the new repression against Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC, the Caxias oil workers union issued a statement "vehemently repudiating state intervention against the workers' freedom of organization," denouncing the "suspension of the rights of the union's elected president" and stressing that "persecution of leaders and various forms of intervention in combative unions has been a constant in recent years, particularly under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso."

As was the case during a previous round of repression (see "Solidarity with Anti-Racist Unionists in Brazil," *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997), some of the most powerful protest statements came from South Africa. An 8 October 1997 statement from the 120,000-strong South Africa Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) notes that "For many years, as municipal workers we fought, with others, a brutal racist regime here in South Africa," where "the labour movement... suffered many losses at the hands of the brutal police and state machinery." SAMWU saluted the CLC's "courageous war on racism" and its fight for the "right to publish information vital to workers of Brazil particularly, and the world in general," demanding: "Down with the charges against Cde Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC."

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and National Union of Miners (NUM) also sent vigorous protests against the new repression in Brazil. The South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) denounced "the latest attack...by the combined dark forces of capital and state machinery" and called on those responsible to stop anti-union repression, "lest they burn themselves in the fire they shall encounter in return."

Stressing that "International Solidarity knows no borders," the Salvadoran telephone workers union (ASTTEL) wrote to "condemn this whole new escalation of repression against the unionists of Volta Redonda, Brazil, and specifically against brother Geraldo Ribeiro and the



Comitê de Luta Classista.” Also from El Salvador, the FEASIES labor federation issued a statement defending Ribeiro and the CLC against the repression. When spokesmen for ASTTEL and FEASIES were denounced on TV by the president of El Salvador as “traitors” and “inhuman” for denouncing the notorious abuse of workers in sweatshops there, Ribeiro and the Brazilian militants came to their defense as well.

From across the Pacific, the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees in the Philippines wrote that “we join against racist employers who are in cahoots with the repressive government in sowing terror among municipal workers,” pointing out: “Your struggle is not far from ours. We also [face] racial discrimination against the Cordillera peoples and the Muslim Moros of the South.” The Filipino workers group called for facing “this disorderly new world order” through “collective action and international solidarity.” In New Zealand, both national labor federations protested the repression against the Comitê de Luta Classista. The acting secretary of the New Zealand Trade Union Federation sent a statement to the Brazilian minister of internal affairs, while the secretary of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions also signed a statement protesting the attacks in Volta Redonda.

In the United States, a solidarity statement to Ribeiro and the CLC from Service Employees International Union Local 399 (representing militant janitors and hospital workers in Los Angeles) noted that this is “the eighth legal action against you. This is an attempt to use laws from the military dictatorship to censor and silence the voice of union activists, including the legitimate elected president of the Volta Redonda municipal workers union who has been the victim of court intervention, armed police shutting down union meetings and repeated acts of repression because of the struggles he has led.” The statement also denounced the threat “to seize your belongings and the outrageous threat to demand the names of all the activist[s] who exercised their rights by publishing leaflets to inform the workers and defend their interests.”

In the San Francisco Bay area, ILWU longshoremen’s Local 10 denounced “the vicious witchhunt” following earlier repression aimed at Ribeiro “because you played a central role in carrying out the will of your membership to disaffiliate the guardas (police) from your union.” Citing an earlier protest by Local 10, it underlined: “As we stated then and reiterate now, we support your principled struggle. Police have been banned from membership in our union since they killed workers in the 1934 Maritime Strike. And today, the brutal killings of street children in Brazil by police don’t go unnoticed here.” The protest also referred to state repression of last spring’s dockers’



Vanguarda Operária

**Bosses’ courts of Brazil’s “Steel City” are now targeting LQB and Class Struggle Caucus militant Jorge de Oliveira, retired after 25 years working at Latin America’s largest steel plant (in background).**

strike in Santos, Brazil.

On the East Coast, a solidarity statement in Spanish and Portuguese from the Independent Farmworkers Center noted: “Farm workers here are predominantly Latino immigrants, and we have suffered repression and intimidation in our countries of origin. This kind of repression continues when we arrive in the United States. We believe the struggle you are carrying out is a great example for other countries and popular movements internationally.” An eloquent statement from the Latino Workers Center of New York said “we understand only too well the brutal methods utilized by the police and the state when their interests are threatened” and ended: “Demand that ALL charges against the CLC and comrade Ribeiro be dropped right away!!!”

In addition, statements have been received from the International Bolshevik Tendency, from the Freedom Socialist Party and radical historian Howard Zinn in the U.S., the Communist Workers Party (PCT) in Brazil and LabourNet in Britain. On behalf of the Comitê de Luta Classista and the Internationalist Group, we wish to express our thanks for all those who have come to the defense of the CLC against the unrelenting state repression.

\* \* \*

The judicial repression from the Volta Redonda court continues to hang over the CLC, and may escalate. Solidarity statements may be sent to Geraldo Ribeiro and the CLC care of:

Internationalist Group  
Box 3321, Church Street Station  
New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.  
Fax: (212) 614-8711  
E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Letters can be sent to the CLC and LQB in Brazil by addressing them to:

Caixa Postal 084027  
CEP 27251-970  
Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

# Brazil

## Program of the Class Struggle Caucus

The following program of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC)—the Class Struggle Caucus initiated by our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil) was printed as a leaflet in June 1997 and reprinted in the LQB's newspaper Vanguarda Operária No. 2 (August-October 1997).

**CLC** Comitê de Luta Classista

Trabalhadores do mundo, uni-vos!

JUNHO DE 1997

**PROGRAMA DO COMITÊ DE LUTA CLASSISTA**

**Introdução:**

No Brasil, há duas décadas, havia uma estrutura sindical onde o Estado intervinha diretamente e os pelegos atuavam no sentido literal e direto como agentes deste Estado. Uma luta massiva se fez contra isto, sob o nome do "novo sindicalismo", que colocava um programa de "de-unionismo" (política sindical que aceita os limites capitalistas) contra o qual polemizava a CUT.

**Introduction:** Two decades ago Brazil had a trade-union structure in which the state intervened directly and the *pelegos* (government-aligned bureaucrats) acted literally and directly as agents of the state. A massive struggle was carried out against this under the name of the "new unionism," which put forward a program of *trade-unionism* (union politics which accept the limits of capitalism), which Lenin polemicized against and which can be classified politically as social-democratic. This "new unionism" under the umbrella of the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT—United Workers Federation) is dominant today, revealing its own bankruptcy as it seeks to discipline the workers in the service of the popular front, an alliance which subordinates the workers to a sector of the bosses. Thus, the various enemies we are facing, from the puppet provocateur Artur Fernandes, chief of the pro-police faction against the workers of the SFPMPVR (Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union) and shareholder in CSN (the National Steel Company), who is advised by the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista, to the fake-leftists of the PSTU [the Morenoite United Socialist Workers Party], Causa Operária and Dodora's Força Socialista, which have supported the gangsterism and thuggery used by the pro-police clique against the SFPMPVR, all act as what Trotsky called the "fifth wheel" of the popular front. The CLC's central policy is for the defeat of the tendencies which tie the workers to capitalism.

**Who we are:** The Comitê de Luta Classista is a group of workers, founded by public employees and open to workers from all other sectors, who understand that all the forms of oppres-

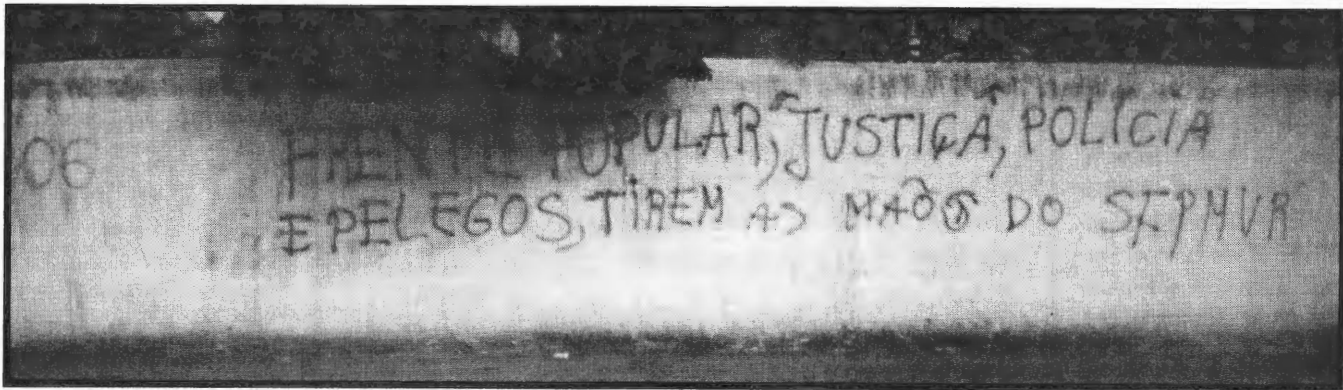
sion that we face arise from the capitalist system. Determined to fight against this system, we seek to make our union an instrument in this struggle, together with the exploited and oppressed of the entire world. After the decline of bourgeois "laborism" [*tabalhismo*, a reference to the followers of veteran capitalist politician Leonel Brizola's "Democratic Labor

Party"] and the *pelego* system inherited from the military dictatorship, the economist "new unionism," remaining within limits acceptable to capitalism, demonstrated its bankruptcy. The union bureaucrats seek to discipline the workers in the service of the popular front of class collaboration, a situation which has been further accentuated after the capitalist counterrevolution in the ex-USSR and East Europe. This is shown in Volta Redonda and nationwide, for example in the betrayal of the oil workers' strike. The CLC is not like other union tendencies which exist only to run in union elections. We seek to constantly raise the workers' consciousness, organize them and mobilize them in struggle to



Volta Redonda 1988 steel strike: army occupies the plant.

Tasso Marcelo



Slogans on wall in main avenue of Volta Redonda protesting repression against municipal workers union, July 1996. Vanguarda Operária

carry out the class-struggle program. The key is to forge a revolutionary leadership.

#### What we stand for:

**1. Complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state.** Against any intervention or interference by the bourgeois "justice" system in the union. We repudiate any and all control by the government (ministries, "justice" system, parliament, police, etc.) over the workers movement. It is the workers who decide. Union dues must be freed from the dues check-off controlled by the state and the bosses and be paid directly to the union, so the workers will control the union's money. Against the "union tax," "labor federation tax," etc. We condemn the traitors who "invite" the bourgeois courts into the unions.

**2. The union belongs to the working class, not to the bosses and their agents.** The union meeting of 25 July 1996 disaffiliated the municipal *guardas* (cops) from the SFPNVR, because police (of all kinds) are not part of the working class; they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.

Remember Ernane da Silva Lúcio, a black youth murdered by a municipal *guarda*. Remember the repression against the oil workers and the massacres of Candelária, Carandirú, Rondônia, Eldorado, Favela Naval in Diadema (state of São Paulo) and Cidade de Deus (state of Rio de Janeiro). This means that the municipal workers' historic decision must be extended throughout the union movement by expelling police, *guardas*, prison guards and watchmen from the unions and the CUT.

**3. Union democracy.** Election of delegates from each sector to represent and mobilize their sectors and keep them informed. All union directors and leaders must be subject to recall by the ranks. The right to form caucuses within the union. Down with the union bureaucrats' witchhunts against class-struggle militants. Mobilize the ranks to defeat all the union bureaucrats, who serve the bosses and the bourgeois state. Maintain a genuine strike fund. Free union programs to teach literacy, technical training and workers education. Seek to establish union radio programs.

The independence of the unions from the bourgeois state, together with union democracy, can be achieved only with a revolutionary leadership. The current union bureaucracies (both the *pelegos* of Força Sindical [pro-company labor federation], etc., and the popular-frontists leading the CUT) act to subordinate the working class to the bosses and their state. These anti-working-class politics were highlighted when Artur Fernandes "invited" the intervention of the bourgeois courts in the SFPNVR against the struggle to disaffiliate the *guardas*.

**4. CUT should mean struggle.** We defend the SFPNVR's affiliation to the CUT, against company-union federations like Força Sindical and the CGT. No to "partnership" and all forms of class collaboration. The workers' interests are completely counterposed to those of the capitalists. The CUT must withdraw from all joint boards and committees with the bosses and the bourgeois government. We condemn the "CUT Investment Clubs" such as those created by the Volta Redonda metal workers union and in other state-owned companies that are being privatized. We fight to defeat the *pelega* and *neo-pelega* (sell-out) bureau-



Zulmair Rocha

Volta Redonda 1988 steel strike: workers killed by army.

cracy—which is increasingly integrating itself into the state—and for a new, class-struggle leadership. The CUT must break with the popular front and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. For trade-union unity: for industrial unions, drawing in contract workers and those manipulated by bourgeois corporatism. For an organizing campaign to unionize subcontractors' and COHAB (federal housing construction authority) employees, with full rights.

**5. An injury to one is an injury to all.** When the bourgeois state attacks one group of workers (as occurred with the oil workers and dockers), the

power of the working class must be mobilized in solidarity action. During strikes, use mass pickets and factory occupation against the strikebreakers. Hot cargo (refuse to transport or handle) products of companies where the workers are on strike. The working class must be mobilized to defend the landless peasants against the capitalists' brutal repression, calling for workers self-defense militias; for agrarian revolution and not the "agrarian reform" proposed by the reformists. Mobilized the exploited and oppressed against the Cardoso/IMF hunger plan. Unify struggles at the national, continental and international level.

**6. Against dangerous and unhealthy working conditions.** Fight to stop the dangerous practices of Volta Redonda's City Hall and other cities and companies, such as transporting workers like cattle in trucks together with dangerous implements. Protection against hazardous materials, such as benzene in the steel mills and petrochemical plants, a gas which causes leukemia (a work-related disease [affecting white blood cells] which these bosses call a "black disease"—a clear example of capitalist racism). Workers committees (without management) on health and working conditions, with the power to stop work when conditions are dangerous. Retirement in line with seniority and with no loss in pay.

**7. Against starvation wages.** For a large wage increase, especially for the lowest-paid sectors. Make up all lost wages [due to government austerity plans and inflation]. For a living wage with automatic cost-of-living increases (sliding scale of wages). Equal pay for equal work. Committees of workers and working-class families against high prices. Organize a large-scale, class-struggle fight by the workers movement, blacks, women and youth against the starvation minimum wage. This poverty wage (which the PT [Workers Party] and the reformist CUT

leadership have collaborated in maintaining) has been the "secret" of racist Brazilian capitalism.

**8. Against unemployment, layoffs, privatizations and "laborflexibilization."**

Against Cardoso's constitutional "reform." Defend job security at all levels through class-struggle mobilization; no confidence in parliament and the laws the bourgeoisie uses to control the workers. Jobs back now for all those laid off in the Collor regime's "administrative reform." Immediate reinstatement of Regina Célia, the black worker and mother victimized by City Hall's racist firing. Fight against

privatizations; cancel the privatizations that have already occurred. Down with "productivity" programs, which mean more exploitation and less jobs.

The labor movement must organize committees of the unemployed linked to the unions. Unemployment compensation equal to wages of employed workers. For a large-scale public works program with hiring controlled by the workers organizations. Cut the work week with no loss in pay: jobs for all! This slogan can also be an important way to win support from the unemployed for the organized labor movement. Union control of hiring and training, with special attention to traditionally excluded sectors (women, blacks, youth). Workers control of production.

**9. For a class-struggle fight against racist oppression and the oppression of women.** "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded" (Karl Marx). The workers movement must lead the struggle against black oppression, which is a fundamental part of the struggle against capitalism in Brazil. Smash discrimination, whether open or disguised ("good appearance" requirements, etc.). Army, police: out of the *favelas* (ghettos). Stop the racist murder of street children. Workers defense committees against strikebreakers and the forces of racist repression.

For a class-struggle fight against leukemia. Open all jobs to women. Free 24-hour child care. We fight against the use of children as cheap labor, which deprives many of them of their childhood and schooling. Free abortion on demand; free, high-quality medical care for all. Defend the rights of homosexuals, Indians and all victims of the bourgeoisie's discrimination and terror; fight bigotry, anti-Semitism, etc. The struggle against oppression can be victorious only as a struggle against capitalism.

**10. Against the popular front, for the class independence of the workers.** The popular front chains the workers organizations

**GESTÃO MUNICIPALÍRIOS em LUTA**

Pela independência de classe dos trabalhadores

28 DE MAIO DE 1996

**Fundação Beatriz Gama demite mulher negra que sustenta filhos por ter a "CARA AMARRADA"**

No dia 13 de maio de 1993, a frente popular despejou de sua casa no bairro Santa Cruz, a família de Ismaelina, com o nome de...

**HISTÓRIA DO MOVIMENTO OPERÁRIO SOBRE A MULHER**

A experiência histórica demonstra que as lutas e protestos que buscam a emancipação da mulher não são apenas de casa e cozinha. Os movimentos sociais e culturais da mulher são essenciais para a construção da sociedade socialista. Sem a participação da mulher, não há a construção da revolução. A luta da mulher não pode ser dissociada da luta da classe trabalhadora. A luta da mulher é uma luta por justiça social e econômica. A luta da mulher é uma luta por liberdade e autonomia. A luta da mulher é uma luta por dignidade e respeito. A luta da mulher é uma luta por igualdade e justiça. A luta da mulher é uma luta por paz e harmonia. A luta da mulher é uma luta por amor e fraternidade. A luta da mulher é uma luta por vida e esperança. A luta da mulher é uma luta por futuro e sonho. A luta da mulher é uma luta por liberdade e justiça. A luta da mulher é uma luta por dignidade e respeito. A luta da mulher é uma luta por igualdade e justiça. A luta da mulher é uma luta por paz e harmonia. A luta da mulher é uma luta por amor e fraternidade. A luta da mulher é uma luta por vida e esperança. A luta da mulher é uma luta por futuro e sonho.

**Volta Redonda Municipal Workers union bulletin defending Régina Célia, black woman worker fired for her appearance. On right, excerpt from article by Leon Trotsky on women and the family.**



to politicians and parties of the bourgeoisie. This is class collaboration, which leads to the destruction of the workers' struggles. From Brazil to Chile, Central America, Indonesia, France, Spain and many other countries, the popular front has meant terrible defeats for the proletariat. Not one vote for any candidate of popular fronts. Against bourgeois parties of the right and "left."

The working class must break from the PT [the Workers Party of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva], a reformist party which organizes betrayals and repression against the oppressed. All the dominant tendencies within the CUT (and the PT) support the politics of popular frontism, from Articulação [Lula's tendency] and its camp followers of O Trabalho [Lambertistes] and Democracia Socialista [Mandelites] to the PSTU and the centrists of Causa Operária and the LBI (advisors to Artur Fernandes). The politics of the Stalinists and ex-Stalinists (PC do B [formerly pro-Albania], PCB [formerly pro-Moscow], PPS [another group of formerly pro-Moscow Stalinists]) seek to subordinate the workers to the class enemy. Thus these tendencies stab the proletarian struggle in the back, as we have seen in Volta Redonda, for example during the struggle to disaffiliate the municipal *guardas*.

**11. For a revolutionary workers party** which fights for a workers and peasants government. Against trade-unionist, syndicalist and “anti-political” illusions. The proletariat can win its class independence only in the struggle for workers power in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. Against the large landed estates: agrarian revolution (seizure of the land by the peasants). We fight for the end of capitalism and for socialism. Repudiate the foreign debt. Revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie; for a democratically planned and centralized economy run by workers councils to satisfy the needs of humanity and not the bosses’ profits.

**11. Workers of the world, unite!** Proletarian internationalism. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now. Against the racist death penalty. Real solidarity actions with workers' struggles in other coun-

tries. Against imperialism and counterrevolution, the working class must defend Cuba, China, Vietnam and the other deformed workers states. The workers of those countries must expel the Stalinist bureaucracies from political power, establishing workers councils under revolutionary leadership. The betrayals of Stalinism, with its lie of “socialism in one country,” prepared the way for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union by world imperialism, which was a big defeat for the world working class. Socialism can only be international. For the Socialist United States of Latin America, extending workers revolution to the USA and the entire world.

**JOIN US!**

## New Repression...

*continued from page 48*

state, against any kind of "union tax" [government-administered financing of unions], for union democracy, against dangerous and unhealthy work conditions, against starvation wages, against unemployment, layoffs and privatizations. We fight against racist oppression and the oppression of women. We fight against the Popular Front, the bourgeois coalition which is the boss of Volta Redonda city workers. We fight for the construction of a revolutionary workers party. Our fight is internationalist: Workers of the world, unite! Join us!

**The bosses' courts want to silence the voice that tells the truth. But the Comitê de Luta Classista will not let itself be intimidated. Neither should you!**

In your union, student, neighborhood, black or women's organization, etc.: make an urgent solidarity statement with the CLC and Geraldo Ribeiro, demanding: *No to anti-union repression! Throw out the 15 percent charge and return the money to those who were forced to pay it! Unconditionally drop all charges against the CLC and Geraldo Ribeiro! Courts hands off our rights!* ■

# VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

N.º 02 AÇOSO/OUTUBRO 1977 - ÓRGÃO INFORMATIVO DA LIGA QUARTA-INTERNACIONALISTA DO BRASIL - PREÇO: R\$ 1,00

**Por uma luta operária revolucionária para derrubar os planos de FHC e FMI:  
CRISE DO ESTADO CAPITALISTA BRASILEIRO**  
Frente Popular do PT junta as massas trabalhadoras à polícia assassina, braço armado da burguesia: Forjar um partido operário revolucionário!

**Novamente entra a campanha  
dissolvente da LCI contra o  
LQI e as identificações anti-  
racistas de Velloso Bastardo**  
DIRETOR



*Prêmio Fernando de Oliveira*

27  
neste mês, e  
com vendas  
de 1.000  
exemplares.  
O preço  
deste mês é  
de 1,00  
real, com  
Frete  
Grátis, em  
toda a  
cidade.  
O preço  
deste mês é  
de 1,00  
real, com  
Frete  
Grátis, em  
toda a  
cidade.

## VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

**Geronimo Pratt**  
**PANTERAS NEGRAS NAS MASMORRAS CAPITALISTAS DOS EUA:  
GERONIMO SAIU DA PRISÃO! EXIGIMOS AGORA: LIBERTEM MUNIA!**



US\$ 25.000 a advogado Johnnie Cochran  
negro está sendo instanciado como de-  
fensor de um grupo de acusados que Cochen  
passou a gerenciar a defesa de Julius Butler  
de que Cochen não tinha "contato" e  
assim não há a chance de condenação.  
Butler fez esta alegação pela primeira vez  
nesta "Vanguarda" depois de anos de  
exatidão e dois dias depois de que  
Cochen tinha explicado Butler de 1974  
por ser informante policial. Em dezembro de  
76 e janeiro de 77, as audiências no tribunal  
de Santa Ana produziram 2.400 páginas de  
depoimentos mostrando as ligações de Butler  
e o FBI.

Butler mostrou documentos e  
provas, dizendo ao júri que ele nunca fu-  
zionalmente policial. Porém, este testem-  
nho de Los Angeles é o mesmo conside-  
ra de Los Angeles porque nos últimos anos  
sua vida não mudou de polícia de Los  
Angeles desde 1960, mas por muitos anos  
nos documentos como agente do FBI nos  
anos 1970 e o contato com o escritório de  
Procuradoria de Justiça de Los Angeles

placenta muitos meses há vida de Cochen.  
Em outubro deste mês a validade de 112  
meses por 24 meses, sendo apenas 23 me-  
ses de cada durante 18 anos e mais dois 27  
anos mais os prêmios de Faltoso e San  
Quentin. Na sua vida de prêmios, Johnnie  
Cochran nunca mais viu a Cochen em  
San Quentin, onde a "Vanguarda" nunca en-  
controu nada que não um pouco de breves com  
um nome "S" nos casos "112 anos mais  
meses com 6 anos e 11 meses" disse Cochen.  
"Quando alguém me pediu para ir para a  
prisão, eu não fui lá, eu não fui lá e não  
fui lá". Foi a primeira prisão onde o racista  
negro Cochen foi acusado de  
seus crimes. Sua transcrição dos anos  
Cochran foi a de perseguição constante  
dos autoridades penitenciárias, viagens e  
passagem dentro que programam de vi-  
tória imediata e não há o que não há a  
estância do processo contra ele. Agora a  
procuradoria de Los Angeles está pedindo a  
revocação de 1972, diz que não se refere ao  
decisão que Johnnie Cochen.

Na realidade, não há o que se subli-  
ça que foram suprimidos, como declara o  
nosso advogado, Johnnie Cochran.

**De Mobuto a Kabila, presidente "maoísta"**  
*Como Tshombe, o primeiro presidente*

*Leia e assinie*

# Vanguarda Operária

Órgão informativo da Liga  
Quarta-Internacionalista do  
Brasil

**R\$4,00 por 4 números**

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

## Internationalist Group Statement

25 July 1997

Why They Lie

# WV's Frenzied Slanders Can't Hide ICL Leaders' Brazil Betrayal

Following the pattern they have set over the last year, the leaders of the International Communist League have responded to our exposure of their latest lying smear against the Internationalist Group and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) by shoveling out still more lies. *Workers Vanguard* substitutes mudslinging for Marxist political debate, resorting to slander and wholesale falsification, because they are frantically seeking to cover up their desertion from a key class battle in Brazil. Having been caught in a shameful betrayal, they accuse those who saw and fought of themselves committing a betrayal. The WV editors' cynical calculation is transparent: they figure that many readers will throw up their hands and conclude that it's a dirty business all around. But serious Marxists will not be deceived by such obfuscating tactics. Anyone who honestly studies the facts will see who is defending the revolutionary program in struggle and who is flinching before the pressure of the bourgeoisie.

The ICL leaders' recourse to falsification and frame-up is nothing new in the history of the degeneration of revolution-

ary organizations. Rather, it is a recurring historical pattern. As Trotsky wrote in 1929 in introducing the newspaper of the French Left Oppositionists, *La Vérité* (The Truth):

"The reformists deliberately lie to their readers in order to preserve the bourgeois system. The centrists employ lies to cloak their vacillations, their uncertainty, their capitulation, and their adventures."

Those who resort to such anti-Marxist methods figure they can crush the voice of authentic communism under the weight of a mountain of lies. WV certainly has a much greater circulation to spread its filth than *The Internationalist* does for refuting it—as we have done with every single one of their attacks while they just duck and dodge. But the ICL is no organizational juggernaut. In following this disastrous course, it is gutting the most precious capital of the Spartacist tendency, its fidelity over more than three decades to the Trotskyist program.


Let's recapitulate how this "discussion" came about. In June of last year, the Spartacist League/U.S. expelled several long-time leading cadres in a bureaucratic political purge that flagrantly violated the SL's own organizational norms of Le-

Ever since the International Communist League suddenly broke relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in June 1996 at the high point of a struggle led by supporters of the LQB to oust police from the municipal workers union of Volta Redonda (SFPMVR), the ICL leadership has been waging a lying smear to cover up its betrayal. Entailing a slander from a pro-cop element in Volta Redonda with the local popular front government. In June of last May *Workers Vanguard* exposed an LQB supporter Geraldo Ribeiro of Volta Redonda, the union of which he is the elected president. In *The Internationalist* No. 3 (September-October 1997) we published earlier responses by the LQB (24 June) and the Internationalist Group (29 June) refuting the ICL's lies. The 25 July statement and 1 September postscript by the IG, printed here, exposed WV's continued campaign of slander against the ICL leadership has been a disgrace to the popular front.




Vanguarda Operária

Volta Redonda demonstration calls to stop threatened execution of U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, 9 August 1995. Luta Metalúrgica sign on left says: "Break with the Popular Front! For a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!"



**GESTÃO  
MUNICIPÁRIOS  
em LUTA**

Pela independência de classes  
dos trabalhadores



06 DE MAIO DE 1996

## AS BASES ESTÃO DECIDINDO :

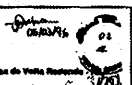
### POLÍCIA FORA DO SINDICATO; REAFIRMAÇÃO DO PROGRAMA MUNICIPÁRIOS EM LUTA!

Segunda feira de manhã, dia 06/05/96, às 6:00 hs, os funcionários da Garagem decidiram em assembleia, por unanimidade que: Os Policiais não devem fazer parte nem interferir no SFPMVR e no movimento operário em geral. Pois são instrumentos e braço

**Comandante DA GUARDA E A FRAÇÃO DE ARTUR ATACAM O SFPMVR:**

Primeiro foi o chamado que a fração de Artur fez para que policiais viessem à assembleia do dia 13/03/96, e que foi condenado ao redor do mundo pela campanha internacional que fizemos e que todos os dias recebemos solidariedade. [veja jornal, Municipários em Luta do dia 11/04/96]. Agora o comandante da Guarda, mancomunado com a fração de Artur está processando o SFPMVR. [veja a fim deste do processo do comandante da guarda contra o SFPMVR.]

avante com nossa vitória classista!



Union bulletin (6 May 1996) reports on garage workers' vote, "The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union." The bulletin closes with the slogans (below): "Forward with our campaign! Police out of the union! Workers of the world unite!"

ninist democratic centralism. The significance of this "cleansing" was underlined ten days later when the ICL leadership broke relations with the Brazilian LQB and ostentatiously exited from the struggle to remove the police from the ranks of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), headed by a supporter of the LQB. The ICL leaders' treacherous flight from a struggle they had at first encouraged occurred the very day before a union membership assembly that was scheduled to vote on the disaffiliation of the cops. That meeting was banned by court order and shut down by armed police, but the Brazilian comrades took the fight forward, leading to a historic vote by the union ranks on 25 July 1996 to oust the cops. Today they continue their struggle to become the nucleus of the Trotskyist party in Brazil, joining with the Internationalist Group in the cause of reorganizing the Fourth International.

The ICL has spent the last year spinning out one lie after another against the LQB and the IG in attempting to justify its ignominious flight. The ICL leadership's catalogue of smears and slanders includes:

- The lie that the LQB had "refused" to undertake party-building tasks, such as putting out a newspaper and extending to a major metropolitan center, and instead was wedded to "trade-union opportunism." This fiction was the ICL's central pretext for breaking fraternal relations, yet within a month the LQB pub-

lished the first issue of *Vanguarda Operária* (Workers Vanguard), and it now has a nucleus in Rio de Janeiro.

- The lie that LQB leader Cerezo was refusing to give up a post as an "unelected adviser" of the union. Even the LQB's enemies in Volta Redonda stated months beforehand that he was not an advisor to the union.

- The lie that the LQB supposedly had a "deal" with the cops in the SFPMVR. Yet the program of the Municipários em Luta (MEL—Municipal Workers in Struggle) slate supported by the LQB stated that the cops, at all levels, like the armed forces, are part of "the armed fist of the bourgeoisie" and thus "no alliance with them is possible." As union president Geraldo Ribeiro moved to disaffiliate the police from the union, the cops have relentlessly gone after the class-struggle leaders of the SFPMVR.

- The lie that the ICL did not know about the 19 June 1996 union meeting. When we quoted internal ICL documents showing that they knew of the meeting, they switched stories to claim that they didn't know that the question of the police was to be voted there. We have reproduced union leaflets and newspaper articles in the ICL's possession which state that this issue was to be decided by the union membership assembly. ICL representatives were also informed of this beforehand by the LQB.

- The lie that the union ranks' vote to disaffiliate the police "never happened." We have reproduced union minutes, MEL leaflets and articles from *Workers Vanguard's* favorite source, the steel bosses' mouthpiece *Diário do Vale*, reporting on the fact that the 25 July 1996 union assembly voted the cops out.

- The lie that the LQB never publicized this "great victory" in the Brazilian labor movement, when in fact the LQB has said that "partial victories" had been won and underscored the importance of the union ranks' historic vote in numerous leaflets and statements.

- The lie that the IG supposedly tried to hide that the court-appointed pro-cop clique around Artur Fernandes "controls the union." The dossier, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil*, published last February by the Internationalist Group, reproduces a letter from Geraldo Ribeiro and Marcello Carega stating that the Fernandes clique was occupying the union hall, and that the "mobilization of the ranks will impose the democratic decision that the workers have repeatedly expressed" in reaffirming Ribeiro as SFPMVR president.

- The lie that the LQB refused to provide information or documentation on the struggle against the cops and the repression against its militants. Yet the LQB sent the International Secretariat of the ICL dozens of pages of leaflets and reports on this, followed by the extensive documentation in the dossier published by the IG.

The latest from the ICL leaders in their frenzied vendetta is the fraudulent claim in *Workers Vanguard* No. 669 (30 May) that Liga Quarta-Internacionalista member Geraldo Ribeiro supposedly sued the very union of which he is the elected president, and that the Internationalist Group is supposed to have covered this up. In statements by the LQB (24 June) and the IG (29 June), we refuted this frame-up, taking apart their whole lying construct and demonstrating its falsity point by point. In

**AVANTE  
COM NOSSA  
CAMPANHA!**

**POLÍCIA  
FORA DO  
SINDICATO!**


**OPERÁRIOS  
DO MUNDO  
UNÍ-VOS!**

the face of a barrage of repression by the capitalist state, including no less than *seven* judicial actions against LQB supporters, Ribeiro has steadfastly opposed all court intervention in the unions, both in repeated public statements, in statements to the courts and in his actions. We showed that what's actually going on here is that the ICL is repeating the lies spread by pro-cop elements, the company press and the popular-front left in opposing the LQB's campaign for police out of the unions and justifying the onslaught of cop and court repression against the Brazilian Trotskyists.

This is no idle academic debate. Over the last two weeks Brazil has witnessed several armed confrontations between the military police and the army. The cops who are infamous for massacring street children, slum dwellers and peasants are "striking" to demand higher pay to enforce the bourgeoisie's bloody rule. And now the leaders of the CUT labor federation and the PT (Workers Party) are *joining together with the cops*. This poses the greatest danger to the workers. CUT leader Vicentinho recently appeared on the same platform with a notorious killer from the ROTA police commandos in São Paulo. MST landless peasant leaders have praised the murderous military police whose troops gunned down their comrades at Eldorado dos Carajás last year. The main leader of the military police in the state of Alagoas is a member of O Trabalho, the tendency in the PT that follows the French pseudo-Trotskyist Pierre Lambert! With virtually the entire Brazilian left openly or in a barely veiled manner supporting the bonapartist police mobilization, this underscores the vital importance of the struggle waged by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista to remove cops from the unions. The LQB alone is fighting to drive home the lesson that the police are not "public servants" or allies of the workers but the armed fist of the bourgeoisie, the enemies of the exploited and oppressed.


### ICL's Vendetta Escalates

Following our exposure of their role as a trumpet for the campaign of lies emanating from the bourgeoisie, the ICL leaders have responded with a new escalation. *WV* No. 671 claims of Ribeiro and the LQB that "Court Papers Prove They Sued the Union." No, they do not. What they show is that *the ICL is falsely accusing Ribeiro—the target of the anti-union court suits—of doing what was in fact done by those who went to the bourgeois "justice" system to remove him as union president*. Like the articles that have preceded it in the ICL's smear campaign, the whole article is shot through with one fabrication and falsification after another, once again beginning with the graphic they use to illustrate the article. In *WV* 669, they claimed that a headline from *Diário do Vale*, the mouthpiece of the steel bosses in this steel



## GESTÃO MUNICIPÁRIOS em LUTA

Pela independência de classe  
dos trabalhadores



19 DE JUNHO DE 1996

### Resolução aprovada no 1º Seminário dos servidores municipais de Volta Redonda, sobre a fração de Artur

**EXPOSIÇÃO DE MOTIVOS:**

Desde janeiro de 1996, uma onda de provocações tem procurado caluniar o SFPMPVR e a gestão Municipalistas em Luta, sob a liderança de Geraldo Ribeiro procurando destruir os mesmos, como ponto de referência e trincheira de lutas dos servidores do movimento operário. Estas provocações aumentaram a partir das eleições sindicais da categoria dos servidores municipais, em novembro de 1995.

Nestas eleições, os oficiais do SFPMPVR Sérgio Montenegro e Luiz Paolin, pela primeira vez na história do SFPMPVR, articularam uma chapa da Força Sindical e de cavalcadinho se lançaram aos braços do Governo frente-populista de Bittar em busca de "parceria". Mas na verdade o que conseguiram foi acobertar um aumento salarial de 34% para os secretários em troca de misérrimos 5% para os servidores e a possibilidade de tolerarem 3 mil demissões entre os servidores ante a possibilidade da quebra da estabilidade no emprego cujo objetivo tem sido tentado sistematicamente pelo governo federal, estadual e municipal.

vergências aparentemente disculpáveis antes das eleições sindicais, foram levadas a um completo antagonismo depois da posse.

Artur Donizete Fernandes passou a organizar uma fração contra o programa Municipalistas em Luta com o pretexto que mesmo fora elaborado longe das massas. Ora, as massas enquanto tal são incapazes de elaborar um programa. O programa é uma herança das reivindicações históricas da classe operária e baseia-se nos quatro primeiros congressos da Terceira Internacional, o programa de Transição da IV Internacional e outros documentos importantes do movimento operário elaborados cientificamente pelas pessoas mais avançadas deste. Um programa classista não pode ser elaborado pelas "bases" com apêlidos eletrônicos.

É demagogia afirmar que as massas cansadas pela repressão e exploração do jugo do capital podem elaborar um programa. Outra coisa é a necessidade de fusão e integração das forças sob a liderança de avançados e obstinados dir. do operário revolucionário.

A política de colaboração de classes da Frente Popular cooptos e corrompeu uma camada muito grande de ativistas sindicalistas e dirigentes operários. Esses "dirigentes" traficam a ideologia da burguesia para o interior do movimento operário. Assim é produzido o erro neste ambiente e busca exemplos em Filina, Arruñón, Vagner Barcelon, Luizinho etc... Artur e sua fração burocrática se alinham das derrotas da classe operária em um ambiente de ataques permanentes, como escrevemos no convite para os seminaristas:

**"OFENSIVA CAPITALISTA  
E A CRISE DE DIREÇÃO**

A aplicação da "globalização" da economia no Brasil, por FIC/FMI e seus aliados, depende de um conjunto de reformas.

Um claro elogio a estes carreiristas e oportunistas que eles tentam imitar. Também tentam desfilar o SFPMPVR da CUT e estão mancomunados com o comandante da Guarda Municipal, que está processando o Sindicato e instigando a luta contra o mesmo. E por isso o nosso programa, "Municipalistas em Luta", insiste que filiação de guardas e policiais aos sindicatos operários é incompatível com um programa classista.

Uma reunião convocada por Geraldo e seus aliados deliberou por assembleias setoriais de base onde todas essas denúncias foram levadas e onde a fração de Artur não conseguiu eleger um delegado sequer dos que foram convocados com esta fração incompatível com o programa Municipalistas em Luta com o qual fomos eleitos e tem como um dos pontos principais a independência completa do movimento operário e portanto dos sindicatos, do estado burguês e seus aparatos estatais.

**18 June 1996 bulletin prints main resolution from 13 June union conference, stating: "the affiliation of guards and police to workers' unions is incompatible with a class program." Resolution stressed need for "complete independence of the workers movement, and therefore of the unions, from the bourgeois state and its state apparatus."**

company town, proved that Ribeiro had been removed as president of the union. Yet the subtitle said this was done by a meeting of 25 people—only four days after a union assembly of over 150 reaffirmed him as president and expelled the police. This time around *WV* shows a clipping from the *Diário do Vale* of the SFPMPVR announcement of the 19 June 1996 union assembly which was to vote the exclusion of the cops, purporting to show that the agenda had "Nothing about cops!" This is a cynical lie.

As the graphic printed in *WV* itself shows, the first point on the agenda of the June 19 meeting is "Report of the resolutions of the 1st *seminário* [conference] of the SFPMPVR" held on June 13. The resolutions passed at that *seminário* called for removal of the police. The agenda for that meeting, including point 7 on the "Municipal Guard," was published in a union brochure distributed to the membership beforehand. It was reproduced on the front page of a June 17 union broadsheet building for the June 19 meeting. The other side of the tabloid-size sheet is headlined, "Campaign is Growing for 'Cops Hands Off the SFPMPVR'." And the next day, June 18, a four-page union tabloid printed the



text of the main resolution of the *seminário*, which stated that "the affiliation of *guardas* and police to workers' unions is incompatible with a class program."

The class-struggle union leadership waged this struggle *politically*. The June 17 union bulletin included an editorial on "The Capitalist Offensive and the Crisis of Leadership," which states:

"In addition, there is an increase in racism and male chauvinism in the context of a general offensive against the working class. But this capitalist offensive, which the fake-leftists call 'neo-liberal policy,' is in reality the ongoing crisis of capitalism, further exacerbated following the capitalist counterrevolution in the planned and collectivized economies of the USSR and East Europe.

"At the same time, despite the innumerable manifestations of its struggles, the proletariat is being defeated by the politics of popular-front class collaboration and because it does not have a revolutionary leadership which fights for the end of capitalism and for socialism, a task which is only possible if the working class has its revolutionary workers party."

Remember that this is in a union bulletin produced by militants that the ICL labels "trade-union opportunists!"

All of this material is available to the public. Reproductions of those union bulletins are to be found on pages 11 and 12 of our dossier *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil*, and the ICL has the full text. Now consider the statement in *WV* 671 that "here is the public advertisement for that union meeting: there is *no mention* of removing the cops from the union. Workers were not publicly mobilized for that purpose, and in fact it didn't happen." You don't have to travel to Brazil to find out the truth about this—all a reader has to do is look at the material published by the ICL and at the material published by the IG to see for yourself that *WV's* claim is a *flat lie*.

And what about *WV's* statement, that "in fact it didn't happen." The ICL leadership knows full well, as we underlined in our recent statements, that the 19 June 1996 meeting was banned by court order. Armed police moved in to shut it down just as Ribeiro was reading the resolution that called for removal of the *guardas* from the SFPMVR. The vote was not held on June 19 but a month later, *because of the action of the capitalist state*. Yet in its sneering account, *Workers Vanguard* never mentions this fundamental fact. The ICL deliberately hides the bourgeois repression against the class-struggle unionists from its readers.

Incredibly, the ICL continues to play three-card monte with the date of the vote by the union ranks to disaffiliate the cops. "June 13? June 19? July 25?" they sarcastically asked last time, claiming, as they do again, that "it didn't happen." But it did happen. In addition to the responses from the IG and the LQB, we have circulated a letter from LQB member and SFPMVR union activist Marcello Carega describing the 25

REUNIÃO REALIZADA NO DIA 25 DE JULHO DE 1996, NO  
SIC (CURRAL DO CONCELHO) NESTA CIDADE, CONVOCADA PARA BASE  
DO ALCALDE DO SINDICATO DE TRABALHADORES PÚBLICOS DO MUNICÍPIO  
DE VOLTA REDONDA, CONFORME REQUERIMENTO COM ASSINATURA  
DE ANTONIO, BAIXADO NO ESTATUTO DO SFPMVR, ARTIGO 10, PARÁGRAFO  
1º, 2º, 3º, 4º, 5º, 6º E ARTIGO 2º, INCISO IV; ENVIADO NO DIA 19  
DE JULHO DE 1996 À DIRETORIA DO SFPMVR, RESOLUÇÃO 000000  
000000 C DIRETOR SINDICATO DE FÁTIMA BATISTA PANGLOSS

OS TRABALHADORES DO SINDICATO DE VOLTA REDONDA DO  
A REUNIÃO DO SINDICATO, TEM INICIALMENTE UMA PARTICIPAÇÃO  
1 FERNANDEZ DA SILVA LUIZ, MUNDICAR 10 ANOS DESEMPREGADO NA  
A OBRIGADA, ELES ESTÃO ETC. PORÉM A REUNIÃO É CONCLUÍDA SEM  
ESCRITOS PARA O APROVEITO DE REUNIÃO DE TRABALHADORES  
VAL DE TRABALHADORES E PORÉM NÃO ACABA COM A REUNIÃO DE  
OS TRABALHADORES. O SINDICATO CONSIDERA A REUNIÃO FOLTA

Minutes of 25 July 1996 union meeting state: "We proceeded to the motion to disaffiliate the municipal guards from the union. The proposal was accepted by a majority vote of those present."

July 1996 meeting that voted the removal of the police and how it was prepared.

In its previous smear, *WV* sought to hoodwink readers into believing that Geraldo and the LQB had never answered the claims in the bourgeois press that he was taking the union to court. We pointed out that Ribeiro had immediately written to *Diário do Vale*, on 26 July 1996, stating unequivocally that he opposed appealing to the courts and that in fact it was the usurper Fernandes who had brought the bosses' "justice" system into union affairs. Now *WV* gives it another try with the same technique, alleging that Ribeiro's letter is a fraud ("Neither the IG nor the LQB has ever published [the] letter to *Diário do Vale*," it pretends) and that "neither had the LQB issued any propaganda directed at the working class in Volta Redonda" on these claims. Not so. The IG response to *WV* No. 669 noted that faced with the systematic distortion of his views in *Diário do Vale*, Ribeiro gave an interview to the other local paper, *Opção* (9 August 1996), which reports that he says "the city's justice system is bourgeois and he does not believe in it." And we noted that on 30 January 1997, Geraldo issued a declaration quoting his letter from last July that the *Diário do Vale* refused to print. This declaration was issued as a leaflet and widely distributed to workers in Volta Redonda.

This issue was also addressed in a recent (26 June 1997) leaflet by Ribeiro calling for united workers action against layoffs by the local Popular Front government. The leaflet points out that the elected SFPMVR leadership had called for "no vote for any candidate of the Popular Front," and that he had warned that the new mayor planned mass layoffs. It also stressed the importance of the disaffiliation of the *guardas* voted by the union ranks last July, noting that the layoffs have been facilitated by the attacks of the pro-cop Fernandes clique, "which maintains itself by force in the union under the protection of the 'justice' system and the police." He adds: "My lawyers wanted to resolve the question in the bourgeois courts, but even though this could have benefited me, I opposed this, since it is against our principles. We fight for class independence and it is the workers who must

resolve their own problems." Meanwhile, the response to the slanders of the ICL takes up four pages of the second issue of the LQB's paper, *Vanguarda Operária*. This is how the LQB supposedly hasn't issued "any propaganda directed at the working class in Volta Redonda" on these questions. Not only does *WV* simply lie about and suppress facts we have reported, it simply invents "facts" out of thin air.

### ***WV's "Irrefutable Evidence" Refuted***

This brings us to the latest of *WV's* supposed "proofs" that Geraldo Ribeiro supposedly brought in the bourgeois courts against the union of which he was the elected president. In justifying a thug attack against Ribeiro in January, the court-installed puppet Fernandes accused Ribeiro of suing the union. As we explained in the IG answer to *WV's* lying smear, when Geraldo inquired of his lawyers what the cases cited by Fernandes were about:

"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 instructions 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."

Now *WV* is forced to admit the fact that Ribeiro indeed ordered these suits to be withdrawn, yet in the next breath it claims that the appeals by the LQB and the Internationalist Group for solidarity to demand that the cops and courts keep their hands off the SFPMMVR and its president were "an international diversion." Our campaign was supposedly nothing but "camouflage" to hide the fact that "*they had sued the municipal workers union in Volta Redonda in the capitalist courts.*"

This is a lie, and a very dirty lie in the service of the popular front, intended to undercut solidarity in the face of the barrage of state repression against the SFPMMVR and Ribeiro.

While admitting that Ribeiro had the suits withdrawn long before their article claiming that he was suing the union, the *WV* editors do not even mention his statement to the court explaining that these legal actions "were erroneously introduced as a defense in my name," and emphasizing that "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." Ribeiro stated there that "I do not participate in any case

of that kind" and pointed out as well that five months previously he opposed the courts ruling even to confirm him as president of the SFPMMVR. That was at the beginning of last December, and there is no mention of that important fact in the *WV* article either, even though Geraldo explained his principled stand in a letter to international supporters and in a leaflet to Volta Redonda workers.

Since *Workers Vanguard* claims to base themselves on court papers and the public record, *why is it silent about these facts?* And if the "real" purpose of the IG and LQB was to sue the union, and appeals for solidarity against repression were only a "diversion" and "camouflage," then why did Ribeiro repeatedly, both in public statements and in responses to the courts, insist on his opposition to *all* court intervention in the unions, *not only in word but also in his deeds?*

To bolster its fraud, *WV* now claims that "files in the courthouse prove the IG and LQB are lying," that Ribeiro had to know what his lawyers were doing. First, the article claims, there are "power of attorney" documents signed by Geraldo. These documents only state that the lawyers "can represent him in any trial, jurisdiction or government office, in the entire national territory," saying nothing about these cases. Secondly, the article charges Ribeiro with "concealing" a third case. How is he supposed to have concealed this? Artur Fernandes referred to two cases, *WV* referred to the same two cases. The "third case" was a continuation of the second, and when Ribeiro instructed his lawyers to withdraw all such cases, it was withdrawn.

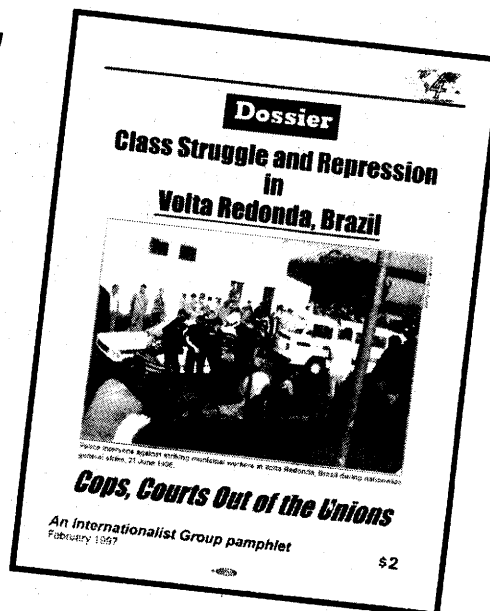
Then comes *WV's* supposed KO punch, claiming: "In order to back up Ribeiro's claim that the capitalist state should recognize him as the legitimate leader of the municipal workers union, *he submitted union bank statements, account books, statutes and minutes of union meetings to the bourgeois court as 'evidence'!*" This, too, is a lie, and a very telling one, because here *WV* is *accusing Ribeiro of actions that were in fact the result of the court suits by Artur Fernandes &*

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*Co. to oust Ribeiro as president of the union.*

The *WV* article purports to provide "irrefutable evidence that the LQB dragged the SFPMMVR union through the bourgeois courts," when in fact it was the pro-cop element Fernandes (the original source of many of *WV*'s lies) and his camarilla who appealed to the bourgeois courts to remove Ribeiro from his elected position and to shut down the union meeting that was to disaffiliate the police. In the entire *WV* article, there is no mention of these fundamental facts. The article asks rhetorically: "how could his lawyers get their hands on the union's financial records and other sensitive internal material and append them to Ribeiro's lawsuits unless he himself turned them over to the lawyers?" The answer is simple: *these materials were demanded in the court suits by Fernandes' flunkie Sebastião de Fátima Batista Passos which carried out the judicial coup against Ribeiro.*

The first of those suits (detailed in our Brazil dossier), case no. 30.421, accused Ribeiro of violating the union statutes by calling the 19 June 1996 union assembly, and initiated court proceedings to remove him as union president. The second suit, case no. 30.545, introduced on 18 July 1996, established a "jurisdictional receivership" by the courts over the union, with Fernandes acting as the administrator, and ordered the removal of Ribeiro as president of the SFPMMVR. The suits press charges against Geraldo related to the payment for union bulletins, including the 11 April 1996 bulletin reprinting the statement by Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" As part of his defense against this frame-up, Ribeiro provided his lawyers with copies of bills showing that the suit against him used crudely falsified bills as "evidence." The suits against Ribeiro called on the court to rule on the union statutes, which were quoted extensively. As for the SFPMMVR financial records, bank accounts, etc., Ribeiro never had these. In fact they were demanded in the first Fernandes/Passos suit which sought (and got) a court order to seize the union's books, calling for "granting a preliminary order for a financial investigation of the books of the Union Body which are in the possession of the accountant Vera Lúcia Nunes Ferreira."

Here *WV* is falsely accusing Ribeiro of turning over union records that in fact came from Fernandes & Co. or which were demanded in the court suits these pro-cop elements introduced to suspend and then remove Ribeiro as president of the SFPMMVR, the suits that *WV* never talks about! It was Fernandes, not Ribeiro, who "invited the class enemy to scrutinize the SFPMMVR's internal documents" and "appealed to the capitalist state to determine who should be the legitimate representa-

#### DECLARAÇÃO

Declaro, que quando da publicação do DIÁRIO OFICIAL DO DIA 03/12/1996, que dizia o seguinte:

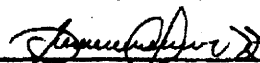
"Miga o autor e réu face a desistência homologada nos autos 30545/96, ainda pretende postular e dar prosseguimento ao presente feito. Prazo: 05 dias, o réu não implicará em concordância com a desistência".

Na ocasião durante o período de 05 (cinco) dias, sendo um dos advogados de GERALDO RIBEIRO, insisti com o mesmo que face a desistência de Sebastião de Fátima Passos ( processo nº 30545) que pedia a cassação de Geraldo da Presidência do SFPMMVR, depois de anulá-lo, seria a grande chance de Geraldo processá-lo por calúnia e difamação e reaver a Presidência do SFPMMVR por meio de uma sentença judicial.

Mas Geraldo Ribeiro foi intransigente e disse que era contra quaisquer intervenção da Justiça para resolver divergências entre trabalhadores.

Sendo assim, desisti de ser seu advogado.

Barra Mansa, 19 de julho de 1997.



Dr. Roberto HENRIQUE DOS REIS

**Letter from former lawyer of Geraldo Ribeiro, Roberto Henrique dos Reis, stating that Ribeiro refused offer of court to rule on validity of union assembly that confirmed him as president of Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMMVR). Ribeiro insisted "that he was against any intervention by the justice system to resolve differences among workers." Because of Ribeiro's principled opposition to court intervention, the lawyer resigned as his representative.**

tive of the municipal workers." And like Fernandes, *the ICL accepts the verdict of the capitalist state*, declaring with great bombast and even glee that this pro-cop usurper "controls the union." Perhaps they would like to tell this to union militants angry over how Fernandes abandoned workers who participated in a recent work action. This court-installed puppet is still in the union hall because of the diktats of the bourgeoisie, not the will of the union membership. In every respect, the ICL's "irrefutable evidence" shows precisely the opposite of what it pretends.

In sneering at "the IG's lame claim that Ribeiro didn't know what his lawyers were doing," *WV* acts as if lawyers always and only do what their clients want. This is hardly the experience of communists historically. For those who do not have access to party lawyers, and even for those who do, Lenin's injunction (in a January 1905 letter to imprisoned Bolsheviks in Moscow) applies: "it is better to be wary of lawyers and not to trust them." Lenin emphasized that even when liberal lawyers were defending and praising their clients, they did not understand their revolutionary convictions and thus were liable to misrepresent them.

Let us return to Ribeiro's action in December 1996, after Fernandes & Co. were forced to drop their case no. 30.545 for lack of any evidence for their trumped-up charges. Ribeiro

refused the court's offer to rule on the validity of the July 25 union assembly that reaffirmed him as president of the SFPMMVR and voted the disaffiliation of the police from the union. Again, if Ribeiro was "appeal[ing] to the capitalist state to determine who should be the legitimate representative of the municipal workers," as *WV* claims, why didn't he accept this offer? The ICL leaders can't explain that, which is why they must vigilantly disappear this fact. In order to do so, they doctor quotes from Ribeiro by chopping a sentence in half, cutting out the reference to this *action*, not just "fine words," in a 31 December 1996 letter by him and SFPMMVR activist Marcello Carega to unionists and others who have defended them internationally (the letter is reproduced in our dossier on *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil*).

Ribeiro's action in December demolishes the ICL leaders' elaborate lying construct. But you don't have to take our word for it—here is what Ribeiro's then lawyer has written:

"I declare that at the time of the publication in the *Diário Oficial* [Official Gazette] of 3 December 1996, which stated the following:

'In view of the approved withdrawal of case no. 30.545/96, the plaintiff and defendant must each state whether he continues to lay claim and pursue the present lawsuit. Deadline: five days, silence indicating agreement with the withdrawal.'

"On that occasion, during the period of 05 (five) days, being one of the lawyers of Geraldo Ribeiro, I insisted to him that in view of the withdrawal by Sebastião de Fátima Passos (case no. 30.545) which called for the removal of Geraldo from the presidency of the SFPMMVR after slandering him, that this was the big chance for Geraldo to sue him for slander and defamation and to retake the presidency of the SFPMMVR by means of a judicial sentence.

"But Geraldo Ribeiro was intransigent and said that he was against any intervention of the judicial system to resolve differences among workers.

"This being the case, I withdrew as his lawyer."

[signed] Roberto Henrique dos Reis, 19 July 1997

### ICL Leaders' Tissue of Lies and Smears

The ICL leaders stick together their patchwork of distortions and fabrications with a whole lot of smears, slanders and mud. Thus they have several times now referred to Ribeiro as an "ex-cop." Once again, this comes from Artur Fernandes, who accused Geraldo of "demagogy" for leading a campaign to disaffiliate the police from the union when he was a former cop. The fact is that Geraldo was for a short period in the early 1980s a municipal *guarda*. For the last dozen years he has been a printer and a leader of the Municipal Workers Union since its inception. He has led the union in six strikes. In a 1988 general strike Ribeiro was subjected to a vicious beating with riot sticks by the military police while he was defending a strike barricade on the picket line. And he has led a campaign to remove the cops from the union in order to defend the class independence of the workers movement, the fight that the ICL leaders fled from.

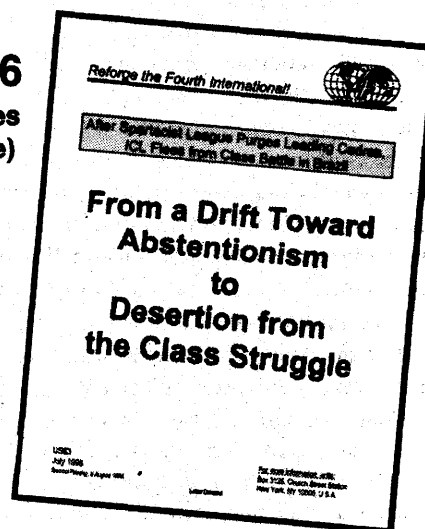
If Ribeiro's background would disqualify him, perhaps ICL leaders would care to comment on the fact that Marshal

Tukhachevsky, who rose to become commander of the Red Army and deputy Soviet minister of defense before being murdered in Stalin's purges, was a lieutenant in the tsarist army in World War I. In the past *WV* rightly published articles hailing Marshal Tukhachevsky, but now...?

Then there is the following gem, a classic in the genre of dirty innuendo and mudslinging. *WV* writes that since Norden and Negrete were "quite exclusively in control of our contact with the LQB prior to January 1996, the question must be asked, *did they know about the cops* [in the municipal workers union] *and keep that secret from the party*." Previously they had similarly "asked" if Norden and Negrete perhaps secretly wrote the MEL program; they also voiced "hefty suspicions" (in the charges against Norden and Stamberg in their frame-up expulsion "trial") of "political collaboration with non-members" and even an "outside source of political funding." The idea that Brazil was an exclusive preserve is pure fiction; it is belied by the fact that Brazil together with South Africa was repeatedly singled out as one of the ICL's top priorities in the period of 1994 to 1996. There were numerous extensive reports by Norden and Negrete to the rest of the ICL leadership on discussions with LM. These are cited in the "Brazil Report for the

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IEC" by Negrete (21 December 1995), as well as in "On Relations with Luta Metalúrgica (Brazil)" and "Once Again on Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica," by Jan Norden (17 April and 5 May 1996). For that matter, the supposed discoverer of the LM/LQB's alleged "trade-union opportunism" in 1996 had made an extensive visit to Brazil in 1995, together with Negrete, a trip from which there were dozens of pages of reports, all duly circulated to the IEC.

As for supposedly knowing about the presence of cops in the SFPMVR and keeping this a secret from the party, not only is this a paranoid fantasy, it was *Negrete* who first learned about the cops at the January 1996 IEC meeting, and immediately initiated a discussion about this question with Luta Metalúrgica representative Cerezo (who said that LM was committed to removing the *guardas* from the union). This is attested to in 25 January 1995 reports on the conversation by both Negrete and Jon B. What's next? Will the ICL leadership now "discover" that the party leadership had been harboring "nests of spies and traitors" who for years were allegedly secretly plotting against the party in alliance with imperialism (or in this case the cops)? Their whole scenario has a distinct quality of "déjà vu all over again," in the immortal words of Yogi Berra.

This brings us to the charge of running a "wrecking operation," and an inside-outside job at that. *WV* writes: "Norden & Co. ran a wrecking operation inside the party, engineered their own expulsions and now run a wrecking operation against us from outside the party." "Trotskyite splitters and wreckers," anyone? How exactly did we carry out such a "wrecking operation inside the party" and engineer our own expulsions? By "declining the opportunity to form a faction" to "change the party's program and perspectives," *WV* says. No, what we did was calmly answer the frenzied smears and bureaucratic sanctions against us, refusing to be cowed by them. We have consistently defended the historic Spartacist program and fought to implement those perspectives, while the new ICL leadership abandoned that program in practice at a key moment.

As for running a wrecking operation against the ICL from the outside, and rushing to form "an anti-Spartacist bloc" with the LQB (as claimed in *WV* 669), nothing of the sort is true. We have repeatedly defended the ICL against anti-Spartacist slanderers such as the picket-line crossers of the Bolshevik Tendency and others of their ilk. What we did was continue the fraternal relations with the LQB and continue to support



Fernando Maia/O Globo

**Landless peasants demonstrating in Brasilia display list of their comrades murdered by the Military Police at Eldorado dos Carajás, February 1996.**

the struggle for cops out of the unions, a key element of the Trotskyist program for working-class independence from the capitalist state. It is the ICL leaders who are wrecking the party with their escalating vendetta, miseducating the membership in the anti-Marxist methods of cynicism and lies. It is they who are beginning to revise the program on key issues such as the Russian question, abandoning in practice the Trotskyist understanding of the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and on the popular front.

We pointed out in a May 5 Internationalist Group leaflet in Mexico that the Grupo Espartaquista de México is now denying there is a *popular front* around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Not only has this been a position of the ICL since 1988, before the GEM was formed, this question has come to the fore in the recent Mexican elections in which the PRD emerged as the main opposition party and Cárdenas himself was elected mayor of Mexico City. In the 1994 Mexican elections, the GEM put out a supplement warning working

people and opponents of imperialism not to be hoodwinked by the Cardenista popular front. However, for this vote, in which there has been a popular-frontist upsurge as never before in Mexico, neither the GEM nor *Workers Vanguard* put out any propaganda on the issue. Instead, they issued an *Espartaco* supplement denouncing...the Internationalist Group and the LQB. As the ICL's perspectives become increasingly narrowed to pursuing its dirty vendetta, it is progressively abandoning the tasks of any tendency that claims to be acting as a vanguard of the proletariat.

Meanwhile, there are some politically significant and ominous new elements in the ICL's latest slanders against the IG and the LQB. Grotesquely, *WV* declares that "the Ribeiro faction in the union was every bit as squalid as the pro-cop faction led by Artur Fernandes"—an "even-handed" characterization whose purpose is to justify the ICL leaders' own treacherous actions. Here we have a fight over ousting cops from the union—as far as we know, the first time this has occurred in Latin America—a struggle led by the LQB that the ICL previously described as principled and which it encouraged, against a provocateur who brags of his support for and advice from the police, and who has repeatedly brought armed police in to shut down union meetings. We have a struggle of union leaders who have insistently called for courts out of the union, and acted in accordance with that principle, against the same pro-cop clique that has repeatedly brought in the courts as a club against the class-struggle militants. And in this battle, the ICL

leaders declare all sides equally "squalid." This is their response to the question in the LQB's 24 June letter to the ICL: "Which side are you on?"

Neutrality in such a fight is itself a betrayal, but the ICL's "neutrality" is phony, for in practice they dish out the lies from the pro-police elements, the popular-front government and the bourgeois press. Who benefits from such actions? Only the class enemy.

In addition, the ICL leaders have reached a new low in blaming the victims for repression. The latest *WV* article claims that the LQB and the Internationalist Group "helped make" Fernandes' operation a court-rigged outfit, when in fact Geraldo Ribeiro and the LQB have been the target of a concerted campaign of police and judicial repression, as well as thug attacks. At the same time, *WV* describes the LQB and IG as "unscrupulous and dangerous hustlers." Readers of *WV* and *The Internationalist* will recall the ICL leaders' earlier claim that the IG is "for sale" and its comparison of the fight for cops out of the Volta Redonda union with the Stalinist adventure of the 1927 Canton Commune. As the ICL now repeats the lies spewed out by the popular front, the steel bosses and their agents in Volta Redonda, who have long sought to destroy the communists of the LM/LQB, they are trying to isolate these Trotskyist comrades and stop people from defending them against continuing repression and assault.

The precedents for this kind of dirty operation are well-known, from the Healyites acting in concert with the bourgeois media against British miners leader Scargill to the BT's smear campaign against the Spartacist League calling the SL violent gangsters at a time when we were suing the FBI over its description of the SL as terrorist. Since the ICL leaders have traveled so far down this well-travelled road, one has to ask: what is their next step?

The claim of the ICL leaders that they are defending Marxist principle is manifestly false. Their vicious vendetta is driven by factional frenzy, and a desperate search for an after-the-fact alibi to salvage their badly damaged reputations. They believe that they are accountable to no one, that they can lie and spread smears without being exposed. They think they can urge a difficult and dangerous struggle on comrades and then abandon it and them when the stakes are rising, and it will have no political consequences. But they are wrong. A communist party true to the program of the Lenin and Trotsky is answerable to the revolutionary interests of the working class. It wins its role as leader of the exploited and oppressed through its intervention in the class struggle, where Bolshevik cadres are tested and steeled. In fleeing from a key class battle, alleging that the danger to the vanguard was too great, and then justifying that betrayal with a welter of lies, the ICL leadership is undermining the struggle to forge that leadership, the vanguard party of the proletariat that is the key to world socialist revolution.

What we are seeing is the political degeneration of the tendency which for more than three decades upheld the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism. It reflects the pressure of the capitalist offensive, buying into the lies of bourgeois

GUARDA MUNICIPAL  
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 PÚBLICOS DO MUNICÍPIO DE U.A.  
 DECIDIU QUE:  
 ESTA DE ALUGO COM O PROGRAMA MUNICIPAL  
 EM LUTA QUANDO ESTE AFIRMA QUE:  
 (2º O BOLETIM)  
 PARA TOME A SEGUNTA DECISÃO:  
 PRIMEIRO SERÁ ENVIADA UMA CARTA AS TODAS  
 OS GUARDAS MUNICIPAIS SINDICALIZADOS  
 QUE OS MESMOS NAS NAS PROTECÇÃO  
 NO QUADRO DE ASSOCIAÇÃO DO SFPMVR  
 O GRUPO VOTOU POR UNANIMIDADE  
 (1 A VOTO CONTRA) ANACELDO

IL claims that 13 June 1996 *seminário* (conference) of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR) did not vote for removing *guardas* (police) from the union. The IL lies. Above, excerpt from minutes of that union *seminário*: "A letter will be sent to all the unionized municipal guards informing them that they no longer belong to the membership of the SFPMVR." Passed with one vote against.

triumphalism and seeking to find a protected niche in the "new world order." The ICL leadership's recent actions would gut the historic Spartacist program, turning it into empty paper. They increasingly treat the principles and rules of the Fourth International with cynical disregard. This political degeneration is what is behind *WV*'s substitution of mudslinging, character assassination and lies for Marxist political debate. This is behind the ICL's growing revisions on the key issues of the Russian question and the popular front, and its shameful actions as purveyors of the lies of the popular front and its agents against the Trotskyists. The smears and slanders are the handmaidens of a deeply unprincipled course, which can only be fought by building an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard in struggle against all those who drag the principles and program of the Fourth International into the swamp of class collaboration.

Internationalist Group  
 25 July 1997

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## Postscript to Internationalist Group Statement 1 September 1997

# ICL Takes Slander Campaign to Brazilian Labor Congress

The national congress of the Brazilian Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT—United Workers Federation) labor federation was held in São Paulo this August in the aftermath of “strikes” by the murderous Military Police across Brazil. The MPs were demanding more money for carrying out the bourgeoisie’s dirty work of repressing workers, blacks and landless peasants. From CUT leader Vicentinho, linked to the reformist Workers Party (PT), through virtually all of the “far left,” the tendencies at the labor congress had supported the bonapartist cop revolt. One particularly cynical outfit, the “Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista” (LBI), called for “red unions” of the Military Police! At the same time, it presented theses co-signed by one of its leaders and Artur Fernandes, the pro-police stooge who has been point man for repression by the capitalist cops and courts against class-struggle unionists in Volta Redonda.

In sharp opposition to the betrayal of the reformist and centrist left, a team of militants from the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil was outside the CUT congress selling the new issue of the LQB’s newspaper *Vanguarda Operária*. Its lead article calls for revolutionary opposition to the cop “strikes,” labels the police “the armed fist of the bourgeoisie,” and demands the expulsion of cops of all kinds from the unions. The LQB is the *only* tendency in the Brazilian left to uphold this crucial position, which is key to the fight for workers’ class independence and against racist, anti-labor police terror. Their tenacious and principled fight for this fundamental principle has earned them the enmity of the popular front and a barrage of judicial actions against them.

Two representatives of the International Communist League showed up at the CUT congress on August 17. They came to distribute a leaflet in Portuguese that says not a word on the burning issue of opposing the CUT’s support for cop “strikes,” nor against the popular-frontist left which ties the workers and oppressed to the bourgeoisie, nor against the LBI advisors for the pro-cop provocateur Artur Fernandes. Instead, the leaflet smeared the LQB and comrade Geraldo Ribeiro as engaging in a “squalid struggle for control” of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SPPMVR), charging the LQB and the Internationalist Group with “class betrayals” and sneering about a phony “union ‘struggle’” in Volta Redonda. The leaflet was a translation of the latest smear attack on the Internationalist Group and the LQB in *Workers Vanguard* No. 672 (8 August 1997).

The previous issue of *WV* (No. 671, 11 July 1997) claimed that “the Ribeiro faction in the union was every bit as squalid as the pro-cop faction led by Artur Fernandes.” On one side is Fernandes, his armed cop cohorts and the bourgeois courts who installed him. On the other side are the revolutionary

workers of the LQB and the class-struggle unionists, led by the legitimately elected union leader Ribeiro, who fought to remove cops from the union. Because of that fight they have been the object of repeated acts of cop repression, gangster violence and no less than seven court actions against them, including by the police commander and the Popular Front city government. In the face of all this, they defied the courts and cops in voting to oust the *guardas* (police) from the SPPMVR.

Yet *WV* says both sides are the same. *This is a betrayal and a cover-up for the class enemy.* And as we have pointed out, the neutrality is phony: the ICL leaders have retained one smear after another against the LQB from the mouth of Fernandes and the bourgeois press.

At the CUT congress, as if to display their tacit bloc with the LBI against the Brazilian Trotskyists, the ICL representatives hung around the LBI’s literature table for many hours of amicable discussion. This table was quite openly the command post for the LBI’s dirty operation inside the congress based on the “theses” co-signed by Artur Fernandes.

\* \* \*

So, once again, let’s take a look at the latest smears from *WV*’s slander mill of supposed spectacular “revelations” against the IG and LQB.

First of all, readers should note that while *Workers Vanguard* obscenely gloats that Geraldo Ribeiro was “booted out” of the union hall, it has sought to disappear the fact that this was carried out by the jackboot of police repression. *One article after another failed to mention that armed police shut down the 19 June 1996 union meeting, imposing a court order that initiated a judicial coup to oust Ribeiro from his elected position.* This means that anyone reading *Workers Vanguard* would have no idea of the real course of the struggle in Volta Redonda.

*WV* first claimed that the LQB was suing the union, on the basis of claims by Fernandes and the LBI. Not only did Ribeiro *not* sue the union, when he learned of the requests for injunctions his then lawyers had filed, he immediately instructed the lawyers to withdraw them, which was done, as *WV* is now forced to admit. *WV* doesn’t mention: 1) that this occurred months before their phony exposé; nor do they mention 2) his statement to the court explaining that those legal actions had been erroneously introduced in his name and that he was categorically opposed to bringing the courts into the unions; nor do they mention, 3) that last December [1996], when the court offered to rule on the validity of the union membership assembly that reaffirmed Geraldo Ribeiro as union president, he refused the court’s offer; nor that 4) his ex-lawyer confirms in a signed statement that this *did* happen, and it was because of Ribeiro’s refusal on principle to sue the union that he resigned as Geraldo’s lawyer.

Geraldo Ribeiro has stated repeatedly, from the beginning, that he is opposed to all court intervention in the unions. He has done so in leaflets, on the radio, in statements to the courts, as well as to international supporters. If Geraldo Ribeiro wanted to sue the union, as the ICL dishonestly claims, then why would he have made the lawyers withdraw the requests for injunctions? Why did he refuse the court's offer last December to rule in his favor?

*WV* says that if Geraldo signed power of attorney papers, he must have known what his lawyers were doing. *WV* claims that the fact that Ribeiro didn't know about these legal actions for seven months is "Not possible." But it is true, so why isn't it possible? Underlying *WV*'s claim is the idea that lawyers usually do what their clients want them to do, which is very far from the case when the clients are working-class and poor people, let alone revolutionaries. Lawyers are agents of the courts, and behind *WV*'s haughty remarks is a form of confidence in the bourgeois state.

\* \* \*

What is going on here is that the ICL leadership committed a betrayal in Brazil, which they are now brazenly trying to cover up. The ICL correctly encouraged the LQB to undertake a fight to remove the police from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union, and then when the struggle reached the boiling point, the ICL leaders told the LQB to "pull our hands out of the boiling water," pull out of the union leadership and even pull out of town. When the LQB refused this shameful request and continued the fight to remove cops from the union, the ICL broke off fraternal relations and pulled out. While waxing ironic about our "passion" for defending the Brazilian comrades, the ICL leaders are out of control in a real frenzy to defame the Brazilian militants *in order to alibi the documented fact that the ICL stabbed them in the back and deserted this key class battle.*

Much as they have tried, the ICL leaders have not been able to blot out the fact that they abandoned the struggle in Volta Redonda in the midst of the fight to remove the cops from the SFPMMVR, so now they try to pretend that it never happened. In answer to *WV* 671's claim that the call for the 19 June 1996 meeting—the day after they broke relations with the LQB—had "nothing about cops," we pointed out that the first agenda point was "Report of the resolutions of the 1st *seminário* [conference] of the SFPMMVR" and that "the resolutions passed at that *seminário* called for removal of the police." Now *WV* 672 shrieks "No they didn't!" and repeats that "workers were not publicly mobilized for that purpose, and in fact it didn't happen." In fact, the workers were publicly mobilized for that purpose, and in fact it did happen.

The ICL leaders have become so blinded in their frenzied vendetta that they believe they can simply decree an alternate reality. Unfortunately for them, the public record shows what really happened. In the first place, there was a whole campaign by the union lead-

ership to mobilize the ranks for the disaffiliation of the police. One of the reasons the ICL leaders hate our February 1997 Brazil dossier (*Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil*) is that it reproduces materials they sought to suppress. Thus, on page 10 of the dossier we show a union bulletin of 6 May 1996, which the ICL leadership translated but did not distribute to the membership. This bulletin is headlined "The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union" and reports: "A meeting of the [municipal] garage workers voted unanimously: The police should not be part of, and should not interfere with, the SFPMMVR or the workers movement in general. Because they are the instrument and armed fist of the bourgeoisie."

That bulletin published a schedule for elections of workplace delegates to the union *seminário*. Even *WV*'s favorite source, the steel bosses' paper *Diário do Vale* (17 May 1996), reported that in early June, "the union will hold a conference where it will discuss the removal of the *guardas* from its membership, Geraldo Ribeiro said yesterday." And it did. The main resolution from the *seminário* declared that "the affiliation of *guardas* and police to workers' unions is incompatible with a class program." *WV* rants that this was from the "preamble" and came in the midst



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Volta Redonda, 08 de Setembro de 1997.

#### DECLARAÇÃO

Eu Marcelo Lázaro Bendia, diretor do SFPMMVR eleito para o período de Novembro de 1995 a Novembro de 1998, participei do 1º Seminário do SFPMMVR, realizado em Quatis, (RJ) no dia 13/06/96.

No Seminário foi discutida uma pauta que foi apresentada num boletim - convocação de delegados. No item Guarda Municipal, fui o único dos delegados presentes no Seminário que votei contra a exclusão das Guardas Municipais - como sócios do SFPMMVR, embora hoje estou refletindo sobre isso.

Inclusive fui demitido ilegalmente no dia 11/07/97, não sei se foi como punição ou não.

Sem Mais

Marcelo Lázaro Bendia

**The 13 June 1996 SFPMMVR *seminário* didn't vote for removal of the police from union, according to ICL? Wrong. Above, letter from the one union director who voted against:**

"I, Marcelo Lázaro Bendia, director of the SFPMMVR elected for the period of November 1995 to November 1998, participated in the 1st *seminário* of the SFPMMVR which was held in Quatis (Rio de Janeiro), on 13 June 1996.

"In the *seminário*, an agenda was discussed which had been presented in a bulletin convoking the delegates. On the agenda point concerning the Municipal Guards, I was the only one of the delegates present in the *seminário* who voted against excluding the Municipal Guards as members of the SFPMMVR. However, today I am reconsidering this.

"In addition, I was illegally fired on 11 July 1997, I'm not sure if this was as a punishment or not."



of "more than a dozen paragraphs of economist verbiage." It is bizarre and grossly dishonest that they call "economist" a highly political text that, among other things, refers to "the Transitional Program of the Fourth International" and the "counterrevolution in the planned and collectivized economies of the USSR and East Europe," and calls for "a revolutionary workers party which fights for the end of capitalism and for socialism" while stressing that "this party must be internationalist with a multiracial composition of men, women and youth."

The main resolution, quoted above, provided the overall political motivation for the motions passed during the ten agenda points. The question of the municipal *guardas* was point 7 on the *seminário* agenda. And as we reported in our dossier, "a motion was overwhelmingly passed calling for the ouster of the *guardas*." That motion, as recorded in the *seminário* minutes, voted that "a letter will be sent to all the unionized municipal *guardas* explaining that they will no longer be part of the membership of the SFPMPVR." The motion was passed with one vote against. Will *WV* claim this didn't happen as well? We are reproducing this point from the minutes of the June 13 SFPMPVR *seminário* so that readers can see for themselves.

And what of the 19 June 1996 union membership assembly? We have already cited the 28 June union bulletin which reported that, in defiance of a court order, as the cops moved in to shut down that meeting, "Geraldo read the resolutions of the 1st *seminário*, and among the main points is: To disaffiliate the municipal *guardas* from the SFPMPVR, because they are not part of the working class...." The front page of this bulletin is reproduced in our Brazil dossier. But *WV* still pretends that this didn't happen either. So we will cite a source their reporter had in his hands (because it is part of the court papers he "personally examined" in Volta Redonda). The court suit by Fernandes's flunkie Sebastião Passos includes the minutes of the meeting of Fernandes' court-rigged "executive board" held on 27 June 1996. In a bill of particulars against union president Ribeiro, the minutes state:

"It was also public knowledge that the general assembly called by the union president on 19 June 1996, at the Municipal Hall, despite being canceled judicially, decided to disobey judicial orders and at the beginning of the assembly presented the following proposals: To disaffiliate the municipal *guarda*, disobeying 'Article 6' of the statute...."

This supposed violation of the union rule that membership is open to all city workers (the Fernandes clique calls cops "workers") was then cited as one of the reasons for the "suspension" of union president Geraldo Ribeiro, originally decreed by the court on 19 June 1996. Will the ICL leaders continue the lie that "it never happened" to cover their shameful desertion the day before the June 19 meeting?

We have shown that *WV*'s claim that at the 13 June 1996 union *seminário* "the Ribeiro/LQB faction did not call to remove the cops" is false. We have shown that *WV*'s claims that the agenda for the 19 June 1996 meeting did not deal with the question of removing the cops from the union and that "workers were not publicly mobilized for that purpose, and in fact it didn't happen" are also false. Now *WV* 672 pretends that there was no vote at the 25 July 1996 union assembly to

remove the cops. This, too, is demonstrably false.

After the 19 June 1996 meeting was dissolved by armed police, the LQB comrades used leaflets, workplace gatherings and a petition signed by hundreds of workers to mobilize for the union meeting of 25 July 1996, held despite police intimidation, as the Brazilian comrades have powerfully described in letters published in *The Internationalist* No. 3. At that meeting a motion was passed to disaffiliate the police from the SFPMPVR. An excerpt of the minutes of that meeting is printed on page 14 of our Brazil dossier, stating: "We proceeded to the motion to disaffiliate the municipal guards from the union. The proposal was accepted by a majority vote of those present."

We want to call attention to a particular aspect of this slander published by *Workers Vanguard*. We are not dealing here with a reckless disregard for the truth, but a conscious, deliberate lie. When *WV*'s editors wrote their latest fabrication they had in their possession the minutes of the 25 July 1996 meeting showing in black and white that this vote was held. How do we know? Because an ICL spokesman requested them, and we sent them to him, even before our Brazil dossier was published.

\* \* \*

A side point, but a telling one as to the cynicism of the ICL leadership: The leaflet that the ICL distributed to the CUT labor congress says "labor donated" at the bottom. Those who have closely followed *WV*'s campaign of defamation will recall the vicious smear a year ago when they implied that our bulletin on the ICL's purge of leading cadres and its desertion from the struggle in Brazil was printed by scab labor, when in fact our bulletin said it was labor donated! But consistency is no concern of the ICL leaders.

\* \* \*

In an article on Mexico in issue No. 672 (devoted to a polemic against the IG), *WV* repeats the smear that the Brazilian comrades are trade-union opportunists and that "the LQB went on to drag this union [the SFPMPVR] through the capitalist courts." Wait a minute. Who was dragged through the courts? Who was repeatedly beaten, including in one instance while Artur Fernandes' right-hand man held a gun on him? It was Geraldo Ribeiro. Who was dragged in handcuffs to the police station after military police fired a shotgun in the air? Marcello Carega. Who was "booted out" of the union hall by court order after the popular front mayor sent cops to shut down a union meeting? The LQB comrades.

The ICL leaders not only try to obscure this but are running a smear operation denouncing as a "fraud" and a "diversion" the international effort to defend the LQB and anti-racist unionists in Volta Redonda against this repression. Words have meaning—the ICL leadership is actively *opposing* defense of the Brazilian militants. Make no mistake: the ICL leaders' drive to isolate and destroy the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Internationalist Group weighs in the balance of the class struggle—on the bosses' side. Those who seek to advance the proletarian struggle for socialist revolution must reject and expose this dirty smear campaign.

Internationalist Group

1 September 1997

*continued from page 72*

Centennial Stevedoring Services and the PMA, charges the ILWU with violating the no-strike provisions of the contract in refusing to cross the picket line against the *Neptune Jade*. The bosses already have a temporary injunction, enjoining the union from honoring picket lines at that dock, and they want to extend it.

The third case is a suit against individuals and groups, demanding huge monetary damages and representing a wholesale attack on labor rights and civil liberties. Named as defendants are Irminger and ILWU Local 10 Executive Board member Jack Heyman, as well as the Laney College Labor Studies Club, the Golden Gate chapter of the Labor Party, the Peace and Freedom Party and anyone else the witchhunters can get their hands on who had anything to do with the solidarity picket. *Five hundred* "John Doe" citations were issued, along with "Doe One" to "Doe Ten" labor organizations, and similarly for associations. Outrageously, the names of those who testified on Irminger's behalf in the first case were added to the list of defendants!

The suit is a piece of vintage McCarthyite witchhunting, designed to victimize and intimidate all those who respect picket lines and participate in labor action. "Special Interrogatory No. 1" demands that the defendants "IDENTIFY all PERSONS, associations, and organizations known to YOU who participated in one or more of the demonstrations at Yusen Terminals, Berth 23, Port of Oakland, during the period from September 28, 1997 to October 1, 1997, inclusive." This is followed by "Special Interrogatory No. 2," which demands the names of anyone who participated in "planning, organizing or arranging" the demonstrations.

Other "discoveries" in this sinister fishing expedition ask for the names of everyone affiliated in any way to the Committee for Victory to the Liverpool Dockers; anyone who provided information about when longshore workers were scheduled to work the *Neptune Jade*; every communication, all notes, faxes, e-mails concerning the action; and "without limitation, membership lists, organizational charts, articles of incorporation, by-laws, mission statements, minutes of meetings," as well as computer records, phone records, diaries, bank checks, receipts and anything else these junior G-men could think of.

The PMA lawyers who filed this union-busting fink action clearly missed their calling. They should have been around during the 1950s, when they could have worked for the House Un-American Activities Committee under Senator Joe McCarthy's witchhunter-in-chief Roy Cohen. HUAC went after the West Coast longshore union with a vengeance, trying to get long-time ILWU leader Harry Bridges deported on charges of communism. Hell, they would have loved the Inquisition under Savanarola, when they could follow up their "interrogatories" by boiling the defendants in oil. No danger of being overturned on appeal there.

While the ILWU is so far refusing to comply with the suit's discovery moves, the president of Laney College (a former leader of the SF State strike of 1969) shamefully responded by prohibiting student organizations from participating in labor protests. That is a ban that is begging to be broken--and we hope someone will do so, soon. In the meantime, students (and workers) are getting a real education on the class nature of the state.

The ILWU has filed a motion under California's Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) law, calling to strike the suit against Heyman on the grounds that the companies' action aims at chilling the exercise of free speech. Similar motions have been filed by lawyers for the other defendants. A hearing on Heyman's case is scheduled for February 26. The other defendants are scheduled for March 2. Protests at the Alameda County courthouse in Oakland are projected.

The witchhunters can be defeated. Many ILWUers remember, and others can see on film, how the union swarmed into the courthouse in San Francisco in 1960 when HUAC came to town to go after Harry Bridges. The presence of hundreds of aggressive longshoremen put a crimp in the McCarthyites' plans, and a big mobilization of the ranks of the ILWU and union supporters throughout the Bay Area could have a real impact on these cases and the battles to come.

### **For Solid International Labor Action!**

The union dockers of Liverpool have tenaciously fought their firings for more than two years of bitter struggle, of heartbreak and privation. They have been stabbed in the back by the leaders of their own union, the Transport and General Workers Union, which treacherously refuses to support them. In turn, the International Transport Workers Federation refuses to take official action until the T&GWU does. Now, with Tony Blair's "New Labour" in power, the dockers' situation hasn't changed one bit. When the bosses crack the whip, their loyal labor lieutenants bend their backs. But at the same time, the Merseyside dock workers' grim determination has inspired a wave of actions by unions and labor militants around the globe.

In January 1997, longshoremen on the U.S.' West Coast halted work in stoppages ranging from a shift to a day in support of the Liverpool dockers. On February 26, Geraldo Ribeiro, the elected president of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union in Brazil and target of continuing state repression, sent a letter of solidarity with the Liverpool dockers. During another International Day of Action last September 8, all major ports in Australia were hit by stoppages of five hours or more; in Canada, the ports of Halifax, St. John (New Brunswick) and Vancouver stopped all work for several hours. Brazilian dockworkers from the port of Santos, who themselves are facing a union-busting drive, presented demands to the British consul for reinstating the Liverpool dockers. In Japan, the Zenkoku Kowan (All Japan Dockworkers Union) pledged action against lines doing business in Liverpool. The U.S. government has targeted the dockers unions, demanding the smashing of union power in Japanese ports.

Everywhere, from Denmark to South Africa, from Le Havre, France to Auckland, New Zealand, port workers' solidarity was fed by knowledge that they too are in the crosshairs of the union-busters. Yet real solidarity action has been undermined by the fact that the leadership of the unions support their "own" bourgeoisie, even as companies go all-out to smash them. Even where union leaders made a show of sympathy with the Liverpool dockers, as with the ILWU, they have failed to explicitly "hot cargo" scab ships. The *labor fakers* fear to take on the capitalist state, they quake at the thought that the PMA will charge them with violating the sacrosanct contract and they will go to jail. Well,

unions in the U.S. and around the world would be in a lot better shape if there were some *labor fighters* prepared to go to jail to win. Their example would inspire millions.

In the Oakland picket, ILWU officers refused to set up an official picket line, instead putting the onus on Local 10 members to honor the picket line if one was set up by others, citing a danger to their "health and safety." This cop-out was an abdication of the elementary responsibility to mobilize solidarity with the Liverpool dockers by using the union's muscle to enforce a ban.

Yet the members did respect the picket, even after an arbitrator and judge ordered them to cross the line. A Local 10 business agent told the arbitrator: "I'll be goddamned if I'm going to order the men to go through the picket line escorted by the police like a bunch of scabs, when every July 5 we celebrate Bloody Thursday because police killed our union members" in the San Francisco general strike of 1934.

Serious solidarity action would mean "hot-cargoing" all ships that stopped in ports run by Mersey Dock & Harbour, and the bosses would surely counterattack in force with the power of the state. It would be an all-out battle, but that is what it will take to bust the union-busters.

### Defend the ILWU!

Labor solidarity action is always a hot issue with the capitalist rulers. The anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act in the U.S. passed in 1947 at the height of a red-hunt in the unions made a special point of outlawing "secondary boycotts" when one union respects another's picket line, often just a single person, or refuses to handle "hot" (scab) cargoes. When that wasn't draconian enough to stop the Teamsters from organizing over-the-road truckers with hot-cargoing tactics, the U.S. Congress passed the Landrum-Griffin Act to stiffen those provisions, and launched its vendetta against Jimmy Hoffa. The feds' vendetta against the Teamsters is continuing, installing Ron Carey as IBT president in government-ordered elections, and then removing him in retaliation for the UPS strike last summer.

The court suits against the labor activists who "hot-cargoed" the *Neptune Jade* are the opening shots of a war by the PMA bosses against the West Coast longshore union. Earlier last year, the Maritime Association filed an "unfair labor charge" with the National Labor Relations Board against the ILWU after dock workers in Southern California struck for four days in solidarity with the port pilots (part of a small union affiliated with the ILWU). When a Superior Court judge ordered the pilots' picket lines at the Los Angeles and San Pedro ports taken down, the ILWU tops ordered the workers to work the ships, scabbing on their fellow unionists. Rather than thanking the bureaucrats for this sellout, the PMA filed a federal court suit against the union, seeking damages of over \$3 million, the same tactic they are using in these cases. The *Journal of Commerce* (18 December 1997) reported:

"It was the PMA litigation following the Neptune Jade incident in September, however, that really has the union upset. "In addition to going after the ILWU locals in Northern California, the PMA is seeking damages from individual picketers, including members of groups that have no affiliation

with the waterfront or the ILWU."

The *Journal of Commerce* article points to Joseph Miniace, who became PMA president two years ago, as responsible for turning it into "an aggressive employers' organization" and "single-handedly" ripping up the long-standing arbitration system. ILWU spokesmen complain that everything used to be based on "trust." Nonsense, it was based on the maritime bosses accommodating their labor lieutenants in a form of institutionalized class collaboration. Over the years, the ILWU leadership ripped up one hard-won union gain after another in the name of labor-management cooperation, for example under the "M&M" (Mechanization and Modernization) contracts negotiated by Bridges himself, which slashed thousands of jobs, precisely through arbitration.

Now, in line with the overall bourgeois offensive to jack up the rate of exploitation, the shippers have a new regime that doesn't want to piece off the union bureaucrats for their services rendered in keeping the ranks of labor in line. Miniace & Co. want to eliminate the occasional grandstanding by the ILWU bureaucrats, who would occasionally walk out for a few hours to bolster their "progressive" reputations. The only way to fight this onslaught is by the methods of class struggle, with a leadership that has the program and determination to fight the class war through to the finish. Such a leadership must be forged in the fight to build an internationalist workers party that can make genuine labor solidarity a reality in the struggle for socialist revolution around the world.

**All defenders of labor rights must rally behind the Bay Area labor activists. Drop the charges! Smash the union-busting witchhunt!**

**Send contributions for the defense to: Liverpool Dockers Victory Defense Committee, P.O. Box 2574, Oakland, CA 94614.**

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**Drop the Charges! Support Liverpool Dockers!**

## **McCarthyite Witchhunt Against Bay Area Labor Activists**

### **Shipping Bosses Go After ILWU Over Boycott of Scab *Neptune Jade***

Bay Area labor activists, supporters of the Liverpool dock workers and members of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) are battling a vicious McCarthyite witchhunt that is a threat to unions and defenders of labor around the country. The shipping magnates of the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) unleashed the capitalist courts after protest pickets drove the scab *Neptune Jade* out of West Coast ports last fall. In an effort to stop solidarity actions, the bosses are demanding that unionists "name names" and asking for whopping fines in order to bankrupt anyone who dares to fight for labor solidarity action. With the ILWU coastwide longshore contract coming up this year, it is crucial for labor and its supporters to mobilize *now* in powerful action to beat back this concerted union-busting attack.

From September 28 to October 1, a group of labor activists maintained a picket outside the Oakland dock, as members of ILWU Local 10 refused to cross the line to work the ship. When the stevedoring company finally got a court injunction limiting the numbers on the line, the picketers courageously defied the bosses' law. The *Neptune Jade* was carrying cargo loaded in a port controlled by the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company, which exactly two years earlier had fired all 500 dock workers in the port of Liverpool, the last unionized port in England. For any class-conscious unionist, the scab cargo was "too hot to handle." After sitting at anchor for three days, while its owners lost tens of thousands of dollars every day it was idle, the *Jade* sailed out of the Port of Oakland, its hot cargo still on board.

The ship fared no better as it headed up the coast, arriving in Vancouver, Canada on October 4. Again, members of ILWU Local 500 re-

fused to cross the line of some 30 picketers who stood their ground in a driving rain. The *Neptune Jade* then set sail for Yokohama, Japan, where it docked in mid-October. Japanese longshoremen also refused to touch the ship. The Neptune Orient Line eventually sold the ship in Taiwan, with the U.S.-bound containers reportedly still on board. While this was a limited protest against a single vessel, and thus its effect was largely symbolic, the refusal by dock workers in port after port to touch the *Jade* with its scab cargo shows the potential for powerful international labor action. That is what the bosses, and the union bureaucrats, fear.

So the maritime companies called on the capitalist state to carry out its task of protecting the interests of capital, unleashing a barrage of court cases. The first, for violating the injunction limiting the number of picketers, was directed against Robert Irminger, picket captain of the Oakland protests and now chairman of the San Francisco chapter of the Inlandboatmen's Union (IBU), a division of the ILWU. After a hearing at Alameda County Courthouse on November 18, where more than 100 labor activists rallied outside, in mid-December Irminger was declared in contempt of court.

A second suit, filed in federal court by Yusen Terminals, *continued on page 70*



Workers Liberty

**Liverpool dockers, sacked for insisting that picket lines mean don't cross, have received widespread support from unionists internationally.**