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After Spartacist League Purges Leading Cadres,
ICL Flees from Class Battle in Brazil

From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle

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After Spartacist League Purges Leading Cadres, ICL Flees from Class Battle in Brazil

From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle

by Jan Norden and Marjorie Stamberg

Last month the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), expelled long-time leading cadres, comrades with two dozen years each as party members. This political purge was intended to silence internal opposition to the increasingly erratic course of the ICL's International Secretariat (I.S.), which has in recent months veered sharply to the right toward a policy of abstention from the class struggle. In order to carry out its bureaucratic action, the SL leadership had to trample underfoot the party's traditions of Leninist democratic-centralism, and even to violate its own statutes. The expulsions of Jan Norden, a member of the I.S. and the Political Bureau of the Spartacist League/U.S. and editor of Workers Vanguard for the last 23 years; of Marjorie Stamberg, a member of the editorial board of WV and alternate member of the SL Central Committee; and of Negrete, a member of the International Executive Committee and principal leader of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, took place on June 8. The ruinous meaning and consequences of the I.S.' course were brought out less than two weeks later, as the ICL formally dissolved fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica on June 17, demanding that the LQB/LM turn its back on a crucial struggle it had undertaken, to remove the municipal guardas (police) from the ranks of the Municipal Workers Union in the steel center of Volta Redonda. When the LQB refused to abandon this urgent class battle, undertaken with the I.S.' encouragement, the ICL leadership abandoned them.

This is a sharp turn for the ICL and Spartacist League, with grievous consequences for the course of the party which for more than three decades has represented the continuity of Trotskyism internationally. The ICL leadership's recognition of the gravity of what it accurately calls the crisis in the party is gauged by the fact that Workers Vanguard, the paper of the SL/U.S., devoted almost half of its last issue (WV No. 648, 5 July) to these events: three pages (out of 16) trying to explain the split with the LQB/LM and four full pages seeking to justify our expulsion. These two events are intimately linked together, and not only in the columns of Workers Vanguard. The expelled ICL cadres had objected to the I.S.' renunciation of the 1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Norden opposed the uncritical acceptance of slanderously false charges against the LQB/LM, raised in the bourgeois press by a pro-police provocateur in Volta Redonda, as an alleged "proof" of "trade-union opportunism," and statements by International Secretary Parks that the ICL should never "set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again." For this internal criticism, he was accused of "cop-baiting" (!) the ICL and of trying to "engineer a split with LM against the ICL." Yet less than three weeks later, it was the I.S. that "engineered a split with LM." And they did so precisely in order to avoid association with the LQB/LM as pressure mounted from the capitalist state on the class-struggle activists. The ICL leaders caved in to the pressure of the bourgeoisie.

The I.S.' shameful policy in Volta Redonda was a betrayal of the working class, and particularly of the ICL's Trotskyist program, the program we continue to defend. This fact is cynically disguised in the Workers Vanguard articles, and was also hidden in good part from the ICL membership. While WV professed to support "Revolutionary Trotskyism, Not Trade-Union Opportunism," readers were not informed that the fraternal relations with the Brazilian comrades were broken "one day before the union assembly called to separate the police from the municipal union!" as the LQB's 4 July letter answering the ICL bitterly pointed out. Two days earlier, ICL representatives had told the LQB that there was a danger of a bloody confrontation if it continued to pursue the fight to oust the cops from the union. With its forces, they claimed, the LQB "cannot, at this time, stand up to this whole offensive of bourgeois reaction, which is trying to destroy the union and which is trying to wait for the best moment to destroy our organization in Brazil.... We are telling you: let's pull our hands out of that boiling water and dedicate our attention and time to building a revolutionary party." What a grotesque perversion of Leninism – "building a revolutionary party" by pulling one's hands out of the boiling water of the class struggle!

This was not some off-hand remark, but the synthesis of a whole policy that has been pursued for some time by what Parks terms "the new I.S." On June 5, the I.S. passed a motion saying that "given the sinister provocations and threats of state repression," association of the ICL with the union work of the LQB/LM "presents unacceptable risks to the vanguard" – as well, it said, to the LQB and the union itself. A June 11 letter to the LQB by Parks declared that continued leadership of the union was "not sustainable."* In the meeting with the LQB immediately before the ICL broke relations, ICL representatives told the Brazilian comrades that it was necessary to "to formally leave" the "leadership of the union," because it was "the most prominent issue" used by the bourgeoisie against them when the union "is in the crosshairs" of the bourgeois state. But in the face of these risks, the Brazilian revolutionaries cannot simply walk away from the struggle at its high point without being traitors to the workers' cause. It is to its immense credit that the LQB categorically rejected the I.S.' outrageous demand, and has continued to fight for the separation of the cops from the union. The ICL will be known for years, in Latin America and elsewhere, for its ignominious flight from this battle because it deemed the "risks to the vanguard" to be "unacceptable."

But more than that, in calling on the Brazilian comrades to walk away from the responsibilities of leadership they have undertaken in the class struggle, the I.S. policy and the view expressed by its representatives point toward a fundamental revision of Leninism on the central question of the revolutionary party. V.I. Lenin, the founder of the Russian Bolsheviks and co-leader together with Trotsky of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, insisted in his fundamental work, What Is To Be Done? (1902):

"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes."

* June 5 and 11 quotations retranslated from Portuguese.

The fact that communist consciousness must be brought to the workers from without is the fundamental reason why there must be a separate party of professional revolutionaries. But that party does not stand outside the working class and its struggles – rather it is the most conscious part of the proletariat fused with declassed revolutionary intellectuals. This is axiomatic for Trotskyists, who stand on the program of the early Communist International led by Lenin and Trotsky. The theses on “The Role of the Communist Party in Proletarian Revolution” (July 1920) of the Second Congress of the Comintern stated:

“1. The Communist Party is a part of the working class, the most advanced, politically conscious and revolutionary part. The Communist Party is composed of the best, most politically conscious, most dedicated and far-sighted workers. The Communist Party has no interests other than those of the working class. It differs from the general mass of workers in that it surveys the whole historical path of the working class in its totality, and tries at each stage of the struggle to defend the interests of the working class as a whole, rather than of individual groups or trades. The Communist Party is the organizational and political lever which assists the more advanced part of the working class to direct the mass of the proletariat and semi-proletariat onto the right path.”

What does it mean when the I.S. tells the LQB, “let’s pull our hands out of that boiling water” of the class struggle, and “dedicate our attention and time to building a revolutionary party”? This is the outlook not of a revolutionary workers party, but of someone standing outside the class, who can decide to simply walk away when the risks become “unacceptable.” This is not bringing the communist program to the workers from the outside (including recruiting from among the intelligentsia and other layers of the population), but rather reflects the viewpoint of a petty bourgeois haughtily observing the class struggle from without. Moreover, it reflects a tendency to retreat from the class struggle, to adopt a policy of passive propagandism, that underlay the fights over Germany and Brazil that have been boiling in the ICL for the last year and a half. The I.S. resolved the internal fight by slicing off a section of the leadership, and “solved” its problem in Brazil by pulling its hands out.

Brazil: “Police Are the Armed Fist of the Bourgeoisie! Cops Out of the Unions!”

Luta Metalúrgica grew out of a nucleus of proletarian militants forged in the struggles of the workers at the Volta Redonda steel plant, the largest in Latin America, where three workers were killed by the Military Police in a 1988 steel strike. Entering into struggle at the beginning of the 1980s, during the last years of the military dictatorship, they were strike leaders and became local leaders of the newly formed Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT – Workers Party) of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. But when in the 1989 elections Lula set up a coalition with bourgeois politicians, the Frente Brasil Popular, the LM comrades fought against this class collaboration. This largely black group of class-struggle militants joined the ostensibly Trotskyist organization Causa Operária (C.O.), followers of the Argentine Jorge Altamira, and were the first victims of a purge of left-wingers from the PT later that year. (The hatchet man sent to carry out the purge in V.R. was a prominent member of the Democracia Socialista current of the PT, followers of Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat.) However, while the Altamiristas attacked the popular front in the pages of their newspaper, in typical centrist fashion they called to “Vote Lula!” in the elections.

Inside Causa Operária, the Volta Redonda local fought to take up the struggle against black oppression, ignored by virtually the entire Brazilian left, and made contact with the ICL via trade-unionists in São Paulo who had received our material. In the run-up to the 1994 elections, the V.R. local went into opposition to the “Vote Lula” line, and wrote documents calling for no vote for any candidate or party of the popular front on principle. After splitting with C.O. in July of that year, the Luta Metalúrgica group pursued talks with the ICL, leading to the signing of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations in September 1994. This Declaration was published in Portuguese by LM, and in English, Spanish, French, German and Polish by the International Communist League, including in Spartacist, the organ of the IEC. Until recently the entire ICL was rightly proud of this Declaration and our ties with the Brazilian fraternal comrades. Now the I.S. pretends that it was all phony and they were hoodwinked. On the contrary, it is the ICL leadership that is trying to deceive the comrades and the world at large in order to cover its own betrayal.

There are real risks in any serious class struggle, all the more so when the issue is the role of the cops in a country like Brazil, where police death squads have been at work for years. The Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), with supporters of the LQB in the leadership, pointed out that V.R. is one of the areas with the highest number of street children murdered by police. But the “sinister provocations and threats of state repression” that the I.S. considered “unacceptable risks” to itself are directed above all at the Brazilian comrades. In early March, a SFPMVR meeting was invaded by shotgun-wielding Military Police, at the instigation of a pro-cop provocateur in the union, one Artur Fernandes. The ICL and the Partisan Defense Committee launched an international campaign for solidarity with the class-struggle unionists, demanding “Police Hands Off Volta Redonda Union!” In May, Fernandes claimed to have been fired at in a transparent ploy to deflect mounting support for the campaign to remove police from the union. Undeterred, SFPMVR president Geraldo Ribeiro, with the support of LQB, continued the campaign, including through a series of leaflets, workplace assemblies and a union conference with delegates elected on this point, among others. But instead of standing by the Brazilian comrades, the ICL leadership cut relations and ran from the struggle. “We feel stabbed in the back,” wrote one LQB comrade in a personal statement, noting that he began his struggle in the metal workers union opposition under the military dictatorship in 1982.

The June 19 SFPMVR union assembly brought out 200 workers. It was dissolved by a judicial order sought by the popular-front mayor, at the instigation of the same pro-cop provocateur. The police intervened just as union president Ribeiro was reading the motion to disaffiliate the cops. Two days later, during a nationwide general strike, the Municipal Workers Union struck in Volta Redonda, and LQB militants led the strike actions. One comrade, Marcello Carega, was arrested on charges of “disobedience” for refusing to move the union van blocking a gate at the head of 150 workers. Subsequently, the courts have suspended Ribeiro from the presidency, using as a pretext the printing of a union bulletin containing a column on the police by Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and acclaimed journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. Ribeiro is now being sued by the mayor for defamation of the city (potentially facing four years in jail) for denouncing as racist the firing of a black woman, Regina Célia, for not having a “good appearance,” a racist codeword in Brazil, and for leading a union campaign for her reinstatement. Most recently, on July 26, a membership assembly of the SFPMVR voted to reaffirm Ribeiro as president and to disaffiliate the cops. Yet Workers Vanguard and the I.S. claim these courageous Trotskyist militants are just “trade-union opportunists” engaged in “endless unprincipled blocs and amorphous combinations in the trade unions.”

What kind of “trade-union opportunists” are these, who are suspended by the courts for demanding cops out of the union, who are sued for defending victims of racist discrimination, who are arrested for defying the Military Police to shut down work in the midst of a general strike? The WV article quotes a June 11 letter from the I.S. taking the LQB to task for running for leadership of a union with cops in it while not “specifically and forcefully addressing this crucial question” in the campaign, and then saying: “The point is to do something about it...” Yes, indeed. But the WV article fails to mention that the program of the Municipários em Luta (Municipal Workers in Struggle) slate supported by LM stated that the armed forces and police, including the guarda municipal (municipal police), are “all of them, the armed fist of the bourgeoisie,” and any “alliance” with them is incompatible with class independence, “since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions.” And WV tries to disguise the fact that something is being done about the cops in the V.R. municipal workers union. Every city worker and reader of the local press in Volta Redonda is well aware that a raging battle is going on over precisely this key question of the capitalist state.

The I.S. claims that Norden and Negrete, who were earlier principally responsible for the ICL work in Brazil, conciliated the LQB. Yet the issue of police in the Brazilian trade unions was raised by comrade Negrete two years ago, long before the SFPMVR elections. In the aftermath of the victory of the MEL slate, when we became aware at the January IEC of the presence of cops in the union, a discussion was begun (again by Negrete, along with comrade Bride), in which the I.S. correctly insisted that removing the police from the unions was urgently necessary and a fundamental matter of principle. As a member of the I.S., Norden played a leading role in this fight, including writing the final draft of a 23 February letter to LM, and the key sentence quoted in the recent WV article: “The fight for removal of the cops from the unions is the equivalent of the call for no vote to Lula: it is the concrete expression of the Marxist principle of the independence of the labor movement from the capitalist state.” This sharp discussion had an effect, spurring efforts (which had already begun in December, as Ribeiro described in a written statement) to separate the police from the SFPMVR. In line with the earlier advice of the ICL, they have sought to accomplish this avoiding unnecessary confrontations but also by building class consciousness among the union ranks.

In the entire three pages in WV on the ICL’s break of fraternal relations with the LQB/LM, the only mention that the Brazilian comrades are actually doing something about the cops in the union is the laconic statement that “Since the battle was brought to LM, they have waged a principled and difficult struggle against the police presence in the union.” What cynicism! This statement is clearly incompatible with the picture of ingrained opportunism the article presents. Obviously inserted in order to be quoted when they are attacked for ignoring this whole dramatic battle, that sentence proves that the ICL leaders know the truth and are consciously covering it up. WV does not report, and I.S. secretary Parks has denied, but every V.R. municipal worker knows full well that the police invasion of the March union meeting was in direct response to the position of the elected union leadership under Geraldo Ribeiro that cops are not part of the workers movement. The provocateur Artur Fernandes issued a leaflet calling the March 13 meeting to “defend the guardas,” reproducing the section of the MEL program that called the cops part of the “armed fist of the bourgeoisie.” The leaflet began:

“Geraldo clearly wants to exclude the Municipal Guardas and watchmen from the union movement, stigmatizing them as **ARMED FISTS OF THE BOSSES**, claiming that an

alliance with the Municipal Guardas and Watchmen is incompatible with **MUNICIPÁRIOS EM LUTA**, making clear the intention to disaffiliate all the Municipal Guardas and Watchmen from the Union.”

WV does not report, and the ICL leadership did not even distribute internally, a MEL union leaflet of May 6 headlined: “THE RANK AND FILE IS DECIDING: Police Out of the Union; Reaffirmation of the Municpários em Luta Program.” That leaflet reported on a 6 a.m. union meeting at the municipal garage which:

“voted unanimously that: The police should not be part of, and should not interfere with, the SFPMVR or the workers movement in general. Because they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. They also decided in favor of the MEL program, which defends workers’ class independence; women, their rights and gains; blacks; children; socialism and the construction of a Revolutionary Workers Party which fights to put an end to capitalism; for proletarian opposition to the Popular Front and for workers mobilizations to defeat the starvation plan, firings and misery of FHC [Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso] and the IMF.”

It is no secret in Volta Redonda who is leading this fight. In May, amid the uproar caused by the claim of the provocateur to have been shot and his sinister attempts to implicate LM, the local papers were full of articles on the subject. One began:

“Guardas Say They Feel Pressured by Members of Luta Metalúrgica

“Commander says the group wants to exclude municipal guardas from the Municipal Workers Union

“**Volta Redonda** – The commander of the Municipal Guarda, retired army lieutenant Paulo Roberto Freitas, will call the troops together this morning to find out if his subordinates are being subjected to pressure as a result of the statements by the leader of Luta Metalúrgica and vice president of the regional CUT [union federation], Alexandre Cerezo. Luta Metalúrgica made its support to the election campaign of Geraldo Ribeiro’s slate-which ended up winning the election for the leadership of the Union of Municipal Workers of Volta Redonda-conditional on carrying out a program drawn up by the organization ‘Municpários em Luta’ which precludes municipal guarda being part of the union.”

–Diário do Vale, 17 May

The same article ominously declared: “The attacks and provocations of Cerezo and Geraldo Ribeiro are not being well-received by the guardas...” Not a word of this entire incident was reported in WV.

In Brazil, however, it is impossible to pretend nothing is happening about the cops in Volta Redonda. The Petroleum Workers Union (whose strike was broken by Military Police last year) has supported the V.R. municipal workers against the provocations, as have Belo Horizonte municipal workers and other unions. Various pseudo-Trotskyist groups have written about it, and the provocateur Fernandes liberally uses their material to attack Ribeiro, the LQB and the ICL. The alleged shooting was his response to the fact that the SFPMVR ranks were backing union president Ribeiro and his campaign to remove the cops from the union. Instead of informing the ICL membership of

this, the I.S. passed over the steps being taken to remove the cops in silence and falsely claimed that the LQB was being persecuted for proclaiming its fraternal ties with the ICL. (Parks complained that they were “dim” about “the dangers of international affiliation”!)

The I.S. secretary even drafted a letter accusing LQB leader Cerezo of seeking “sinecures” and “positions of privilege” in the union by repeating a false accusation from the bourgeois press quoting Fernandes, who openly brags he is “advised by the police,” about Cerezo supposedly asking for a salary ten times the minimum wage as an official union advisor. In response to this charge, the union’s president and its accountant (who was part of a previous administration) have published affidavits stating not only that the union never paid Cerezo anything, but that no such salary was ever discussed or requested. When Parks wrote, in a draft letter to the LQB, that “we really should not have to learn about such things” from the bourgeois press, Norden objected to the uncritical acceptance of this slanderous charge – and for this, he was vilely accused of “cop-baiting” the ICL! This, too, is not reported in WV.

The WV 648 article states:

“Despite abstract agreement with the need to forge a Trotskyist nucleus in Brazil, LM subordinated necessary party work—such as publishing a newspaper to openly make their case to the workers and expose the witchhunters—to preserving their control of the union from the top through the unelected position of ‘union advisor’.”

Once again, it was the provocateur Fernandes who first attacked LM leader Cerezo being an official union advisor. Moreover, Fernandes himself announced in a leaflet in February that this was no longer the case, as was stated as well by union president Ribeiro on a radio program in March. It is not as “advisors” but as comrades that LM contributes to leading the union. Ribeiro has made no secret of the fact that he is a supporter of the LQB/LM. Did the Minneapolis Teamsters hide the fact that they were Trotskyists and part of an international during the 1934 strike? And what of charges that James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman, the most prominent leaders of the Communist League of America, were unelected “union advisors” when they went to Minneapolis to help lead that strike? The American Trotskyists in the ‘30s responded to the anti-communist “outside agitator” baiting by ridiculing it (see Cannon, Notebook of an Agitator [1973], pp. 84-86). Today the ICL fearfully echoes it.

While gratuitously claiming that the LQB comrades were “dim” about the “dangers of international affiliation,” Parks even came out (two years after the fact) against the public announcement of the fraternal relations of the ICL with Luta Metalúrgica, saying that there should only have been an “internal document”! This amounts to calling for hiding international affiliation. This is in direct contradiction to the principles and practice of the revolutionary Third and Fourth Internationals. The ICL has always denounced the pseudo-Trotskyists who hide behind the bourgeoisie’s witchhunting laws (like the Voorhis Act in the U.S.) to downplay international ties. The Morenoites have often used this same methodology in Latin America. We protested this policy inside the ICL, pointing out that whatever the motivation, this amounts to capitulating to the ideological pressure of nationalism and imperialism.

Moreover, the LQB is not seeking to “preserve control of the union from the top” but is waging a determined struggle among the ranks. With several supporters in the SFPMVR, they have

put out hard-hitting propaganda in the union. The union paper put out by Ribeiro featuring the defense of Regina Célia had a front-page excerpt from Trotsky on the woman question, and the paper repeatedly stresses that the struggle is against capitalism and its popular-front administrators. In the face of the court intervention suspending Ribeiro, they gathered almost 300 signatures—roughly 15 percent of the union membership—on a petition demanding a meeting to reinstate the elected president and to remove the police from the union. And the newspaper that the ICL leadership claimed the LQB/LM had “subordinated” to a power fight in the union and didn’t really want now exists. The first issue of Vanguarda Operária was published on July 16, and we are proud to have aided as fraternal comrades in that effort. The I.S., on the other hand, was content to denounce the LQB for the fact that it hadn’t appeared, although the publication was held up for several weeks because the ICL rep hadn’t given them the computer codes (attributes) needed to open the files!

Has the ICL membership been informed of any of this, of the fact that the ICL broke off relations on the eve of a meeting called to vote for cops out of the union, and that the ICL representatives called on LQB/LM to desert from this vital class battle at the high point of the struggle on the grounds that the forces of the bourgeoisie and its state were too strong?! Certainly nothing of this was reported in the two articles in WV No. 648.

Instead, the readers are given half-truths, distortions and outright lies. Thus the I.S.’ June 17 letter breaking fraternal relations attacks the LQB for “unprincipled blocs and amorphous combinations in the trade unions....” In fact, it was Norden who wrote, in the 23 February I.S. letter to Luta Metalúrgica, the criticism of the MEL as an “amorphous union formation.” As a result of debate and experience (including the treachery of Fernandes), in its 4 July reply to the ICL’s breaking of fraternal relations, the LQB/LM recognizes that the ICL made correct criticisms on the formation of the MEL slate and that the ICL was also correct in criticizing the original MEL program for not explicitly demanding the disaffiliation of the police from the union – while scoring the hypocrisy of the I.S. for then abandoning the struggle.

Contrary to a May 11 I.S. motion attacking “Norden and Negrete’s attempt to blunt the necessary sharp fights with LQB/LM in Brazil,” we were the first to address problems in LM’s union work, in several letters to LM and memos to the I.S. and IEC warning of a syndicalist danger in their practice. At the time, in the greater interests of waging the fight against Norden over Germany, this was denounced as slandering LM. At the January IEC meeting and in a subsequent letter to LM, leading comrades (with justification) said the V.R. group potentially had the significance of the Trotskyist cadres who led the Minneapolis Teamsters and Belgian coal miners of the Charleroi basin in the 1930s. Yet only a few weeks later, many of the same comrades were declaring LM to be nothing less than “trade-union opportunists” and claiming that our warning of a syndicalist danger was just a cunning cover-up!

On June 11, Parks wrote to the LQB on behalf of the I.S.: “More delays in the subordination of principles to daily struggles for influence in the leadership of the union will only lead to a continuation of the provocations of the cops, the political forces behind the cops, and ‘leftists’ who do their bidding.” Not only does this letter (as well as the June 18 letter breaking fraternal relations) dishonestly portray the situation in Volta Redonda as if the LQB was not waging a struggle for the separation of the police from the union – when readers of the local press are bombarded with articles about Luta Metalúrgica’s fight to remove the cops – it outrageously blames the LQB for inviting po-

lice provocation! And what the I.S. leadership's fine words about principles mean in practice is not an effort to intensify the struggle for cops out of the union, but a demand that revolutionaries run away from the battle! Contrast this shameful back-stabbing to the policy of Trotsky's Fourth International as put forward in the Transitional Program:

“The Bolshevick-Leninist stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. He fights uncompromisingly against any attempt to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state and bind the proletariat to ‘compulsory arbitration’ and every other form of police guardianship-not only fascist but also ‘democratic.’ Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists, including those of the Stalinist bureaucracy.”

Now, in order to drive home the false “lessons” of recent fights in the ICL, the WV 648 article on “A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” claims that the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with LM was fundamentally deviant from the outset. (The article conveniently fails to explain why almost two years went by without anyone noticing this.) To back up this claim, the article asserts: “Indicative of the flawed character of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations was its failure to even mention permanent revolution.” There follows a disquisition on the importance of this fundamental part of the Trotskyist program, supposedly demolishing the “flawed” Declaration we uphold. Yet like so many other allegations in the article, the claim on which this whole edifice is based is demonstrably false. Not only is the entire document imbued with the program of permanent revolution, the Declaration explicitly declares:

“As the tribune of the oppressed, it is indispensable that the Leninist party raise the banner of struggle against the oppression of women, rooted in the institution of the bourgeois family – a question of utmost importance in Brazil – as part of the program of permanent revolution.”

It also quotes Trotsky saying that unless the road is found to the deeply oppressed black population in the U.S., “The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie.” Read it in Spartacist No. 52 (Autumn 1995) or Workers Vanguard No. 608 (14 October 1994).

So WV's claim that the permanent revolution was left out of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations is a flat lie. In fact, the entire article on the ICL's break of relations is one long lie. While there is not enough space here to refute every false statement and distortion, many are answered in two documents by Norden, “On Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (17 April) and “Once Again on Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (5 May). Then there is the comparison of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LM, who were long-time recognized union fighters with authority gained from leading mass struggles, with the Japanese Rekken, which had existed for over a decade as an isolated study group. It is because they were actively engaged in political struggle in competition with other ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies that LM requested that the Declaration be quickly approved so that they could publish it in Brazil, where they were the only group to take a principled position against voting for Lula's popular front in the 1994 elections. The I.S. duly approved the Declaration of Fraternal Relations, which was later ratified without controversy by the IEC – as has

been the case with numerous other decisions over the years.* Behind the phony hue and cry, two years after the fact, over the procedure by which the document was adopted lies the fact that the “new I.S.” would prefer a study circle to having to deal with the difficult problems facing a group like the LQB/LM.

We can proudly say that Workers Vanguard in the 23 years Norden was editor and the more than a decade and a half that Stamberg acted as managing editor consistently told the truth. WV had a deserved reputation for uncompromising honesty. Those who were skewered by our sharp polemics frequently squealed like stuck pigs. But we could always back up our assertions with proven facts, and did so when challenged. This cannot be said of the SL’s paper today. The “new WV” lies! And it does so in the service of a program of fleeing from the class struggle, of abandoning in practice the Trotskyist program of independence of the unions from the state. We have argued that the ICL has recently shown a strong tendency in the direction of abstract or passive propagandism, counterposed to the long-standing Spartacist conception of building a “fighting propaganda group” that fuses Trotskyist propaganda with intervention in exemplary actions where the party has the ability to do so. While over the years many centrist pseudo-Trotskyists have falsely accused the SL of being “ultraleft sectarians,” what is happening now is the opposite: the developing tendency to abstentionism is a rightist policy that means betraying the ICL’s own historic program and liquidating the party as an active factor in the class struggle.

Germany: A False Fight...

The Workers Vanguard 648 article on our expulsions states:

“After more than six months of internal party discussion and struggle that definitively exposed Norden’s revisionist course, which if left unchecked would have destroyed us as a revolutionary Marxist tendency, Norden’s opportunist policies were decisively defeated at the January 1996 International Executive Committee meeting. Norden, and Stamberg, completely rejected this decision of the highest leading body of the ICL between conferences. They declared any and all criticisms of the ‘regroupment’ orientation to the KPF [Communist Platform of the PDS] and Norden’s Humboldt speech were completely false. At the same time, Norden arrogantly denied all responsibility for nearly destroying our German section with the concomitant bureaucratic practices he pushed to realize his perspective.”

As with the rest of the WV article, the claims about the fight over Germany consist of a massive accumulation of distortions, false assertions, and outright inventions. To begin with, we didn’t “re-

*The fusion with the Japanese Rekken group is now held up by the “new I.S.” as a model counterposed to the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Yet the Spartacist delegation to the fusion conference was selected by no official body. The minutes of the August 1988 fusion conference include the statement by Foster that “the IEC must be polled, but this is only a formality.” A 1 October 1988 cover letter to a poll to be sent to the IEC states: “Participants considered the iSt delegation as constituted to be authoritative,” while noting that the decisions of the conference were only recommendations to the IEC. However, due to intervening events, the IEC poll confirming the was not sent out until late December. While these procedures were perfectly valid, the fact is that they were qualitatively less rigorous than those used to approve fraternal relations with LM.

ject” the decision of the IEC by refusing to abide by it; we completely opposed its false conclusions. Also, the Germany discussion didn’t last for six months but for an entire year, during which there was a desperate search for a “Stalinophilic” deviation in the SpAD; after about six months, in which the “evidence” for this assertion kept constantly shifting, the I.S. with Al Nelson leading the charge declared that the source of the deviation had been found in the person of Norden, the policies he had pursued (which the I.S. had approved), and his January 1995 speech at Humboldt University in Berlin on the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe. The next half year was spent in demonizing Norden’s work in Germany, after which another six months were consumed with a similar operation over Mexico and Brazil, culminating in our expulsion.

Contrary to the allegation that Norden ran a “vicious witchhunt denouncing any comrades perceived as an obstacle to his orientation,” there was no witchhunt. Nor were there “bureaucratic practices...pushed to realize his perspective.” No one in the German section was bureaucratically abused, and certainly not as a “perceived obstacle” to the KPF intervention, since that perspective had been universally supported in the SpAD. The accusation of “nearly destroying our German section” is a vicious lie. The KPF work was an excellent Trotskyist intervention that built the SpAD. But in the frenzy to find a pro-Stalinist deviation where it didn’t exist, the ICL leadership endorsed a line that capitulated to the social-democratic anti-communist campaign which equated Stalinism with anti-Semitism. And this along with intimidating leading comrades of the German section to recant their views, which they did, has taken a terrible toll in severely damaging and even destroying their revolutionary fiber.

We said at the time that this was a false fight from start to finish, that there was no truth in the alleged “facts” on which it was based, the analysis and the conclusions drawn. The only “answer” of the I.S. majority to our refutation of the string of falsehoods was to demand that we answer what does that say about them – we must be calling them lying bureaucrats. We did not jump to conclusions. - But in the aftermath, with the explicit codifying of the SpAD “perspectives” of passive propaganda, the subsequent equally false “fights” over Mexico and Brazil, and the welter of bureaucratic measures against us and other comrades for continuing to oppose the “lessons” drawn, one has to conclude that what the I.S. claimed we thought about them was in fact what they knew to be the truth about themselves. There was a campaign of lies in the service of a policy of abstention from intervention as a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group – as was the case even more dramatically over Brazil a few months later – and of purging those who were perceived as obstacles to consolidating the “new I.S.” And to properly carry out this operation, the history of the SpAD has now been systematically rewritten on a whole series of previous fights and interventions over the past six years.

The tendency to passive propagandism was pronounced in the German section of the Spartacist tendency (then the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands) even before the demise of the DDR. At the height of the stormy events of 1989-90, when the ICL mobilized its forces to the maximum to intervene in the beginnings of a political revolution in the East German deformed workers state, the TLD was excruciatingly slow to shift gears and overcome what the document of the second international conference of the ICL (1992) termed a “propaganda circle mentality.” From October through early December 1989, when political events were moving so rapidly that years of “normal” development were compressed into days, crucial weeks were lost in getting our propaganda into East Germany. There was foot-dragging resistance to getting comrades to take time off from work. In December, at a time when streams of East Germans were coming daily to our meeting hall in West Berlin,

the founding of the Spartakist-Gruppen as transitional organizations was inexcusably delayed by almost three weeks. And even after fights about this, a section of the TLD sat out most of the battle for the DDR in Hamburg, right up through the March 1990 Volkskammer elections.

In the aftermath of the capitalist reunification, there was a strong tendency, particularly among former members of the TLD to retreat from struggle into their accustomed narrow and self-satisfied propaganda circle mentality. This was manifest in a number of sharp fights, notably against resistance to the Spartakist campaign in the 1990 Bundestag elections; resistance to maintaining Halle as an East German center, through necessary in-transfers of cadres from the West; and resistance to the January 1993 united-front defense of an immigrant workers hostel in Berlin. Accompanying this, there was a pattern of political flip-flops by the SpAD leadership centered on Max Schütz, who is notorious throughout the ICL as a wildly changeable impressionist. In the recent Germany discussion, we emphasized that the deviations of the SpAD were all over the map, with a kaleidoscopic character politically. The common denominator was the lack of a dialectical outlook on virtually everything, particularly a failure to recognize contradictions. But of the SpAD's various deviations, the most dangerous were those reflecting the pressure of their "own" bourgeoisie.

The German discussion began in response to a December 1994 document by Mary Ann Clemens arguing that the SpAD had over a period of years capitulated to, conciliated and failed to fight Stalinist conceptions among its own members, particularly those relatively newer East German recruits from the former DDR. Norden remarked at an SpAD central committee meeting in January 1995 that there was some truth to what Clemens was saying, and those points should be incorporated in a conference document. There have been pro-Stalinist errors in the SpAD – for example, it was repeatedly necessary in Spartakist articles on the witchhunt trials of former DDR leaders to put in from New York that they were being tried by the wrong class for the wrong crimes. Norden also opposed a decision by the SpAD CC to make defense of former DDR security minister Mielke a condition for joining the Spartakist-Jugend. But such errors are only part of the story – the SpAD also capitulated to social democracy, and in Germany, the economically most robust and now politically aggressive imperialist power, the social-democratic pressures were the greatest. Clemens gave a partial and somewhat skewed picture of the party. Moreover, she falsely argued that at the height of the 1989-90 struggle in the DDR, "the SpAD intervened with the slogan: 'For the Unity of the SED'." Yet this was never the line of the SpAD and ICL, public or internal.

"Unity of the SED": While the new secretary of the International Secretariat of the ICL, Parks, has vociferously accused Norden of capitulation to Stalinism over the KPF work-where there was no such capitulation – it was Parks who in late January 1990 first raised the slogan of "Unity of the SED," along with Brosius, claiming (wrongly) that this was suggested by comrade Robertson. That slogan directly transmitted pressures from dissident SEDers the SpAD was in contact with in Rostock and Schwerin, who were panicked at the sellout of the DDR by Gorbachev and Modrow and sought to resist by closing ranks of the Stalinist "party." This line, which really did conciliate and capitulate to Stalinism, was fought-by Norden, among others-and defeated as soon as the I.S. heard of it. These facts can be verified by any member of the ICL by consulting the International Internal Bulletin No. 21 ("Documents and Discussion on the Collapse of Stalinism," Part II), pp. 94-99 and 104-109. As Norden wrote at the time:

Take the proposal for the slogan ‘unity of the SED.’ It wasn’t just Parks getting it wrong, since various comrades argued for it. Partly, I’m sure, it was a product of exhaustion and not being able to think straight. But it also has to be in part a reflection of the widespread sense of panic over the stepped-up imperialist campaign to swallow the DDR. We’re not big enough, so people look around for a force that could stop it, and they come up with the SED. Except the SED, the political mouthpiece of the crumbling Stalinist bureaucracy, can’t stop the imperialists – that’s precisely why this crisis is coming to a head. But the working class can, and in fact actions by the most conscious sections could have a tremendous impact.”

–Jan Norden, “Supplemental Points from I.S./Financial Consultation” (29 January 1990)

This is not some minor question. The professional anti-Spartacists of the Bolshevik Tendency, in their pamphlet on the ICL in Germany in 1989-90, have a whole section falsely claiming that “Unity of the SED” was the actual policy of the SpAD, just as Clemens said five years later. In fact, at Norden’s January 1995 Humboldt University forum, BTers argued this and were refuted from the podium. In essence this is the same as the line put forward by the revisionist Michel Pablo on Hungary in 1956 – the line of self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy – only here in a situation where the bureaucracy was handing over the country to imperialism! The line of “Unity of the SED” in the DDR in 1989-90 inevitably recalls the Zinoviev/Kamenev line of unity with the Mensheviks in Russia in 1917, that is with the counterrevolution in “socialist” garb. And now the same people who conceived this truly Stalinoid, truly liquidationist line, at the height of the battle for the DDR, cynically accuse Norden of capitulating to Stalinism!

“Stalinophilia”? When comrade Doris Kohn objected in a January 1995 document that “‘Stalinophilia,’ as the BT always accuses us of, is not the problem of the SpAD,” Clemens went ballistic, denouncing the vile “insinuation” that she was suggesting the section was Stalinophilic; she claimed she was being charged with “Stalinophobia,” and that this was part of a witchhunt against her. No one ever said she or her supporters were Stalinophobic: she invented this charge.* But a year later, the IEC passed a resolution claiming that there was a witchhunt against her and her co-thinkers for objecting to the SpAD’s “Stalinophilic collapse”! In response to Clemens’ furious telephone campaign to line up the international leadership behind the claim that Norden and Stamberg had launched a witchhunt against comrade Clemens and her document at the January 1995 SpAD Central Committee meeting, we asked that the discussion at that meeting be transcribed and translated. The charges were repeated over and over for almost a year, but when the transcriptions were finally completed in January 1996, all references to the SpAD CC meeting were suddenly dropped – everyone could read with their own eyes that there was no onslaught against Clemens or her document but a comradely discussion with partially differing views.

1993 Berlin hostel defense: In actuality, the initial reaction in the German section to Clemens’ paper was rather muted. Far from there being a witchhunt against it, the biggest complaint voiced in the I.S.

*Correction: Two and a half months after Clemens claimed she was being accused of Stalinophobia, allegedly by Kohn, who never wrote or said that, Gerrard did make such a charge, in a 19 April 1995 document. For Norden’s criticism of Gerrard’s statement, see Part 2 of his document “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany” (3 July 1995) .

at the time was that there were hardly any responses to it. Many comrades weren't quite sure what point Clemens was trying to make. However, when she came back with another document, titled "For Round 2," that sneered at the 1993 defense of an immigrant workers hostel in Berlin as a "mountain bringing forth a mouse," a "Potemkin village" action and an example of "fake mass work," this produced a justified outburst of opposition from much of the SpAD leadership. Documents against this were written by Petersen, Hecht and others. At an 11 April 1995 I.S. meeting, in his report on Germany, Norden said of Clemens' new document: "Behind that, if you take that seriously and develop that out, is the logic of a different program a program for, at best, a De Leonist and sterile propaganda sect." At the time, he was not the only one in the international leadership to hold this view. During the discussion at that I.S. meeting, George Foster said: "The heat on the hostel stuff is completely understandable. The key point there is not so much exemplary actions, but if we're to be a real fighting propaganda group you cannot stand aside in a situation in which there are fascists running amok and you're sort of duty bound to do something – or you do become a De Leonist."

But that was then. Now the Workers Vanguard article on our expulsion calls this "an entirely tokenistic defense of an immigrant hostel in Berlin in which no damage was done to the fascists and out of which not one youth was recruited." It was hardly "tokenistic" – the hostel defenders were fired on by fascists, the action received a number of labor endorsements and brought out well over 100 youth and leftists who spent the night of the 60th anniversary of Hitler's takeover of power doing shifts on the perimeter of this large building complex and talking about Trotskyist politics inside during their rest periods. It is also false that no youth were recruited out of it; several who later joined the Spartakist Jugend participated in the hostel defense. This was a militarily competent action which provided a concrete example pointing to the kind of worker/immigrant defense the SpAD has called for in its propaganda. It grew out of months of work among the immigrants there, and had a big impact at the time among leftist youth, from Autonomes to those in the PDS milieu. And we would repeat today that behind the ICL's retrospective dismissal of this action is indeed "the logic of a different program a program for, at best, a De Leonist and sterile propaganda sect." (See accompanying text on the 1993 hostel defense, page 43.)

Stalin as commander in chief: The next clash in the Germany fight was over an article in Spartakist No. 117 which supporters of Clemens claimed glorified Stalin as commander in chief of the Red Army. This was a classic example of a quote taken out of context in order to distort it. The article was about the anti-communist witchhunt by the PDS leadership of Gysi and Bisky in response to demands by the Social Democrats (SPD) to purge the Communist Platform (KPF); the SPD, in turn, was responding to the demands by Kohl's Christian Democrats that the SPD break all contact with the PDS for harboring "Communists." At the PDS conference a resolution was put forward saying that support for "Stalinist views" (defined as "vanguardist and centralist conceptions of socialism and the party") were just as incompatible with party membership as support for "nationalist, chauvinist, racist, anti-Semitic views." The KPF voted for this witchhunting motion. Spartakist noted:

"This equation of anti-Semitism and 'Stalinism' exactly 50 years after the Red Army (with Stalin as commander in chief) liberated Auschwitz, chimes in scandalously with the totalitarianism 'theory,' with which the German bourgeoisie trivializes the crimes of the Nazis."

In no way does this glorify Stalin – it cited a historical fact that powerfully undercuts the obscene campaign, then running full-blast, by the bourgeois and social-democratic (SPD and PDS) witch-

hunters to relativize Nazi genocide under the sign “Hitler = Stalin.” Moreover, the same issue of Spartakist contained the text of Norden’s speech at Humboldt University, which spoke of “Stalin’s sabotage” of the Soviet Army, “his beheading of the general staff under Marshal Tukhachevsky, his criminal trust in his pact with Hitler Germany,” despite warnings from the heroic Soviet spies Richard Sorge and Leopold Trepper, and said that “this illusion almost led to the victory of Nazi Germany over the Soviet Union.” So the charge of glorifying Stalin, now embraced by the ICL leadership, is a fabrication.

This question is dealt with extensively in part 2 of Norden’s document, “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany” (3 July 1995), placing it in the context of the voluminous “anti-Stalinist” propaganda being churned out by the media of the Fourth Reich on the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz; and in a document by Bert Matthes, “On the Question of Stalinism, Anti-Semitism, PDS” (14 March 1995). We will be publishing these and other documents of the Germany fight that the ICL leadership would now like to forget.

Communist Platform: The WV 648 article on our expulsions claims that “Norden argued for a ‘regroupment’ perspective toward the Communist Platform.” Nelson claimed that Norden talked of winning a “big piece” of the KPF in a “non-Trotskyist regroupment with homeless Stalinists.” In fact, in an 8 March 1995 letter to the SpAD, Norden wrote of the possibility of a “revolutionary regroupment” not with the Communist Platform, but by winning “a small layer, out of the KPF” through hammering away at “the fundamental question of Stalinism vs. Leninism/Trotskyism.” The previous October, while insisting the main priority must remain youth work, he had raised to the German leadership a proposal for some limited work directed at the KPF. In a memo, “Observations on the Kommunistische Plattform of the PDS” (10 December 1994), Norden argued:

“I think the SpAD should be paying attention to the Kommunistische Plattform in the PDS. Not necessarily for prospects of recruitment directly out of its ranks (two-thirds of KommPlatt members are reportedly over 50)-although we could get some, especially if the party leadership tries a purge. Rather, there are likely to be potential recruits around it, and in any case, given the prominence of attacks on the Plattform in redbaiting the PDS, it will be a reference point for revolutionary-minded youth.”

It should be noted that the KPF is not simply a homogeneous bunch of “geriatric remnants of the former East German Stalinist regime,” as WV claims. The Communist Platform had perhaps a couple thousand members (it claimed 5,000), and at that time was drawing radical-minded youth around it precisely because it was the object of an anti-communist witchhunt. Its best-known spokesman was 25-year-old Sahra Wagenknecht, whose excuse when confronted with the KPF’s line of selling out the DDR in 1989-90 was that she was still in secondary school at the time. KPF supporters were active in the PDS-linked youth group at Humboldt University where we had a fraction and contacts; and we had several active youth contacts around the KPF in Halle. The KommPlatt also had a layer of “thirty-something” leftist intellectuals from around the dissident “Les Lenin” (Read Lenin) group centered at Humboldt, formed in the late ‘80s, which had contact with Mandel’s United Secretariat and whose members were reading Trotsky before the Wall fell.

Contrary to Nelson’s arguments and the line of the WV article, this was a grouping that any serious Trotskyist tendency would seek to intersect and win people from, particularly at the height of an anti-communist witchhunt against them that had thrown the KPF into turmoil. In the course of its

work, the SpAD published a sharp and rich polemic, “Communist Platform: Red Fig Leaf of the PDS” (Spartakist No. 116, January-February 1995) and made several very good interventions in state and national meetings of the KPF. Norden gave a speech at Humboldt University in January 1995 on the collapse of Stalinist rule in the DDR and East Europe, and a debate was held between Fred Petersen for the SpAD and former Platform leader Eberhard Czichon on the 50th anniversary of the Red Army’s victory over the Nazi regime, centered on Stalinism vs. Trotskyism and the popular-front “anti-Hitler coalition.” This all had considerable impact on the KPF and the PDS. Two powerful resignation statements by Communist Platform cadres (Dorte and Michel) in solidarity with the SpAD and ICL were written, read to KPF meetings and circulated. Dorte, who was recruited to the party in the course of the KPF intervention, wrote last July:

“I want to defend our recent successful interventions into the PDS/KPF milieu, and I’m glad of having had a small part in this ORO-work. Also it was during these interventions that I learned a lot more about the nature of ex-Stalinists (even in the KPF there are hardly any hard Stalinists...). After all, our intervention in this milieu, beginning with the KPF conference and the PDS party congress, laid the basis for our broad mobilization for the Mumia campaign, and we won many supporters, also prominent ones, from the PDS. Our PDS/KPF work, Mumia campaign and youth recruitment-these things are firmly integrated into one another and cannot be taken apart.”

However, as part of the factional campaign against Norden, this excellent Trotskyist intervention has been declared deviant. We hold that, on the contrary, this was some of the best work the SpAD has done.

A Social-Democratic Bulge: The January IEC memorandum claims that Norden “stigmatized” a layer of older, mainly ex-TLD comrades and tried to drive them out of the party. False. Nelson elaborated on this to claim Norden was responsible for the removal of a number of ex-TLDers from the SpAD central committee. False again. Norden did say that there was “a social-democratic bulge in the organization that does not want to confront hardships engendered by counterrevolution.” This was a generalization of fights in the SpAD over a period of several years. And this was not some new invention by him but was codified at the 1992 SpAD conference (and reprinted in the ICL document – see Spartacist [English edition] Nos. 47-48, Winter 1992-93, p. 25). Referring to “the leadership’s abusive neglect of Halle,” the conference document said: “There is a social-democratic bulge in the organization that does not want to directly confront hardships engendered by counterrevolution which has destroyed the livelihood of millions.” A motion passed at that conference stated: “The struggle to build Halle up as a strong regional center” was “sabotaged by the outgoing CC.... This means not only passive resistance but an explicitly social-democratic adaptation in our party. It plays into the hands of the social democracy, which pursues the splitting of the working class.” The motion noted that “all former TLD members in the CC but Weiß, who was seen as a ‘troublemaking element’ in the CC, were taken out of the cadre list for reinforcing Halle.”

The WV 648 article accuses Norden of waging a “vicious witchhunt denouncing any comrades perceived as an obstacle to his orientation as a ‘comfortable social-democratic’ layer opposed to ‘youth recruitment’!” What Norden actually said, in a report to the I.S. of 11 April 1995, was:

“There’s a layer of older comrades in the party, mainly coming from the TLD, who have rather comfortable lives and don’t want to see that threatened by the activities of the organ-

ization. That was behind the attempt to liquidate the Halle local, because we initially could not get any of the West German comrades to move there to strengthen a weak and endangered local.... There are real social pressures here, and I think this is part of the context in which the complaints about softness on Stalinism in the SpAD comes.”

In part II of his document, “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany,” Norden elaborated:

“To state that there is a layer of older, mainly ex-TLD comrades from among whom there has repeatedly been resistance to struggle—from the 1990 Bundestag election campaign to the 1991 Halle anti-fascist mobilization to the 1992 fight to save Halle to the 1993 underground opposition to the hostel defense and Menshevik mutiny in Hamburg* to the endless obstacles placed in the way of youth recruitment in 1994—is to describe a social reality in the party.”

In a conversation before the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting, Nelson conceded that there was a similar layer in the Bay Area, but in the interests of his witchhunt thesis, he argued that to mention this in party discussion was to “stigmatize” those comrades. On the contrary, because there was a serious problem that was faced early on in Germany and openly fought, things improved in the SpAD in 1993-94 and a leadership began to consolidate that was not oriented to abstention. Youth recruitment began in earnest, and Spartakist-Jugend groups were formed in Berlin and Hamburg. The fact is that there was no stigmatizing of anyone in the SpAD for being older, ex-TLD comrades. The SpAD’s Political Bureau and the CC always consisted mostly of former Western comrades. Far from seeking to purge ex-TLDers, it was Norden who objected (in a 28 June 1993 letter to the SpAD CC) when several long-time TLDers were knocked off the Central Committee at the SpAD conference.

As for Nelson’s claim that Norden tried to drive these comrades out of the organization, this is another lie. In fact, he said the opposite. At the 11 April 1995 I.S. meeting, Norden cited Trotsky on how to deal with “vague, semi-centrist moods,” and concluded: “I think the way to deal with that is to have the discussion, deal with the points that have been raised, but also to integrate them into the work of the party.”

The Class, the Party and the Leadership: The whole indictment against the work in Germany and Norden’s role in leading it is a string of falsehoods made up out of the whole cloth. But the central charge contained in the IEC memo, and now elaborated in the WV article, is that, in the January 1995 speech at Humboldt University, “While invoking the program of Trotskyism, Norden presented a liquidationist view which denied the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard” (WV’s emphasis). This is the core of the characterization of Pabloism now being thrown against us. And what is the “proof” of this absurd characterization? That Norden said that in Germany in 1989-90 “the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership.” Nelson even claimed that Norden insisted that “we were not the revolutionary leadership, and according to him could not have been”

*In early 1993, the Hamburg leadership refused to bring comrades to Berlin for a scheduled national educational the week after the hostel defense on the question of the state and how to fight fascism, claiming this would upset local priorities.

(Nelson's emphasis). This is all a cynical invention. Here is the passage in Norden's document "A Reply on the German Question" (17 November 1995) that Nelson utterly distorted:

"But Nelson claims that by saying the revolutionary leadership was missing, I was somehow denying that we were 'the proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary formation there at the time.' This is false to the core, and so downright grotesque that it makes one's jaw drop in disbelief. Just before the passage [in the Humboldt speech] Clemens disparages, is where I called for an 'internationalist workers party' as 'the goal to which we Spartakists devoted ourselves then, as we do today.' Some Pabloism! I was making the point that we were fighting to build the revolutionary leadership, but that time was too short to overcome the damage to proletarian consciousness that decades of Stalinism had wrought. We were not yet the leadership of the class, to which we aspired and for which we fought."

In the Humboldt speech, Norden stated: "What was lacking was above all the genuinely communist leadership, which could have turned the real existing possibilities of a socialist development into reality." A "liquidation" of the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard? Not at all. This passage referred to "the voices for socialist-minded opposition and reform" in the DDR at the time. It was in a section on "'Critical' Socialist Currents in the DDR" polemicizing against the Mandelites, the United Left, Markus Wolf, the WF Platform and Communist Platform of the PDS, pointing out that "all of these...are more or less explicit social-democratic" currents. Norden's statement that "precisely the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership" was not Pabloism but the core of Trotskyism. This is the heart of the Transitional Program, which declares: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership." The claim that Norden conciliated Stalinism and liquidated the role of the ICL and the program of Trotskyism in Germany is a monstrous lie.

The ICL's intervention in the DDR in 1989-90 was the focus of the Humboldt speech, which was titled, "Who Defended the DDR, Who Fought Against Capitalist Reunification: The Spartakists on the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe." Norden stated at the outset that the purpose was to talk "about the struggle we of the ICL carried out then, first for a proletarian political revolution in the DDR, then, and really from the beginning, against the imperialist conquest and destruction of the workers state." Conciliating Stalinism? Hardly. The entire last third of the speech was devoted to the question of Trotskyism vs. Stalinism in relation to counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc. This was not just abstract. Norden stressed that "practically the entire left, from the SED/PDS through its Communist Platform to smaller groups like the KPD, Die Nelken and the Vereinigte Linke in practice accepted reunification; at most they haggled over the price for selling out." In particular, Norden said, the SED "handed over the DDR" and "made a present of the DDR to the class enemy." And he went after the KPF for its line that it was "unrealistic to defend the existence" of the DDR, its call for a coalition government with the SPD and talk of a "reunification process" with "new ecological, feminist and humanist qualities." The SPD was the "Trojan horse of counterrevolution," we Spartakists had said, and the KPF wanted to be the "tail on the Trojan horse."

It is a grotesque distortion to claim that this speech "denied the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard" (WV 648). The ICL strained its resources to the hilt to fight for proletarian political revolution against the bankrupt Stalinist regime in the DDR and to oppose capitalist counterrevolution in 1989-90. In this it was unique among tendencies claiming to be socialist or commun-

ist. Far from belittling this intervention, in which he played a leading role and of which we are proud, as all ICL members should be, Norden highlighted this intervention. Moreover, as all ICL cadres know, in debates leading up to and at the ICL's second international conference, he led a fight against proposed amendments to the conference document that exaggerated the mistakes made in that intervention. Norden did, indeed, mention in the Humboldt speech those self-criticisms the ICL had agreed upon and which are explained in the 1992 conference document (printed in Spartacist). This is hardly "conciliating Stalinism," but rather following the rules of Trotsky's Fourth International to "speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be."

Because the ICL was present and fought to the best of its abilities in 1989-90, does that resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership? What about in France in December 1995-the ICL was present and active there as well. The revolutionary vanguard must become the revolutionary leadership of the class by defeating the present misleaders in struggle. You can't simply proclaim this and be done with it. The Spartacist tendency has always fought against this methodology, for example at the 1966 London conference, opposing Gerry Healy's insistence that his International Committee was the Fourth International, and stressing that the task was to reforge the FI by combating Pabloism, including in particular through revolutionary regroupment, a process of "splits and fusions." But now to state this fundamental fact of the absence of a revolutionary leadership is labeled "liquidationism." On the contrary, it is to state clearly the tasks of the Trotskyists.

At the January IEC meeting, comrade Robertson read some notes on this hotly debated question:

"Re: 'Were we the political leadership in Germany?' We shouldn't pose the question in a metaphysical or theological manner but in the concrete. We weren't the leadership in the DDR but we had the potential to become it. And we were clearly a factor: the SED saw the sales of our APK [Arbeiterpressekorrespondenz] among particularly the factory councils, the NVA and the Red Army soldiers and they saw Treptow, that is, they saw and even exaggerated the influence we had in the moves we were making and sensed that we were a counterweight to their own disintegration, which was a large factor in them going for a deal with the West."

This is fully in accord with the Humboldt speech and everything Norden has written since. No doubt these remarks were intended to clean up the condemnation of Norden's role in Germany. It was Robertson, after all, who proposed removing Norden from full IEC membership. But it was a sign that the discussion had moved beyond rational Marxist discourse that even these sensible observations were simply brushed aside in the stampede to convict Norden of denying that the ICL was the revolutionary leadership in Germany in 1989-90.

Consider this: if it is Pabloism for Norden to say that the revolutionary leadership was missing in Germany in 1989-90, what are we to make of this statement by Leon Trotsky 50 years earlier summing up the defeat in Spain?

"...the insurrectionary proletariat was strong enough to have conquered power. Had it possessed a revolutionary leadership and not a treacherous leadership, it would have purged the state apparatus of all the Azañas, instituted the power of the soviets, given the land to the peasants, the mills and factories to the workers – and the Spanish revolution would have become socialist and unconquerable.

“But because there was no revolutionary party in Spain, and because there was a multitude of reactionaries imagining themselves as Socialists and Anarchists, they succeeded under the label of the Popular Front in strangling the socialist revolution and assuring Franco’s victory.”

–Leon Trotsky, “Once Again on the Causes of the Defeat in Spain” (March 1939)

There was a Trotskyist group in Spain, numbering as many as we had German speakers in Berlin in 1989-90. They had an impact during the Barcelona May Days workers uprising of 1937. Does this mean that when Trotsky wrote that there was no revolutionary party, no revolutionary leadership, he was denying that the Fourth International was the conscious revolutionary vanguard? Of course not! But that was Trotsky, and that was then. This is now, and the ICL has now adopted a different viewpoint.

As comrade Dorte stated in her 28 July 1995 document:

“Because Norden in his speech at the Humboldt university said that the revolutionary leadership was missing during the political revolution in 1989, but that we were fighting to build one, he is now accused of false modesty and of not centering around the party. Well, Norden was answering to one of the most common lies spread around by the PDS/ComPlatt all the time: that it was useless to fight, because the workers didn’t want to fight, so the proletariat was guilty of the counterrevolution. This criminal accusation Norden answered by counterposing the Trotskyist position that the crisis of humanity is the crisis of communist leadership. Knocking the ex-Stalinists on their own failure of even defending their own bureaucratic regime is hitting them at one of their sore points....

“Repeatedly there was the accusation that Norden was apologizing (to the Stalinists) that we came out too late during the political revolution. However, I cannot see what is wrong about stating in a public forum a fact which can be read in our own official propaganda. Lenin said, ‘The one who is afraid of admitting an error, because this might be utilized by the opponent, is no communist’.”

Under the tremendous pressure to denounce Norden in the last several months, Dorte has since renounced the views she stated here.

This touches on another important aspect of the recent fights-both in Germany and Mexico, several leaders of the sections initially opposed the false attacks coming from leaders of the I.S. on the grounds that they were simply wrong. Comrade Jäger objected to letters from Nelson and Seymour, saying in a 19 May 1995 response to the latter that Nelson’s “charge of a ‘Stalinist-style witch-hunt’ was false, unfounded and destructive. Comrades like you and Al, with your immense authority in the organization, could do a little more research before firing off missives.” For this he was accused of “narrow-minded national parochialism,” opposition to Leninist internationalism and with a “logical implication” of a “break from democratic centralism.”

Sensing which way the wind was blowing, Max Schütz, who is wont to confess early and often, wrote a document (14 May 1995) saying “I can rightly be accused of being a force behind the witchhunt.” In July, Fred Petersen wrote letters to the I.S. and to comrade Robertson, criticizing the I.S. for supporting “the cliquist campaign of initially Clemens and Schütz, later joined by others, that

there is going on a ‘witchhunt in the SpAD’ against them,” and for the destructive role the I.S. was playing in Germany. He refuted in detail, with quotations, the charges that Spartakist had glorified Stalin or that Norden had ignored the key question of consciousness or the ICL’s fight for political revolution in the DDR (the initial charges against his Humboldt speech, later dropped). Nelson (in his speech to the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting) denounced Petersen’s letters as “an unmistakable threat of a break with the International.” Under a barrage of accusations of “anti-internationalism,” Jäger and Petersen repudiated their letters.

It should be pointed out that the recent 142-page ICL International Bulletin on “Norden’s ‘Group’” includes Petersen’s recantation statement but not his earlier documents, and also none of the several documents by SpAD members disagreeing with the “general line” being laid down. It is also worth noting that the method of intimidating leaders of national sections into disavowing their views by accusing them of anti-internationalism and of threatening to break with the international was repeated in Mexico. Over Brazil, Norden was accused of trying to engineer a split of LM with the ICL. The fact is, no such threats were ever made – not in Germany, not in Mexico, not over Brazil, not anywhere. But as a means of browbeating comrades whose deepest desire is to be internationalists into recanting, this proved to be a very effective device.

When we refused to bow before this onslaught and continued to refute the endless false allegations, we were charged with claiming “infallibility” and running a “100 percent regime.” This, too, is false. In his document, “A Reply on Germany” (17 November 1995), Norden stated that there were a couple of misformulations in the Humboldt speech, notably the statement that “a proletarian political revolution was necessary, which no one among the SED tops, nor in the critical currents among the cadres, could even conceive of at the time.” Nelson (and the WV 648 article) seized on this sloppy formulation to charge that Norden was looking to the Stalinist bureaucracy to lead the struggle. Yet the speech emphatically stated, “That nothing could be expected from the Stalinist SED leadership was clear from the outset.” What Nelson, Parks and other ICL leaders objected to in the Humboldt speech was that it didn’t simply denounce the sellouts – though it did that as well, very strongly – but it also sought to give a Trotskyist explanation of what had happened in the destruction of the DDR. This was and remains an urgently necessary task, for there are significant numbers of would-be revolutionary youth in Germany who are deeply confused about Stalinism and the DDR.

The Humboldt speech was a good exposition of Trotskyism vs. Stalinism and the fight of the ICL against counterrevolution in the DDR and the rest of the Soviet bloc, which had a considerable impact on the quite varied audience. Likewise, the intervention directed at the Communist Platform effectively exposed the bankruptcy of the KPF and sought to win youth and cadre from this milieu. The WV hatchet job tries to make hay out of Norden’s comment, in his December 1994 “Observations” on the Communist Platform, about KPF members’ “grudging respect” for the SpAD, because they know well that the ICL stood for defense of the DDR, whereas they betrayed it. But if this is so deviant, what is one to make of the sentence in the 1992 ICL conference document that says of France in the 1980s: “Our principled stand earned us grudging respect at the time as the ‘Soviet-defensist Trotskyists,’ particularly among broader layers of Communist Party members and working-class militants who had never before encountered authentic Trotskyism”?

One significant error was made: a 2 April 1995 meeting of the SpAD central committee passed a motion declaring that the documents by two comrades who had argued that the article in

Spartakist 117 glorified Stalin “ignore this overall context of our polemic against the PDS and Communist Platform, concentrate mainly on the crimes of Stalinism and thus express a capitulationist stance toward the witchhunt and the popular-frontist politics of our opponents.” This was and is a politically accurate characterization. However, as comrade Robertson later pointed out, by voting on a definitive characterization prior to a conference, this had the effect of preempting the discussion process, and thus “violating the basic substrate of democratic-centralist functioning,” as a motion adopted by the I.S. at its July 1995 meeting said. Norden stated, already before that meeting, that this had been an error, for which he shared the responsibility. But that is a long way from a “witchhunt”-and it is nothing compared to the months of demonization directed against us on the most cynical, trumped-up charges of “nearly destroying” one section after another, ultimately leading to our bureaucratic expulsion on yet another pretext. Moreover, we reaffirm that the charge (now formally adopted by the SpAD and the IEC) that the Spartakist article glorified Stalin represents a capitulation to the social-democratic anti-communist witchhunt in the Fourth Reich.

And we would add: if the 2 April 1995 SpAD CC motion, coming after more than a month of discussion, with a number of documents written on both sides, was preemptive, what is one to say of the 14 April 1996 motions in Mexico, after barely a week of discussion, during which the focus shifted abruptly from Brazil to the GEM, with the most serious charges of supposed “anti-internationalism” first raised in the meeting itself, thus constituting a one-day discussion; a discussion which ousted two comrades from the GEM leadership and ordered them to leave the country, with the former leader (Negrete) immediately placed on involuntary leave so that he couldn’t talk to members who were unsure about the whole business? The April 1996 GEM motions, confirmed by the I.S. three days later, were a wholesale assault on Leninist democratic centralism.

...Leading to Revisionist Conclusions

In fact, over the course of the recent fights, whether for simple factional animus or reflecting a deeper shift in the party, the ICL has now not only revised its own Leninist organizational norms and parts of its recent history, it has begun to adopt revisionist positions at the formal programmatic level. Most significantly, in the Germany dispute, the ICL has rejected important aspects of Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism. Nelson, in his 16 January 1996 document on “Norden’s Role in Germany,” states: “What Norden can’t seem to grasp (because his centrist impulses won’t let him) was that the SED in 1989-90 was leading the counterrevolution” (Nelson’s emphasis). Actually, it is basic Trotskyism and the real development of events that stand in the way of “grasping” this revisionist contraband. Nelson is here portraying the Stalinist bureaucracy as spearheading the destruction of the proletarian property forms on which it was an excrescence. In reality, this is the line that Stalinism is “counterrevolutionary through and through.” The Spartacist tendency has always fought this kind of equation between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that of direct representatives of the capitalist class. It is false, and deeply anti-Trotskyist.

In the first place, it is not what happened. Did Gorbachev “lead the counterrevolution” in the Soviet Union? Or perhaps the Stalinist “conservatives” around Ligachev spearheaded the establishment of capitalist rule? No, as the ICL always insisted, it was led by the open counterrevolutionary forces grouped around Yeltsin. The ICL rightly raised the call: “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin/Bush Counterrevolution!” Yeltsin represented a sector of the bureaucracy which had broken from its previous ties to the collectivized economy and made itself the direct instrument of the

imperialists. In doing so, they ceased to be Stalinists. It is true that Gorbachev's perestroika "reforms" led to the shattering of the bureaucratically planned economy, and that Gorbachev, Ligachev and all the other sectors of the bureaucracy eventually embraced a program of "controlled" introduction of a capitalist "market economy" within a "Soviet" state. But they were overwhelmed as "the imperialist bourgeoisie grasped this long awaited opportunity to destroy the governing apparatus of the Soviet Union and install a pliant capitalist-restorationist regime in Moscow," as the document of the second international conference of the ICL put it. In that document you will read of the "collapse of the Soviet bureaucracy," of the "collapse of Stalinism," of the "Terminal Disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucracy," but never of the Stalinist bureaucracy leading the counterrevolution-because it didn't.

This was the same throughout East Europe. Did Jaruzelski and the Communist Party lead the counterrevolution in Poland, or was it Walesa and the open pro-capitalist forces of Solidarność? To ask the question is to answer it, at least for authentic Trotskyists. (There are, of course, a host of pseudo-Trotskyists who, in order to alibi their support to Solidarność, claim Jaruzelski led the counterrevolution, but the ICL has fought against that pro-imperialist line for more than a decade and a half.) The Stalinist bureaucracies, a parasitic intermediate layer, undercut the defense of the workers states by their treacherous policy of conciliating imperialism and politically suppressing the workers, and thus prepared the way for counterrevolution. In this way the Stalinists play a counterrevolutionary role, even more so in their international policies. But the actual overthrow of the bureaucratically deformed workers states and installation of capitalist rule was led not by the bureaucracies but by the direct agents of capitalism.

In Germany, it was not Gysi/Modrow and the SED-PDS who led the counterrevolution but Kohl and the other representatives of German imperialism. Because Germany was one nation, though divided on a class basis into two states, West German forces from the outside – both Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (SPD) – played a much greater role in spearheading capitalist counterrevolution through reunification than was the case elsewhere in East Europe. We said at the time that the SPD was the "Trojan horse of counterrevolution," not the SED. The SED capitulated to and went along with capitalist reunification; the communiqué from the Moscow meeting of Gorbachev and Modrow in late January 1990 accepted the destruction of the DDR; and the Stalinists clamped down hard on the working class, dissolving the Betriebskampfgruppen (factory fighting groups) and NVA (National People's Army) units that had established soldiers councils (in good part as a result of the Spartakist calls to form workers and soldiers councils). All that was said in the ICL conference document, and in Norden's speech at Humboldt University. What was not said was that the SED "led the counterrevolution," because that didn't happen.

It is not just empirical. For the Stalinist bureaucracy to head up the counterrevolution would imply a different theoretical understanding of that contradictory and brittle social formation. The fact that the bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to defense of the workers state and its economy, from which it obtained its privileges, that large sectors of it would go over to the capitalists, was foreseen by Trotsky and corresponds to his analysis of this parasitic caste. But the line that the bureaucracy as a whole could lead the counterrevolution, without fracturing, would mean that the class nature of this social formation was different from that analyzed by Trotsky, who always emphasized the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Thus, he wrote in his essay "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" (November 1937):

“The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle. The struggle is not concluded. In spite of all the efforts on the part of the Moscow clique to demonstrate its conservative reliability (the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalin in Spain!), world imperialism does not trust Stalin, does not spare him the most humiliating flicks and is ready at the first favorable opportunity to overthrow him.... For the bourgeoisie – fascist as well as democratic – isolated counterrevolutionary exploits of Stalin do not suffice; it needs a complete counterrevolution in the relations of property and the opening of the Russian market.”

Trotsky stated in the Transitional Program that “all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko).” But Nelson rejects this analysis today. In fact, right before he declares that the SED “was leading the counterrevolution,” he objects to Norden’s statement that:

“At the same time, it is our Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy that it is a contradictory caste, which will fracture and split under the impact of revolutionary class struggle, and one can anticipate the possibility [of] sections of it, the size of which cannot be predicted in advance, coming over to the workers side in a political revolution.”

Seymour, as well, argues that it is impossible today for a section of the bureaucracy to come over to the workers in a political revolution.

You will look in vain in ICL materials on Germany during 1989-90, or in the 1992 ICL international conference document for the claim that the SED “led the counterrevolution.” You will, however, find it in the publications of the Stalinophobic BT, who in 1989-90 were screaming at Spartakist meetings that DDR prime minister and SED leader Modrow was the main enemy. This was also the line of the Workers League of David North, who since the mid-1980s claimed that Gorbachev and the Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. In Latin America, it is the line of Jorge Altamira, from whose tendency the LM/LQB broke in 1994. Ultimately, this is a “Third Camp” line.

In line with Nelson’s anti-Trotskyist argument, the WV 648 article on our expulsion pretends that Norden’s description in the Humboldt speech of the SED tops as “paralyzed” contradicts them taking an active role to suppress workers action or being for capitalist restoration. Not at all. The Stalinist tops were paralyzed because they saw no way to maintain the deformed workers states they fed off of within the framework of “socialism in one country”; hence they went over to counterrevolution, seeking to bargain for the best terms for themselves – setting up dummy companies, refounding the Stalinist SED as the social-democratic PDS, and so on. Meanwhile they kept the lid firmly clamped on the working class. Trotsky wrote an essay which is relevant to this matter, under the title “‘Progressive Paralysis’: The Second International on the Eve of the New War” (July 1939). Commenting on an article by the Menshevik leader Dan, he noted that “this progressive paralysis [of the Social Democracy] started in August 1914 and has today entered its final stage.” The Second International was paralyzed and incapable of acting as a coherent force in the face of imperialist war, as its key sections actively lined up with their “own” bourgeoisies.

In an analogous manner, the Stalinist bureaucracy was paralyzed in the face of the final counterrevolutionary onslaught and ultimately shattered, with some sections (Yeltsin) openly going over to the capitalist side and others being cast aside (Gorbachev) or rolled over by the imperialists. A perfect example of the paralysis and the counterrevolutionary role of the Stalinists was the behavior of the “State Emergency Committee” coup plotters in Moscow in August 1991: they did not attack Yeltsin’s headquarters, they were quick to assure the imperialists of their support for a capitalist “market economy,” and they firmly told the workers to keep out of the streets. This also was the analysis of the role of the SED in 1992 ICL conference document, which stated:

“The East German deformed workers state, which had been established from the top down and from without, was swallowed by more powerful West German imperialism. Lacking any viable perspective, the bureaucracy simply collapsed.”

This was also a key part of comrade Robertson’s point about the East German Stalinist bureaucracy’s “disintegration, which was a large factor in them going for a deal with the West.”

Bureaucratic Purge to Consolidate the ICL’s New Leadership...

Earlier this year, Al Nelson remarked during the Germany fight that this was the first time that an internal struggle in the ICL had involved the core cadre of the tendency. This is certainly true. It is significant that of the recently expelled comrades, two have 24 years in the Spartacist tendency, a third has 23 years and a fourth 18 years in the organization. We are long-time Spartacist cadres who have devoted our political lives to building the International Communist League as the political continuity of Trotsky’s Fourth International. And we continue that struggle for authentic Trotskyism, despite the bureaucratic purge that removed us from the ICL’s ranks and against the centrist political course on which the leadership has embarked. Contrary to the title of the recent 142-page ICL internal/public document against us, we are not “defectors” from but defenders of Trotskyism against a misleadership whose policies have shown a growing tendency toward abstention from the struggles of the working class, which means emptying the role of the party as an active force in fighting for leadership of those struggles. What this leads to was shown most dramatically by the ICL’s shameful desertion from a key class battle being waged in Brazil.

The WV 648 article tries to draw a parallel between us and the Rad/Hayes faction, which arose in the Canadian section of the ICL in 1994, as examples of “liquidationism” and a “Stalinoid bent.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Y. Rad renounced Trotskyism by calling for political support to Nelson Mandela’s now bourgeois-nationalist ANC in the South African elections and for military support to Russian troops in the UN/imperialist intervention in Yugoslavia. He was a political adventurer, who shortly after leaving the ICL simply discarded all the positions he had stood for and put on a whole new set of political clothes. Moreover, we played a leading role in the fight against Rad’s genuinely Stalinophilic politics. Stamberg wrote a document on “South African Elections – Reply to Leninist-Trotskyist Faction” (25 April 1994). Negrete wrote a document on Rad’s embrace of bourgeois nationalism, “Permanent Revolution vs. Capitulation to Nationalism” (2 May 1994). Norden wrote three major documents in the fight – “The Politics of Ex-Stalinist Despair” (11 May 1994), “For a Bolshevik Workers Party in South Africa” (1 June 1994), and “Straw Men and Red-Brown Herrings” (14 June 1994) – and led the debate against Rad for the party majority at the

June 1994 conference. Of course, there is not a mention of all this in the WV article, for that would undercut its lying amalgam between Rad/Hayes and “Norden’s group.”

Also contrasting to what happened with the Rad/Hayes faction, in order to accomplish its bureaucratic purge of internal opposition to the I.S.’ turn to the right, the ICL leadership has repeatedly resorted to lies, staged frame-up trials, introduced new anti-democratic practices and openly violated the statutes of the Spartacist League/U.S. Thus, Norden was removed from full membership in the IEC for opposing the IEC majority’s phony claim of a “Stalinophilic” deviation in Germany; condemned for “permanent factionalism” for writing a document pointing out that the SpAD had no perspectives for external work; removed from the International Secretariat and the Political Bureau of the SL/U.S. and sacked as editor of WV for the “crime” of objecting to passages in an unsent draft letter to the Brazilian LQB on which his views had been solicited! Negrete and Socorro were ousted from the Mexican leadership, and Negrete removed from the IEC for opposing the lie that they had led an “anti-internationalist” regime in the GEM. When we wrote documents contesting the charges against us over Mexico and Brazil, including supposedly “blocking” and “blunting” fights with the LQB/LM – in fact, we had started the discussions with them on the key points in dispute, and wrote some of the major letters and statements by the I.S. – measures were passed to drastically limit the number of pages written by us that would be circulated. “No, we’re not going to circulate your documents,” announced I.S. secretary Parks, making matters perfectly clear.

There was a concerted effort to drive us out of the party, and when pressure didn’t work, more energetic measures were resorted to. Less than 24 hours after the vote to remove Norden from all positions of leadership (claiming he was not fit to be a member of the party), even before polls of the IEC and SL/U.S. CC were completed, a hefty repo squad showed up at our door at 11:22 p.m., giving us “two minutes” notice to turn over keys to party offices, a fax machine and a computer purchased by the party, using as a pretext that Norden copied some materials about the fight, including the motions which were faxed around the world but never given to us. Twelve hours later, our phone bills were demanded, and when we refused to aid this blatant fishing expedition, aimed at seeing what comrades we had spoken with, we were suspended and our expulsion demanded. The catalogue of charges of supposed “indiscipline” concocted against us was totally trumped up, beginning with the lying claim that we denied the party’s monopoly over the members’ public political activity. As we wrote in our “Reply to a Frame-Up ‘Trial’” (7 June):

“These charges are false: neither of us has ever asserted any such thing, and all of our public political activity in 24 years in the party has been in accordance with Leninist democratic centralism. Starting with its initial false premise, the I.S. proceeds to spin out an entire fantasy of groundless assumptions, wild conjectures and filthy smears, culminating in the outrageous slander that ‘the consequences of Norden’s and Stamberg’s indiscipline’ – which does not exist – ‘could be extremely injurious to the party’s work and its comrades,’ and on that basis of speculation based on supposition based on lies, it calls for our expulsion from the ICL. This is a frame-up.”

In our “Reply,” we detailed some of the previously unheard-of (in the SL) measures used against us, summarizing:

“So following the ‘innovations’ of (a) removing comrades from the IEC for political grounds, and (b) deliberately restricting the circulation of documents from comrades declared by the

I.S. to be a ‘group,’ we now have the additional changes to Spartacist norms contained in the charges against us, namely (c) communications between individual members are not protected by confidentiality, and (d) the introduction of ‘committee discipline’ incumbent on the I.S., even concerning communications with a member of the IEC, which is a higher body of the international.”

For public consumption, the I.S. has tried to clean up some of its more outrageous violations of Leninist organizational norms. Thus the official PB statement of our expulsion pretends “comrades...have the right to discuss their views with any member of the party.” Yet the “Call for a Trial” specifically charged that Norden, a member of the I.S., had been “caught in an act of indiscipline” for having spoken with Negrete, a member of the IEC, while an I.S. delegation was in Mexico, ostensibly to discuss differences over Brazil but actually to purge Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership. This bogus “indiscipline” was used as the pretext to demand we turn over our phone bills, and then as the basis for speculating that our refusal “can only be reasonably understood as a ploy to shield them from exposure of other acts of freelancing and political activity outside and perhaps against the direction of the I.S....” Yet despite the I.S.’ “hefty suspicions,” we engaged in no political activity with outside forces, and the charge of a possible “outside source of political funding” is pure slander.

A notable aspect of the recent fights and sharp turn to the right by the ICL has been its systematic use of distortion and outright lies, in flagrant contradiction to the proud tradition of the Spartacist tendency. On Brazil, the I.S. under Parks made unsubstantiated claims that the LQB/LM had engaged in “unity negotiations” with the centrist Brazilian LBI and had supposedly formed a bloc with Causa Operária in the union, despite the fact that these two groups were up to their centrist necks in the dirty provocations aimed at destroying the LQB. Parks also uncritically repeated the slander by a police-connected provocateur that an LQB leader had asked for, indeed fought for, a salary as paid adviser to the Municipal Workers Union at ten times the minimum wage. (This was not only slanderous but absurd, as it would have come to more than a quarter of the union’s monthly income!) When we objected to the multiple inaccuracies and unsupported outrageous claims, Parks flew into a rage and proceeded to purge first Negrete and Socorro from Mexico and then Norden from the I.S. In both cases, invented charges were tossed around with abandon, and when one didn’t fly it was simply replaced by a new one. This mud-slinging is an all-too familiar witchhunting technique, based on the assumption that eventually something will stick or the targets will tire of scraping off the slime.

The method of spewing out a barrage of false charges with no regard for the facts was repeatedly used in the Germany fight (for example, claiming that there was a “witchhunt” against “perceived opponents” of an opportunist adaptation to the Communist Platform of the PDS, when in fact there was no adaptation, no opposition and no witchhunt), and again in the lightning strike to remove the leadership of the Mexican section, claiming Negrete was a “sexist bully,” conciliated the LQB and isolated the section from international discussion. A letter by Socorro to Nelson of 30 April refutes these charges in detail. The I.S.’ response was not to answer her arguments but to bring her up on trumped-up disciplinary charges over May Day. Stamberg exposed this methodology in a document (8 May) complaining of blatant disregard for truth by the head of the I.S. delegation to Mexico, Kidder. The latter had charged that Socorro and Negrete were violating the terms of his enforced “leave” by secretly setting up a meeting with two young members; when this was revealed to be false, she simply reasserted her conclusion of secret factionalism without a shred of evidence,

saying this was a war. It is a norm of bourgeois historiography that “the first casualty of war is the truth,” and Kidder, Parks and the rest of the “new I.S.” seem to believe their ends justify those means. But such contempt for truth grievously undermines the integrity of a revolutionary party. In response to Stamberg’s demonstration that there had been a conscious disregard for facts, a motion was passed by the I.S. denouncing her document as “despicable and dimwitted” as well as “slandrous.” That is the method in a nutshell: lies covered by vituperation.

This is only one of many examples that could be cited from the recent fights. On such “evidence,” leading comrades were removed from one post after another for their political views; motions were passed in order to stop the official circulation of their documents; party trials were called on phony charges, and we were quickly expelled. What is behind this outbreak of heavy-handed and increasingly bureaucratic measures is in good part a transition in leadership in the Spartacist League and International Communist League. In the last several years, Jim Robertson has gone into semi-retirement, and a new generation of leadership has taken the helm, led by Parks, first as national secretary of the SL/U.S. and then as head of the International Secretariat of the ICL. This transition has been marked by the increasing weight in the ICL leadership of elements lacking any experience whatsoever in the class struggle, with insecure footing in Marxism (inversely proportional to their arrogance), and whose terms of reference are heavily shaped by the stultifying Reagan and post-Reagan years in North America.

Comrade Robertson has often repeated the axiom that no revolutionary party outlives its founding leadership. This was certainly true of Lenin’s Bolsheviks and James P. Cannon’s SWP, where the political degeneration coincided with the withdrawal of the principal leaders due to illness or age. Cannon himself, while not actively leading the fight against the Revolutionary Tendency in the SWP, did condone it, and Robertson has unfortunately played a similar role in the fight against us. Early on in the Germany discussion, Jim Robertson wrote (15 May 1995) that the first part of Norden’s document, “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany” read very plausibly and “corresponds to what I do know.... to me the story of the TLD and more particularly of its successor the SpAD had been one of endless flip-flops, i.e., shallow impressionism.” Previously, in the Italy fight during 1994, he had said that he wanted to be associated with Norden’s document, which Parks hated (because it didn’t come out against calling for general strikes). As recently as mid-October 1995, Robertson said in a phone call with Norden that “I can’t see you as an opportunist.” A couple of weeks later, he objected to a proposal by Parks to exclude Norden from the delegation to the German conference (see below). But with Nelson and Parks firmly determined to smash Norden, comrade Robertson eventually joined the onslaught, evidently seeing this as necessary for the consolidation of the new leadership.

We were clearly seen as a big obstacle by this new regime led by Parks. We are accused of waging a “regime fight,” whereas the reality is that for several years a fight has been steadily waged against what was termed the “WV collective” and which was portrayed as an alternative leadership. Thus the WV 648 article is full of charges of “a parallel apparatus centered on Workers Vanguard, to that of the central party administration.” In Robertson’s notes on “Some Major Considerations that the New I.S. Confronts” (9 February 1996), printed in the ICL bulletin on “Norden’s Group,” he writes: “It appears to me that the ICL leadership now passes from the American Political Bureau to the I.S., if you look at the composition and the dynamics. Comrade Foster wryly notes that the actual shift in leadership was from the editorial board of Workers Vanguard to the I.S. with a brief stop at

the American PB along the way.” But as Norden’s counter-motion to the 28 May PB motion removing him as editor stated:

“The removal of Norden from the Political Bureau and as WV editor is punitive, as was his removal from full membership in the IEC and now his removal from the International Secretariat for his political views. With Norden as editor, Workers Vanguard has expressed the line of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S. and of the leading bodies of the international.”

This motion, of course, is not printed in the ICL bulletin.

The new leadership of the ICL has had a recurring tendency to bureaucratism even before the final act of the recent fights. In November 1995, Parks mooted a proposal to exclude Norden from the international delegation to the upcoming German conference – even though, or rather because he was by then the main target of the attack – on the grounds that he didn’t have the majority position. Parks’ “thought” was discussed informally in the I.S., but not mentioned to Norden, nor was a note shown to him which came in during the 2 November 1995 I.S. meeting with a message from comrade Robertson that this was “wrong and sets a dangerous precedent.... To exclude Norden or to have him go in but not be part of the delegation would be most similar to Zinoviev-ization of the Comintern where higher bodies are put under discipline in lower bodies and could only present a common face.” In a 5 November 1995 letter to Parks, Robertson elaborated on how Parks’ tentative proposal smacked of Zinoviev’s “Bolshevization” of the CI, and admonished her to look into this “so that we don’t go on to laboriously attempt to reinvent Stalinism” (our emphasis).

The reference to the early stages of the bureaucratization of the Comintern is stunningly appropriate. Another salient aspect of the “Zinovievization” of the Comintern was the removal of leaderships of any national sections who appealed to Moscow for restraint towards the 1923 Opposition of the 46. As Isaac Deutscher notes, “Others allowed themselves to be browbeaten and apologized for their faux pas” (The Prophet Unarmed, Chapter 2, p. 146). This was already seen in the Germany fight in the ICL, where several leading comrades were intimidated into renouncing their documents or face charges of splitting. Then the same thing occurred in Mexico. When Negrete was accused of “sexist bullying” and “browbeating” Cirrus into raising what were supposedly his positions in a letter she wrote to the I.S. correcting some misstatements by Parks on Brazil, comrades Humberto and Arturo wrote documents objecting to the charges. Humberto actually proved that the charges were false by stating what he witnessed of the discussion in question, in which Cirrus was the first to raise questions about Parks’ statements about the LQB (see their letters of 6, 7 and 8 April 1996). Again, they were attacked as anti-internationalists, and they capitulated, with Arturo quickly becoming a rabid witchhunter.

How was this accomplished? In the opening statement for the I.S. delegation to the April 14 GEM meeting, Kidder began by reeling off a list of the names and ranks of eight full or alternate members of the IEC who had written documents on the fight, then saying: “You don’t have to take anybody’s word for it in our organization, leadership or not. Yet comrade Negrete would have you believe that these comrades who together represent about 150 to 200 years in our international tendency have it all wrong, don’t really know the facts, are simply engaging in gratuitous insults against him. What kind of organization is Negrete saying that you have joined, comrades?” Beginning with a naked argument by authority, Kidder proceeded to pose the question as a loyalty oath.

Even then, several of the youth abstained in the final vote, unable to swallow the charge of nationalism about the leadership of a section of the ICL that had recruited them to proletarian internationalism.

In the aftermath of the April 14 vote ousting Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership there was a rapid escalation of bureaucratic administrative measures accompanied by disgusting personal insults and vilification. Negrete was immediately placed on leave against his will. When Negrete wrote the I.S. saying he and Socorro wanted to ameliorate relations in the Mexican section, which had become “terribly poisoned,” Parks in her inimitable style fired off a response: “You really don’t get it, do you.... For the third time, let me make it very simple for you: **LEAVE TOWN!**” Comrade Socorro, a chicana former farm worker, was reviled as “dim” and having her head in a “sewer”! Then she was accused of violating discipline for allegedly losing contact with her team at the huge Mexico May Day march and having her companion Negrete carry her camera bag. When Socorro objected that the reported facts are all wrong, she was put on trial. When Socorro and Negrete objected that this was unfair, since essentially the same body was having the “trial” as brought the charges, the proceedings were moved to New York (without a prior vote by the I.S.). Negrete’s demand to be put on trial on the same charges was dismissed. When the I.S. got around to voting on the change in venue, a motion by Norden to instead have a commission of inquiry was voted down.

Socorro was given four days and one-hour notice of the trial date, contrary to the statutes of the SL/U.S., which require seven day’s notice. The trial took place two days after they arrived in New York, with a heated nine-hour I.S. meeting on the intervening day which focused on Brazil and Mexico. A request to postpone the trial for documented medical concerns was denied. Also denied were all requests for delays – even for one hour – to consult the depositions. The trial body never asked key questions of the two members of the GEM exec present as witnesses which would have confirmed Socorro’s account that she in fact met members of her team, that she followed instructions on how to proceed and that Negrete’s presence was sanctioned. Witnesses were crudely led through their testimony. One question was restated to make it clear that it came from the prosecution not the defense, whereupon the witness changed her answer. To get around the fact that two of the witnesses admitted that Socorro was not told the team was leaving, a supposed “signal” that she allegedly ignored was simply invented. Even then, they couldn’t get a straight story from the comrade who supposedly gave the “signal.”

In the trial decision, Negrete is repeatedly referred to as Socorro’s “burro” and “pack horse.” (In the WV article he has gone from animal to inanimate, being compared to “a piece of lint on a pair of serge pants,” as well as being accused of being an egomaniac and so forth). After the harrowing experience of the frame-up trial, at a New York local meeting two days later that was filled with howling choruses of “get out,” Socorro was driven into a rage and made an impermissible statement, for which she was expelled from the SL. The PB decision expelling her is reproduced in the 142-page ICL bulletin; her letter the next morning retracting her statement is not. But in the WV account, Socorro is not even mentioned: not a word about her ouster from the GEM exec, nothing about her trial or expulsion – she has been turned into a non-person. Thus they avoid discussing the shameful “trial” of this comrade.

This gives a measure of the methods of the “new I.S.” The situation in the ICL today recalls in some respects the early period of the bureaucratization of the Communist International. Obviously, the proportions are vastly different; in the Soviet case the party held state power, had hundreds of thousands of members and had made a revolution. But the techniques are uncannily similar. In an early 1924 article, “Down with Factionalism,” Nikolai Bukharin raised a hue and cry because oppositional comrades had stated, “The center wants to intimidate the party with [talk of] a split.” Bukharin also said the opposition appeals to the youth in order to “go after the ‘old cadres’.” Shades of the recent fight in Germany, where we were accused of trying to drive out a layer of older TLD cadres in favor of youth recruitment. Trotsky was referred to as a “superman standing above the CC” – read, “caudillo,” advocate of “one-man rule,” etc. Stalin said (at the 13th Conference of the RCP[b], January 1924) that “It is not a question of the regime here,” and took Trotsky to task for denying that there was an opposition “faction” but admitting there were “groups.” Such charges were “laboriously reinvented” in the recent ICL fight.

Ah, but when we charge you with going “underground,” the I.S. will say, we were only seeking to bring it above ground. Except that when Norden talks with Negrete, both of them members of the IEC, this is declared a violation of discipline. Then a motion is passed saying if there were declared factions, then there could be a proportional circulation of documents (i.e., the number from the opposition would be drastically cut down); but since there are no factions and only a “group,” the I.S. will decide, and the I.S. secretary says “we’re not going to circulate your documents.” And when Norden hands in solicited comments to the I.S., objecting to statements in a draft unsent letter, he is removed from the I.S., PB and WV editorship, and we are shortly expelled. To explain this all to the radical public, the ICL issues a 142-page bulletin which complains in its introduction that Norden and Stamberg had submitted “392 pages” of documents for internal party discussion (pretty good for going underground!), but prints none of them except for our final protest against the frame-up purge “trial.” This is quite a shift: a party that used to pride itself on publishing the attacks on it by external opponents (the Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League series) now purports to document an internal fight giving only the official story. Any reader of the ICL bulletin must ask, what is the other side?

And then the entire international is called upon to take a position – as is the LQB in Brazil, even though they were given almost none of the documents. Complaining of Menshevism in the Bay Area, where there was considerable unrest over the Socorro trial, Nelson writes that anyone who does not agree “100 percent” with the expulsion of Socorro should be out of the organization. This is a “100 percent regime” of a new type indeed. As Trotsky wrote in The Third International After Lenin (1928) of Zinoviev’s “Bolshevization” campaign during 1924-25:

“A revolver was held at the temples of the leading organs of the communist parties with the demand that they adopt immediately a final position on the internal disputes in the C.P.S.U. without any information and discussion; and besides they were aware in advance that on the position they took depended whether or not they could remain in the Comintern.... Of course, the work of purging was also necessary after 1924 and alien elements were quite correctly removed from many sections. But taken as a whole, the ‘Bolshevization’ consisted in this; that with the wedge of the Russian disputes, driven from above with the hammer blows of the state apparatus, the leaderships being formed at the moment in the communist parties of the

West were disorganized over and over again. All this went on under the banner of struggle against factionalism....

“But to employ the split as a preventive measure against differences of opinion and to lop off every group and grouping that raises a voice of criticism, is to transform the internal life of the party into a chain of organizational abortions. Such methods do not promote the continuation and development of the species but only exhaust the maternal organism, that is, the party.”

Such bureaucratization is not peculiar to Stalinist organizations. German social democracy, in a different social context, was quite heavy-handed and bureaucratic toward internal opposition, particularly on the left, even before it went over openly to the side of the bourgeoisie by voting war credits in August 1914-witness the treatment of Rosa Luxemburg, or the systematic purge of left-wingers from editorial boards in 1910-12. To repeat, the ICL is neither the massive apparatus of the German SPD nor a party with the power of vast state resources behind it, as with the Stalinists. But it is not immune from the kind of social pressures that produce bureaucratic degeneration. The ICL has itself recognized this in the past. The document of the 1992 second international conference stated:

“Thus far, the American section has weathered the Reagan/Bush years rather well. But as comrade Robertson recently pointed out, there are three ways we can wreck ourselves unless we make a conscious effort otherwise. We could degenerate into: (1) Menshevism, (2) Stalinism (i.e., become some sort of bureaucratic organization) or (3) De Leonism (i.e., drift into abstract propagandism, concomitantly withdrawing from struggle.”

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and indeed the course that has been undertaken by the ICL today has aspects of all three tendencies.

Turn Toward “Passive Radicalism”: De Leon and Kautsky

The escalation of bureaucratic measures never before practiced in the Spartacist tendency, the unprecedented purge of long-time cadres of the International Communist League for their political views, the dissolving of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LQB and the ICL’s shameful flight from a major class battle underway in Volta Redonda are all part of a sharp turn in the party. As James P. Cannon stressed against the petty-bourgeois Shachtman-Burnham opposition in the SWP, organizational questions in the Marxist movement are not “independent” of but directly reflect the political program:

“What is the significance of the organization question as such in a political party? Does it have an independent significance of its own on the same plane with political differences, or even standing above them? Very rarely. And then only transiently, for the political line breaks through and dominates the organization question every time.”

–The Struggle for a Proletarian Party (1940)

Cannon emphasized, “Thus it is clear that the question stands not organizationally in the first place, but politically. The political line is and must be the determining factor. It is and must be placed in the

center of the discussion.” So what is the political line behind the sudden appearance of bureaucratic practices in the ICL?

A short answer is that there has been an increasingly pronounced tendency toward abstract or passive propagandism, which divorces the party propaganda from active intervention in the class struggle. In the communist movement this tendency is known as De Leonism, after Daniel De Leon, one of the early American Marxists, who opposed fighting for any kind of “immediate demands,” arguing that this watered down the revolutionary program, and instead confined himself to abstract propaganda for socialism. This policy is justified with the argument that since this is a reactionary period, little can be achieved; that perceived opportunities for intervention are illusory, and thus only a reflection of opportunism; and that the job of revolutionary Marxists is defined as (limited to) keeping the flame alive against attempts to squelch it.

The fight against revisionism must be a constant and central focus of communists, particularly in reactionary periods when the ideological pressures of the bourgeoisie mount. Part of that fight is to guard against tendencies toward abstention from class struggle, which are ultimately social-democratic and Kautskyan. The German SPD theoretician Karl Kautsky, even before Lenin, insisted that socialist consciousness must be brought to the workers from the outside by the socialist party. However, Kautsky’s conception of the party was very different from Lenin’s. Not only did he conceive of a “party of the whole class,” rather than a Leninist vanguard party of professional revolutionaries, in the period leading up to World War I Kautsky developed the policy of he called “passive radicalism,” i.e., that the job of the party was to concentrate on educating and to “wait for the appropriate opportunity” (from “The New Tactic” [1912]). This policy was a key component of Kautsky’s centrism, allowing him to maintain a veneer of Marxist orthodoxy while cohabiting with the increasingly reformist trade-union and SPD party bureaucracy.

The present period grows out of the world-historic defeat for the proletariat represented by the triumph of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. Yet despite and as a result of this defeat, there have been numerous sharp outbreaks of social and class struggle, from Brazil, South Africa and Mexico to the upsurge of workers’ struggles in Italy (autumn 1992 and autumn 1994) and the December 1995 strike wave in France. These struggles have been set off by the bourgeoisie’s drive to gut the trade unions and dismantle social programs instituted to counter the “communist threat,” and by the drive to form trade blocs in this period of heightened inter-imperialist rivalry. They provide important openings for intervention by revolutionary Trotskyists, to combat the manifestly bankrupt programs of Stalinism and social democracy, and to show the road to take these initially defensive struggles in the direction of a fight for power, through a transitional program. But there has been a tendency in the ICL to draw defeatist conclusions from defeats – to conclude, as WV 648 puts it, that the present post-Soviet period is one in which the forces of the “small revolutionary vanguard” are in a “conjuncturally fragile situation” and their “necessary relationship to the proletariat” is one of distance. What this boils down to is waiting for an appropriate moment, i.e., “a better period.”

To be clear, this is only a tendency, and is uneven across the ICL. In a country where it knows its way around the political terrain and the dangers are less pronounced, the Spartacist League/U.S. is prepared to initiate the recent admirable action that trounced KKK racist terrorists in Chicago. This is in line with the SL’s correct policy of seeking through labor/black mobilizations to interdict the

hooded Klan fascists from staging their provocations in the major cities. Yet the increasing tendency of the ICL leadership is to “pull our hands out of that boiling water” of the class struggle, particularly where it feels out of its depth politically. This is a tendency toward what Kautsky called “passive radicalism,” toward the construction not of “fighting propaganda groups” but of passive propaganda groups, whose activity consists of commentary to the exclusion of ongoing active intervention in the class struggle. In order to cut short a developing fight over this abstentionist policy, the I.S. resorted to bureaucratic measures never before practiced in the Spartacist tendency. And the results are seen in Volta Redonda, as the ICL deserted from a class battle.

Facing attacks and provocations by the bourgeois state and its agents, the I.S. was seized by panic. The I.S. secretary wrote that the ICL should never “set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again.” (As it turns out, while sending ICL representatives to Brazil was ruled out for purposes of defense of the Brazilian fraternal comrades, ICL representatives were dispatched to Brazil for factional aims, to demand that the LQB line up against us.) The I.S. declared (in a motion of 5 June), on the basis of no evidence, that “The state appears ready to use the pretext of a ‘foreign red threat’ to weaken an entire sector of the labor movement and through this to destroy the present and future perspectives for a revolutionary vanguard in Brazil.” In the last discussion with the LQB before breaking relations, one of the ICL representatives summed up: “The reality is that right now the police are using all their power to smash you and the municipal workers union,” and while the present situation may be demoralizing for the ranks of the municipal workers, “it would be even more demoralizing for them to see one of their leaders dead in the street. That is the point. The point has to do directly with the power of the bourgeois state.”

Some may recall the fate of the French OCI and its youth group, the FER, during the events of May-June 1968. While the context is different, it’s hard not to be struck by the parallel of leftist verbiage to cover a rightist course. A popular history describes what happened when the Lambertiste youth marched up on the key “Night of the Barricades” (May 10-11, before the bulk of the working class entered the struggle):

“...at the sight of the barricades, their leader was seized by doctrinal doubts: This was clearly going to be murder. It was an ‘adventurist’ enterprise, in which the FER would have no part. Their squad marched off the field to the derisive hoots of the embattled students. FER’s defection at the hour of combat will long be remembered.”

–Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, Red Flag/Black Flag: French Revolution 1968 (1968)

And indeed it was. The Lambertistes never lived it down, despite the “orthodox Trotskyism” they brandished like a protective talisman. While they continued to maintain a “revolutionary” veneer over the next few years, this episode showed what their real politics were in practice.

The corollary of the ICL leadership’s panicked response, and the broader tendency to passive propagandism, is the accusation against us of “vicarious political adventurism.” So now, after all the epithets thrown at us over the last year (Stalinophilic, Castroite, Healyite, ultra-Shachtmanite, BT-like, like Hansen, like Cochran/Clarke, like Goldman/Morrow, and don’t forget dupes of Saddam Hussein’s war propaganda), the I.S. has settled on “Pabloists of the Second Mobilization.” Of course,

they have the small problem that Norden authored the Prometheus Research Series No. 4 bulletin on Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism.

The hard core of the accusation against us is adventurism. For doing what, exactly? Obviously in the first instance for fighting to continue fraternal relations with the LQB/LM and to pursue the fight to remove cops from the V.R. union. “Adventurism” for saying that it’s wrong to say “we” should “never set foot” in Volta Redonda again, for saying that it might be necessary to send an ICL representative to Brazil to defend the LQB/LM against the mounting witchhunt. Grotesquely, Parks wrote in the ICL discussion: “With Norden in command it is likely that...LM would be destroyed, the union would be busted, and the ICL would have the reputation as international hitmen.” Norden responded: “What’s next – will I be named ‘fingerman for the international bourgeoisie’?!” Parks’ charges are pure slander. As the comrades know, Norden was in charge of the iSt/ICL’s Latin American work for over two decades. In “A Reply to Parks” (28 May), he asked: “Where is the slightest scintilla of evidence to back up Parks’ dire fantasies? It doesn’t exist.”

Taking its fantasies for reality, the I.S. expels internal critics from the highest level of the ICL leadership, cuts its ties to the LQB and flees from the struggle. Its reputation will not be of “international hitmen” but of panicked deserters, who abandoned a fight after encouraging it. Interestingly, a description that Cannon wrote of the petty-bourgeois Shachtman-Burnham opposition in the SWP applies to the ICL leadership today:

“The driving impulses behind the opposition as a whole are petty-bourgeois nervousness at the prospect of impending struggles, difficulties and sacrifices, and the unconscious desire to avoid them at all costs.”

–from James P. Cannon, The Struggle for a Proletarian Party (1940)

This description certainly applies to the leadership of the “new I.S.” today. In that same fundamental text, Cannon takes aim at the tendency of “isolated groups to console themselves with the monotonous repetition of adherence to great principles without seeking ways and means and new opportunities to apply them.”

This rightist tendency toward abstract propagandism is not simply, or even particularly, the expression of a literary conception of politics. Real social pressures, to which the SL is not immune, are at work here as well. An outlook and orientation geared to the labor aristocracy is increasingly in evidence, in tandem with the weight of this sector (and the disproportionate number in white-collar jobs) in the wake of the decimation of the SL trade-union fractions in the late-1970s layoffs. That this requires serious analysis is indicated, for example, by the fact that despite our interventions in one PB meeting after another to get effective party intervention in Los Angeles – where low-paid immigrant workers have spearheaded some of the most dynamic labor struggles of recent years and the upsurge against the racist acquittal in the Rodney King case rocked the triumphalism of the U.S.-dominated “New World Order” – the branch is just as stagnant as ever.

The I.S.’ desertion from the fight to oust the cops from the union in Brazil represents a major departure from Marxism toward centrism, a policy of mouthing revolutionary phrases while flagrantly contradicting them in practice (see Trotsky’s essay, “Centrism and the Fourth International,” Spartacist No. 9, January-February 1967). But this is not the first time such tendencies have appeared

in the ICL. As the reporter for the I.S. at the second international conference, Brosius, put it, the Australian section has been the “bellwether of social-democratic deviations in the ICL.” At the beginning of the 1980s, it flinched badly on the Russian question, beginning with dropping the slogan “Defense of Cuba, USSR Begins in El Salvador.” Over the years, the SL/A has had a series of sectarian responses, most recently in failing to demand a halt to French nuclear testing in the Pacific, out of a knee-jerk reaction to the disgusting Australian nationalism of the anti-nuke protesters. Moreover, until a recent fight, the SL/A didn’t call for independence for East Timor, the beleaguered island under the jackboot of the Indonesian military for over two decades.

The most stunning examples of the Australian section’s repeated “social-democratic drift” came in the last several years, when it repeatedly placed itself in opposition to union strike struggles. The first was an October 1991 24-hour general strike against anti-union laws of the New South Wales state government. In this case, some comrades even went to work during the strike. The section also missed a one-day general strike in the state of Victoria. As one comrade put it during the ICL’s second international conference, “The lesson learned in Australia was that a general strike means ‘oh shit!’” But even after a 1992 emergency conference called to deal with this tendency, the editorial board of Australasian Spartacist in 1994 wanted to publish the position of “militant indifference” (!) to the privatization of Australia’s nationalized shipping line. In all cases, this very rightist sectarian abstentionism was justified with supposed left arguments against the wretched trade-union bureaucracy. This was also the posture adopted by the Spartacist League/Britain (later corrected) in declaring the Liverpool dockers strike dead last fall, even though union mobilizations for the strikers continued.

Now Parks has taken up the position in several countries that it is wrong for a small Trotskyist propaganda group to call for a general strike. This arose in Italy, when G. Maggi produced a draft leaflet during the workers upsurge of autumn 1994 headlining a call for an all-out general strike. In fact, this represented a capitulation to the popular front then being formed, as the reformist union and party leaders wanted a show of worker militancy to build pressure for their class-collaborationist parliamentary coalition against the rightist Berlusconi government. For Trotskyists, the key was to highlight opposition to the popular front and the need for a revolutionary party. But Parks went further, opposing a call for all-out workers struggle against the cutbacks and inclusion of a call for a general strike among the listed demands. Over the years, pseudo-Trotskyists have routinely called for general strikes as an all-purpose, radical-sounding demand on the union bureaucracy, to disguise their actual policy of tailing the labor fakers. But Parks’ lesson from this 1994 Italy fight, that it is wrong for small propaganda groups to call for a general strike at all, is a caricature of Trotskyism. What about the campaign of the French Trotskyists for a general strike in the mid-1930s?

During the December 1995 strike wave in France, the CC of the French section was paralyzed, incapable of producing interventionist propaganda to bring the Trotskyist program into the developing struggle. In this case, the LTF leadership collapse was fought from the I.S., and particularly by Parks – while at the same time she was denying that this had anything to do with passive propaganda. But subsequent events have shown that this tendency has been increasingly generalized. For example, in Germany not only was the intervention directed at the Communist Platform repudiated after the fact, but after the SpAD conference in January, the tasks and perspectives section of the conference document was redone to rule out any work directed at the PDS. Nor were any concrete perspectives raised toward the Autonomen, or indeed any other focus for external work.

In the months before our expulsion, we found ourselves constantly fighting for articles in the ICL sectional presses to pose transitional demands as a tool of intervention, instead of simply passive commentary. In Germany, an article on the Balkans for Spartakist in January raised no call for, or even any perspective of, working-class action against imperialist intervention, even though this was the first time the Bundeswehr has been deployed outside the Reich since World War II. Instead the draft declared: “The task of Marxists, however, is to raise the consciousness of the workers and to convince them of the necessity and tasks of the socialist revolution.” True, but the whole question of how to mobilize the working class in struggle leading to a fight for power is not addressed.*

In March, a Spartakist draft on the “Alliance for Jobs” (a stillborn scheme by the union tops for a “partnership” with Kohl) virtually ignored actual labor struggles and failed to put forward a program of demands to lead the struggle forward. In a draft for Spartaco on the Italian elections, where the recently elected Ulivo (Olive Tree) popular front promises to push through the austerity program the right-wing Berlusconi government couldn’t implement, Parks opposed a suggested slogan to “Prepare for Hard Class Battles Against the Ulivo’s Anti-Worker ‘Reforms’.” She argued once again that a small Trotskyist propaganda group should simply put forward general propaganda on the popular front and the need for a revolutionary workers party. It’s classical De Leonism – no transitional demands.

Parks also objected to any reference to the Italian bourgeoisie’s push for a “strong state” to ram through the brutal “restructuring” of government and industry, including the massive layoffs and drastic lowering of real wages, that the ruling class is driven to accomplish following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has been a point we have raised in numerous articles on Italy for the last several years. In the same vein, a lead article on Mexico for Espartaco omitted any reference to the semi-bonapartist nature of the Mexican regime and the corporatist character of the PRI-controlled “unions,” while seeing big opportunities in a split by dissident corporatist “unions.” Thus the key point of Trotsky’s analysis of Mexico is simply dropped!

Skipping over the question of bonapartism, the Mexico article calls for “combat” against the “glorification” of “trade-union struggle” in order to “leap from the struggle for mere demands for higher wages” (in a country where real wages have been slashed to below 1940 levels) “to political struggle which coheres and raises the consciousness of the working class about its tremendous social power.” Rather than this glib rhetorical “leap,” what is urgently required is a system of transitional demands as a bridge from the present demands and consciousness of the working class to the struggle for socialist revolution. Naturally, no demands were raised in the article for a sliding scale of wages and hours, turning strike pickets into workers militias, factory committees, etc. If ever there was a situation crying out for the Transitional Program, Mexico today is it. But this is not to be found in the “new” Espartaco.

* In the June 11 I.S. letter to the Brazilian LQB, the formulation is: “The task of Marxists is to have a program which conceptually opens the road to revolution for the working class” (retranslated from Portuguese). But the mere “having” of revolutionary “conceptions” is nothing but an idealist veneer for opportunist passivity, unless an active fight is waged to transform the consciousness of the proletariat in the class struggle, without which it is impossible to open the road to revolution really, and not just conceptually.

In his speech at the SpAD conference in January, Nelson cited a quote from Trotsky's 1937 article "Stalinism and Bolshevism" as summing up the tasks of Marxists today:

"Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions, the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: It must swim against the current...it must at least retain its ideological positions, because in them is expressed the dearly purchased experience of the past."

This quote (repeated and expanded in the WV 648 article on our expulsion) is utterly correct, but Trotsky never intended these words to be counterposed to the tasks of participating in and giving leadership to the struggles of the working class. The year after he wrote the above essay, with the Spanish Revolution strangled and World War II fast approaching, at a time that Victor Serge characterized as "midnight in the century," Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program:

"The strategic task of the next period – a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard.... It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The ICL leadership notes one way in which the pressures of the period and historic defeats weigh on the proletarian vanguard, in the form of attempts to revise and reject our fundamental Leninist-Trotskyist programmatic positions. But in addition to outright programmatic revisionism there is another way in which the pressure of defeats takes its toll on revolutionary organizations. In the Transitional Program, Trotsky notes that "the influence of the betrayal by the historic organizations of the proletariat" led some elements to "a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses" and to conceive of revolutionary struggle as "convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism." He noted:

"These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the selfsame meager abstractions. Political events are for them an occasion for comment but not for action."

Here, too, one can recognize elements of the SL/ICL leadership today, more comfortable with "calling for" a revolutionary vanguard than shouldering the responsibilities, challenges and dangers of intervening to build one in the class struggle. But as Lenin stressed in What Is to Be Done? (at a time when the Russian party was still consolidating as a fighting propaganda group): "it is not enough to call ourselves the 'vanguard,' the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognize and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard."

So far we have seen a tendency toward passive propagandism. The ICL can still make other turns, it can zig and zag, carrying out an action against the KKK in Chicago at the same time that it abandons a struggle against the cops in Volta Redonda. But with the recent purge of long-time cadres, the accumulation of bureaucratic measures never before practiced in the organization, the dissolving of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LQB and precipitous flight from a major class battle underway in Volta Redonda, there has been a turn in the ICL in the direction of bureaucratization and a policy of "passive radicalism." Particularly its shameful abandonment of the fight for cops out of the unions in Brazil marks the turn as centrist, revealing a sharp cleft between the ICL's stated program and its policies in practice. We would be fighting within the ranks of the ICL to defeat this disastrous course were it not for our unjust expulsion, which we hereby appeal. We have fought to build the ICL based on the Trotskyist program, which we have helped formulate and defend. We continue to fight to build a Leninist world party of socialist revolution, a reforged Fourth International Trotsky would recognize as his own.

Brazilian Militants:

It Is a Crime to Abandon the Struggle Now

The day before the International Secretariat of the ICL wrote its letter breaking relations with the Brazilian LQB, a meeting was held between the Brazilian comrades and representatives of the ICL. The latter repeatedly denounced the LQB's "intransigent defense of work in a union which at this time poses fundamental objective risks" (the municipal workers union in which LQB supporters have been waging an intense campaign for the removal of municipal guardas [police]). The ICL representatives called on the Brazilian comrades to "formally leave the most prominent issue" the bourgeoisie sought to use against them, their "leadership of the union," etc. In reaction to the LQB's unanimous and indignant rejection of this policy of flight, the ICL "dissolved" its fraternal relations with them. At the June 16 meeting, comrade I., a leading member of the LQB who was a founder of the 1982 metal workers' opposition under the military dictatorship and an organizer of the militant illegal 1984 strike at the Volta Redonda steel plant, Latin America's largest, noted that no other organization in Brazil had ever put forward the Marxist position of intransigent opposition to the presence of cops in the unions. He continued:

We agreed with cops out of the unions. We have concrete proof of this, since together with the ICL, we touched off an international campaign against cops in the unions. This is where the controversy comes in. If we launch an international campaign against cops in the union, and the campaign is becoming a success from the standpoint of the world Trotskyist program as well as in terms of the work within the union, what reason is there for us to leave the union at this time? ...Now we are on brink of expelling the police from the union, an objective of both the ICL and the LQB.... I think, and we of the LQB think, that it is cowardice and a crime to abandon this work halfway through.... We think it is necessary to go to the metropolitan centers, to form the vanguard of the revolutionary party, considering that this trade-union work is part of the formation of the vanguard. We should go forth from this area, while maintaining conquests that have already been won. I don't see any contradiction there. I think it is a mistake, at a moment when we are putting into practice the Trotskyist program of cops out of the union, for us to abandon the struggle.

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

Nº 1, JULHO-SETEMBRO 1996 - ÓRGÃO INFORMATIVO DA LIGA QUARTA INTERNACIONALISTA DO BRASIL - PREÇO: R\$ 1,00

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



Trotsky pretende abandonar esse legado "Operários do mundo, unidos no Quarto Internacional", se não de longo prazo "O tempo do mundo do trabalho". As lutas, Comem. Espal. Marx e o espírito de lutar mais e mais.

Fim da luta da revolução pro-... é uma questão estratégica para o proletariado. Trotsky escreveu: "Para lutar a... não mais revolução socialista neste país..."

18

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

No artigo "Os sindicatos na época da desordem imperialista" (1940) Leon Trotsky escreveu que "a primeira palavra-de-ordem" dos quartas-internacionalistas na luta dentro dos sindicatos é "Independência total e incondicional dos sindicatos em relação ao estado capitalista. Isso significa lutar para transformar os sindicatos em organizações das grandes massas exploradas e não da administração operária. A segunda é: demarcação sindical". Essa palavra-de-ordem deve ser desenvolvida da primeira e premissa para sua realização a independência total dos sindicatos em relação ao estado burguês."

No Brasil e muitos outros países, a burocracia sindical mantém a "sindicalização" dos policiais, professores e outros setores através da repressão burguesa. Junto com social-democratas, socialistas e outros, mantém assim as condições de seu reformismo, incluindo nos sindicatos os "elementos oportunistas de honras armadas" que, nas palavras de Lenin, são o núcleo do estado burguês. Esta é uma das formas mais abertas em que a burocracia sindical e os reformistas burocráticos se vinculam ao estado burguês. Os pilares e "bases pedagógicas" das ideologias da independência de classe dos trabalhadores. Temos de reconhecer que cada vez mais o tempo da América, da América latina, etc., que têm preparado o caminho para o fortalecimento de forças de esquerda.



Anúncio das lutas no dia 4 de junho. Trabalhadores e políticos, deve-se saber do SP/AVR/... greve nos últimos anos, formando 2.500... comunistas derrotados pelo governo de... Luta principista e copas às bruzas em Volta Redonda

The Truth About the 1993 Berlin Hostel Defense

by Marjorie Stamberg

January 30th is the anniversary of Hitler taking power. Every year this date is a flashpoint for provocations by Nazis and skinheads as they “celebrate” a night of bloody terror in the reunified Germany of capitalist counterrevolution. In East Berlin, these attacks have particularly targeted the immigrant workers' hostels housing thousands of Mozambican and Vietnamese families who had been employed in the DDR as contract workers. Leading up to 30 January 1993, the 60th anniversary of the fascist takeover, throughout Germany immigrant communities braced for a rash of Nazi terror actions. On that night, the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschland (SpAD-Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the ICL) and the associated KfsV (Committee for Social Defense) carried out a united-front defense action, in cooperation with hostel residents and with the active participation of scores of left-wing youth and a number of trade-unionists. At a sprawling hostel complex in the working-class district of Hohenschönhausen where several thousand immigrants lived in a number of large apartment buildings, the defenders stood guard throughout the dangerous night. Teams patrolled the perimeter while reserve forces rested inside.

Today, the new Workers Vanguard (No. 648, 5 July 1996) declares this to have been “an entirely tokenistic defense” in which “no damage was done to the fascists and out of which not one youth was recruited.” The new WV lies. A statement issued the day after the 1993 hostel defense by the KfsV reported:

“The immigrants were able to have a peaceful night and socialize with the defenders. But in the early morning hours, after Nazis had circled the hostel several times, fascist provocateurs shot a gas pistol at the guards at one of the entrances to the hostel. The guards were immediately reinforced, and during the next provocation a Nazi car was decisively forced away. Some Nazis left their boots and bomber jackets behind.”

In an article on the hostel defense at the time, WV No. 569 (12 February 1993) noted that: “On the previous night, the KfsV organized patrols on short notice when reports were received of a possible fascist attack on the hostel. And on the night of January 30-31 there were patrols around a smaller hostel in an outlying area notorious for Nazi attacks on immigrants and other residents. Residents of the hostel complex later thanked the KfsV for the defense, noting that there had been rightist threats in recent months and that the police had previously raided the dormitories on numerous occasions.”

The 30 January 1993 Berlin immigrant workers hostel defense sought to put into practice the Trotskyist program of workers mobilization against the fascist threat. It was an example as well of how the revolutionary party carries out its commitment to act as a “tribune of the people,” taking up the cause of all the oppressed. Now, for factional purposes to smear the - “Norden group” with the phony charge of “adventurism,” and in the service of its own very real policy of abstentionism, the ICL leadership denigrates this action. Yet in the year prior to the SpAD/KfsV action (1992), official statistics listed almost 2,300 cases of rightist terror, including

17 murders. In the week of the hostel defense there was a fascist arson attack in Schwerin (East), a hostel for asylum seekers in Düsseldorf (West) was surrounded by a mob of skinheads hurling rocks, and Berlin's Jewish community was bombarded by anonymous threats demanding they "leave Germany by Saturday," January 30.

New evidence on the extent of the fascist threat has come out recently in Führer-Ex: Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi (Random House, 1996), by Ingo Hasselbach, who was a leader of the "National Alternative" fascist group. "We called it the 'Movement for the 30th of January'," he writes, "named for the date of the original seizure of power in 1933." "All around the country, neo-Nazis and even ordinary teenagers were starting to bomb refugee shelters and attack Gypsies on weekends.... The favorite targets were Vietnamese, Africans, and anyone who looked suspiciously dark, who could be a Gypsy or a Jew." Hasselbach's particular group had targeted "a refugee shelter that lay not far away in the Hans-Loch quarter in Lichtenberg." The Hohenshönhausen complex was located about two miles away.

The Spartakist call for united-front defense of the hostels struck a chord. Thousands of leftist youth and workers were outraged at the growing Nazi terror spawned by the counterrevolution. Six months earlier, in August 1992, the country was riveted by the images of flames engulfing an immigrant hostel in Rostock. The fire was allowed to rage out of control as police aided and abetted a Nazi pogrom in that northern seaport city. And in November 1992, the arson-murder of a Turkish family in Mölln near Hamburg produced a wave of outrage, as thousands marched in protest. Later, in the spring of 1993, there were again huge protests after a Turkish family in Solingen was killed when their building was firebombed. There was mass indignation, including against the bourgeoisie and SPD reformists, whose campaign to gut the constitutional right of asylum fueled the Nazi firebombers. The situation cried out for organized worker/immigrant action against the Nazi threat.

This was the context in which the ICL Second International Conference was held in Europe in November 1992. A motion that I initiated, which was passed unanimously (and enthusiastically) by the conference, stated:

"Clearly the related questions of immigration, nationalism and fascism will determine the political activity of all ICL sections in Europe in the next extended period and must be reflected in our propaganda and application of united-front tactics. Our Marxist proletarian-centered revolutionary program can be a powerful attractive weapon to draw closer to our sections the vanguard of workers and working-class and student youth. This would provide a road to intersecting the radicalizing youth who are breaking from their reformist and centrist organizations precisely on the question of defense of immigrants and refugees."

A document by Norden and Stamberg ("A Road to the Youth – Now is the Time to Intervene!" 20 November 1992) was written, serving to orient the German section in this period of turbulent struggles and spelling out in some detail what this strong mandate from the conference would mean there. This laid the basis for the January 1993 Berlin hostel defense, as well as for intervening in the numerous protests and for youth recruitment. But today, not only is the hostel defense smeared, but the whole perspective is dismissed by WV, which grotesquely claims that "Norden and Stamberg's idea of 'anti-fascist actions' was all photo-op and little political content." The article says nothing about what they now think was the correct strategy to fight the fascists, and nothing is their strategy.

The proposal for the hostel defense on January 30 was a concretization of the decisions of the highest body of the ICL. But before the action could be carried out, a political fight had to be waged inside the SpAD, against a section of the leadership. When pressure was put on to look for opportunities to carry out this perspective, there was systematic foot-dragging, subterfuges and diversions, and ultimately downright sabotage by a section of the SpAD leadership, particularly Schütz and Petersen. That “underground opposition” was politically defeated in a hard discussion, and the comrades who had tried to block the work were won over, and fully participated in the preparation of the defense action. Nor were they “stigmatized” in any way: indeed, both Schütz and Petersen were elected to the SpAD Political Bureau, which was formed shortly thereafter at Norden's initiative.

With the internal fight resolved, at least for then, on 20 January 1993 the KfsV issued a leaflet headlined: “Workers, Immigrants, Anti-Fascists: Defend the Hostels!” This appeal was circulated to labor and left groups and received the support of numerous trade-unionists from the Berlin area and in the chemical industrial triangle of Halle-Bitterfeld of the former DDR. The hostel defense action was a taste of what we seek to achieve, pointing in the direction of united-front workers mobilizations. But as we frankly wrote at the time, we were not able to achieve a full-fledged workers defense, including organized union participation, due to sabotage by the social-democratic union bureaucrats. As endorsements from important unions came in, and the KfsV appeal was having an impact particularly in the key ÖTV public workers union, SPD union bureaucrats actively countermobilized to prevent formal endorsements from turning into real participation. But even the formal trade-union endorsements helped to build the defense, as has been the case with many labor/black mobilizations in the U.S.

WV 648 argues that the hostel defense action had “little political content.” Quite the opposite: 30 January 1993 saw a sharp counterposition of the revolutionary vs. reformist programs on the question of how to deal with fascism. That day, tens of thousands of Germans participated in impotent candle-light chains for “tolerance,” which were organized by social democrats (both SPD and PDS) and supported by pseudo-Trotskyists such as Voran and its Youth Against Racism in Europe (JRE). Scores of youth showed up at our organizing meeting at Humboldt, and well over 100 people stayed throughout the night to defend the hostel, including a number of PDSers who disagreed with their party's policy. While on duty, they got a real lesson in a militarily competent and disciplined defense effort, and during their rest periods, they spent the night sitting up with their Vietnamese and Mozambican hosts, and talking and arguing with the SpAD about Trotskyist politics. A week later, an SpAD educational was held on the question of the state and how to fight fascism which attracted several score participants, including youth from several different Autonomen groups and Vietnamese hostel residents.

The forthright evaluation of the 1993 hostel defense at the time in both Workers Vanguard and Spartakist stands in sharp contrast to the utterly dishonest account WV presents. The underground opposition in the SpAD was unable at the time to prevent this concretization of the program for worker/immigrant defense, although they certainly tried, not by fighting openly but by the same method of back-corridor appeals they were to use two years later in the recent Germany fight. After going to ground, they resurfaced with powerful backing in the international. But it took quite a while for them to beat down opposition from within the SpAD. When in a February 1995 document Mary Ann Clemens dismissed the hostel defense as a “Potemkin village” and “fake mass work,” this called forth a storm of protest in the SpAD. The documents that were written then are quite revealing.

For example: WV 648 claims that the 1993 hostel defense was a “purely tokenistic” action “not one youth was recruited.” Let's see. In his document, “On the 30 January 1993 Defense Action” (15 March 1995), A. Hecht writes:

“Following the defense action we recruited, namely the first wave of youth, and the first new members whatsoever in two years: Daniel, who was directly involved with the action, Erik and Steffen. And the bad mood in the Berlin Local exec in November/December (threats to resign) didn't have so much to do with cadre maintenance as rather with political opposition to the youth perspective given by the International Conference. I think that a better-functioning leadership and a clearer perspective on our tasks have helped us to do much better with cadre maintenance than previously.”

But, of course, Hecht now says that at the time he wrote this he was “Norden's baby.” (Quite an image!) So let's take another witness. F. Petersen writes in his document, “Answer to an Answer on the Hostel Defense...” (26 March 1995):

“Additionally, we recruited Erik and Daniel with the hostel defense. And Michael and Friedrich to the youth...which, however, didn't exist yet. And Michael won over Steffen, whom we recruited to the party.”

But, of course, Petersen, denounced from the I.S. as “anti-International,” later renounced his documents of this period as well. So let's have a third testimony, from Clemens herself. In her document, “On the Hostel Defense Action of 30 January 1993 and our Orientation to Youth: A Response to Petersen and Hecht” (5 April 1995), she writes of her earlier attack on the action as “fake mass work”:

“It's so telescoped and in part incorrect that the impression necessarily arises of a rehabilitation of the underground opposition of the time. I find that repellent. In my depiction I also conflated two things: the struggle over the action and what this signified for the party (namely life or death); and how it is to be evaluated in the framework of our strategic tasks. The context in which the actions was undertaken, the fight for a turn toward youth recruitment, I failed to mention-because this was self-evident to me-distorting my depiction even more. Additionally we made individual important recruitments from it, in contrast to what I wrote....

“The organizing of the defense was an exemplary action, in the sense of the definition of exemplary work in the SL Transformation memorandum of 1971 (Marxist Bulletin No. 9). Naturally such work was and is inseparably linked to our orientation to youth; the action had nothing to do with fake mass work. It demonstrated that we can attract serious anti-fascist youth to our program and lead them. Similarly, the positive effects on the party's internal functioning cited by Petersen, in particular the introduction of a staff as a functioning team to guide our daily work, I would not question.”

So either they were lying then, or WV is lying now. Which is it? At least when all three SpAD leaders wrote last year that they did recruit out of the hostel defense action-as well as that the 1993 action was a matter of life or death for the party, and that as a result of it the party functioning improved-they listed names and concrete facts. Today, WV just asserts the opposite,

without a shred of evidence for its lying claim. Perhaps the new editors figured no one would remember the old documents.

While the resistance in the SpAD leadership at the beginning of 1993 was mainly through footdragging and diversions, a younger comrade most frankly expressed their underlying politics. In a letter against the hostel defense action, this comrade wrote, “We recruit, if we do it, on the basis of words, not on the basis of actions.” Norden, in a presentation to the SpAD CC on 24 January 1993 noted that behind this statement is a program of pure De Leonism, the product of which is an abstract propaganda group that does not intervene in the class struggle. He cited Trotsky's 1930 essay, “The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany,” in which the Bolshevik leader argued for united-front action against fascism:

“The more persistently, seriously, and thoughtfully – without the whining and boasting the workers so quickly tire of – we carry on this agitation, the more we propose serious measures for defense in every factory, in every working-class neighborhood and district, the less the danger that a fascist attack will take us by surprise, and the greater the certainty that such an attack will cement, rather than break the ranks of the workers.”

Arguing six decades ago against the sterile conception that counterposes recruitment by words to recruitment through actions, Trotsky wrote in another article: “The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantages of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions” (“Some Ideas on the Period and the Tasks of the Left Opposition,” July 1931).

Defense of immigrant workers against fascist attacks in Germany in 1993 was vital, burning and principled, just as is the fight for cops out of the unions in Brazil today. In abandoning the struggle to remove cops from the union in Volta Redonda and renouncing after the fact the 1993 Berlin hostel defense action, the ICL is turning its back on hard-won lessons of the workers movement, which are synthesized in the Trotskyist program which the Spartacist tendency has defended for more than three decades. The fight for the independence of the labor movement from the state and to mobilize the workers movement to smash fascist/racist attacks on the oppressed is not a paper program but are burning necessities of the class struggle. The words must be transformed into actions. As Goethe said, in a basic statement of materialism, “In the beginning was the deed.”

The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles

ICL: Waiting for “Better Times”

by Jan Norden

To cover its increasing tendency to passive propagandism and give a political justification for our expulsion, its break of fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica, and its flight from the battle being waged by the LQB/LM to remove cops from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union, the leadership of the International Communist League has gone back and labeled a whole series of interventions proposed by Norden and Stamberg as “get rich quick schemes.” And to justify their abstentionist line, the ICL leadership has a constant refrain about the reactionary nature of the period: “Failure to recognize the period we are in and the necessary relationship of our small revolutionary vanguard to the proletariat has generated disorientation, demoralization and appetites to look elsewhere for the 'answer',” writes WV No. 648 (5 July). What is the nature of the present period? The article states:

“In a period conditioned by the colossal defeats for the international proletariat signified by capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and across East Europe, this puts our small forces in a conjuncturally fragile situation.

“Across West Europe, the working class has fought back in some of the largest and most militant battles in years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or the program of proletarian revolution.”

This not only overstates the historic reformist “socialist” consciousness of the West European working masses, but by emphasizing exclusively the overall reactionary character of the period and qualifying the significance of the explosive mass labor struggles in Italy (1992 and 1994) and France (1993 and 1995), it represents a significant shift away from the line adopted by the International Executive Committee in January. The memorandum adopted by the IEC states:

“The ruling classes are on a ruthless offensive with precedent-setting attacks dictated by Maastricht, NAFTA and other rival trade blocs and which are equivalent to Thatcher's war on the British miners or Reagan's busting of the air traffic controllers strike. But this is also a period marked by convulsive battles of the working class in its own self-defense....

“It is a period of high stakes. The breakup of the once-hegemonic Stalinist parties creates an opening in which we could rapidly grow through intervention as fighting propaganda groups with a revolutionary Trotskyist program, and through exemplary actions. But we are not the only ones who seek to exploit the instability of the period. We will grow at the expense of our opponents, especially the centrists, or vice versa...

“Across West Europe, the working class has engaged in some of the largest and most militant battles in years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or program of socialist revolution. The most conscious militants still defiantly march under the red flag of revolution and sing the Internationale. But the mass is justifiably skeptical, thanks to the crimes of the Stalinists, Socialists, and their pseudo-Trotskyist tails who sold out the October Revolution and paved the way for the capitalist onslaught today.”

Compared with the excerpt from WV quoted earlier, the IEC memorandum sees a much more contradictory and unstable situation, with possibilities for intervention and rapid growth by a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group undertaking exemplary actions. But in its polemic justifying our expulsion, the ICL leadership sees a seamlessly reactionary period, with its own forces in a “fragile” state, and the only mention of exemplary actions is to retrospectively denounce the 1993 Berlin hostel defense.

In attempting to explain our expulsions, the WV states: “The party hadn't changed, nor had Norden particularly. What had changed was the world.” The article quotes parts of a letter to me by Joseph Seymour (24 April). I will quote a little more:

“Your political personality has not changed fundamentally over the years though you do seem to have become more impatient for organizational successes, especially where you are personally involved in the work. What has changed fundamentally is the world in which we live and function. And therein lies the crux of the problem.

“In the mid-1870s, Engels described Auguste Blanqui as 'a man of the pre-1848 era.' By this he meant that it was no longer possible for communists to ride the bourgeois-democratic revolution to power in West Europe. Instead communists were faced with the lengthy and often mundane task of building mass organizations of the working class, then in a largely atomized condition, in continental Europe.

“I would now describe you as a man of the pre-1991 era or, more accurately, as a man of the pre-1976 era. When I was in Germany last fall, I said to Max half jocularly: 'Norden is acting as if reunified Germany is Portugal in 1974-75.' The world of 'Mass Strike' and kindred groups is gone forever. I believe you do not accept that, beginning in the late 1970s, there has occurred a historic retrogression in the political consciousness of the working class and left internationally. This development both conditioned the counter-revolution in the Soviet bloc and has been reinforced by it.”

Leaving aside the crude psychologizing, I quote Seymour's letter in extenso because it is the most coherent expression of the outlook of the present ICL leadership. In a draft reply I was working on before we were deluged by the purge campaign (trial and expulsion of Socorro, escalating fight over Brazil, suspension and expulsion of Norden and Stamberg, “leave” and expulsion of Negrete), I noted that there likely were underlying differences in the ICL leadership on the question: “Thus on several occasions, as in your letter to me, you have tended to overstate the nature of the change in world conditions as concerns the prospects for revolutionary struggle.... Put briefly, I think that some comrades believe that this is a period of defeat, whereas in my view we are living in a period which was the result of a world-historic defeat for the working class, namely the destruction of the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated and

deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc; one which is currently marked by a bourgeois offensive against the working class, but is also a period of turbulent proletarian struggles that can pass from the defensive to the offensive. The key, as always, is the fight to forge a revolutionary leadership.”

And this is the nub of the question, for in his letter Seymour states succinctly the real perspectives of the ICL's International Secretariat today:

“Stop trying to get rich quick. It ain't that kind of period. And when things do change for the better, one thing is certain: it will still be a very different world than the one in which the Soviet Union and Stalinism existed. Meanwhile, our main task is to educate and train-at all levels-the relatively few young comrades we have to take advantage of better times in the future.”

Out of the destruction of the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states, the ICL leadership has drawn the defeatist conclusion that we have entered a bad period in which not much can be achieved. Hence those who perceive opportunities must ipso facto be opportunists, seeking openings for intervention is labeled pursuing “get rich quick schemes,” and when sharp class battles are posed (as in Germany at the height of the fascist attacks on immigrant hostels, or today in the fight for cops out of the union in Brazil) the I.S. denounces or abandons the struggle. Its analysis of the period is the handmaiden to an objectivist perspective and policy of passive propagandism. The ICL leadership sees its task as simply holding on to the program and waiting for “better times.”

There have been shadings of differences in discussions in the ICL on the nature of the period before, but this abstentionist outlook has really taken shape in the course of the recent fights. It is in good part the generalization of the lessons drawn from the Germany discussion, now applied to the entire ICL. Even at the January IEC, this tendency had not been consolidated. In the discussion on the tasks and perspectives memorandum there, I commented:

“The document is very good on the description of the period coming after the tremendous defeats for the working class represented by the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe. It says on the one hand it's a reactionary period, and it also is a period marked by convulsive battles by the working class in its own self-defense. I think that the French strike wave very dramatically showed that.

“It's conditioned by the defeat for the working class of historic proportions, but it is not simply defined as a period of defeat. For one thing, the outcome is not foreordained. And I thought that Jim's analogy with the period from 1929 through the late '30s was very apt, very much what I'd been thinking. The period following Hitler's coming to power in 1933 was also a period of tremendous defeats, as in Spain, in France and elsewhere. It was also one of struggles such as the Spanish Civil War, which ended in disaster with the bloody strangling of the proletarian revolution by the Stalinists in the name of the Popular Front.”

Yet when I said virtually the same thing at a recent I.S. meeting, this was denounced as deviant because in the 1930s the Soviet Union still existed. Yes, and so did the Moscow Trials and the strangling of the Spanish Revolution.

In his letter to me, Seymour refers to the “pre-1991 era.” But we are still in the imperialist epoch, defined by Lenin as the final stage of capitalist decay, an era of wars and revolutions. Within this epoch, there have been many periods, but none of extended duration. Seymour himself wrote the article demolishing the Mandel theory of a long post-war boom supposedly extending from 1945 into the 1970s. More recently, Mandel, in the 1994 debate with Seymour for the Spartacist League/U.S. and the ICL, objected to our characterization of the present period, saying:

“The Spartacists underestimate the gravity of the current long depressive wave of capitalism. They write, 'The present period is marked, above all, by the impact of the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the other deformed workers states of Eastern Europe.' This is wrong. The principal feature of the world situation is the worldwide offensive of capital against labor....

“There is nothing 'reformist' in recognizing that under such conditions the workers' struggles are mainly defensive ones, and revolutionary Marxists have to give priority to this, as Trotsky did in Germany from 1929 on. Like at that moment, what is on the immediate agenda today is not the struggle for revolutionary conquest of power by the workers, but the need to eliminate unemployment in a radical way in the West and the East and in a substantial way in the South.”

–Spartacist [English edition] No. 52, Autumn 1995

Mandel's perspective of a period of defensive workers struggles and the reformist utopia of “eliminating unemployment in a radical way” without a revolutionary conquest of power summed up his outlook.

In contrast, the article in Workers Vanguard (Nos. 591 and 592, 7 and 21 January 1994) that Mandel objected to, titled “Workers Struggle Across Europe,” focused on the thesis that in the present bourgeois offensive against the working class, defensive struggles can be transformed into an offensive against capital, through the fight for a transitional program for proletarian revolution and to build Trotskyist parties. Responding to an article in Le Monde which asked, “What is there in common between May 1968” and “this somnolent France of 1993, where ideologies no longer have a hold, where recession keeps up unemployment and strikes are at a record low?” we wrote:

“The working class is certainly on the defensive, but, hardly asleep, the Air France strike and its reverberations in workers struggles across Europe showed that the fighting mood of the masses can quickly change. Defensive struggles can rapidly go over to a challenge to the capitalists. Today the bourgeoisie proclaims the 'death of communism,' but in the 1950s they also declared the 'end of ideology,' and that didn't stop the outbreak of significant social struggles a few years later. What is key is the question of leadership....

“The job of revolutionaries is to pose the objective tasks and needs of the working class, not to reflect the limitations of the current or spontaneous consciousness of the working class. Only on this basis will the indispensable instrument of the revolutionary party be forged. This is not to say that small revolutionary groups can jump over their own heads, even in revolutionary situations, or make up through will power and healthy lungs for nonexistent roots in the working class. An insurrection cannot be mounted simply

because it is posed. But the programmatic tasks facing the working class do not change because the instrumentality is lacking or weak. The recent wave of class struggle in West Europe points to the potential for new situations like Belgium 1961 and France 1968. The key is to prepare for this by intervention in the class struggle to forge the revolutionary party.”

This certainly isn't the standpoint of the ICL leadership today, which in “a period conditioned by the colossal defeats for the international proletariat” can only see that this “puts our own small forces in a conjuncturely fragile situation” (WV 648); which in the face of a sharp class struggle in Brazil, led by comrades with real roots in the working class, decides that this poses “unacceptable risks” and exits the scene. This stands in flagrant contradiction to the above program for “intervention in the class struggle to forge the revolutionary party.” Does the ICL still uphold the article on workers struggles in Europe? Certainly not in practice.

Past Periods of Reaction

In any case, the length of the present reactionary period is not foreordained, and depends above all on the course of the class struggle. What about past periods of reaction? Seymour refers in his letter to the mid-1870s. This is the period after the defeat of the Paris Commune. In a conversation, Foster raised the same comparison. I objected that the situation today is strikingly different—indeed the comparison is instructive for the contrast with the present times. A book by Michelle Perrot, Workers on Strike: France 1871-1890 (1987) looked at statistics on labor struggles in that period. It showed that for the decade after 1871, the number of strikes picked up only gradually. Then, after a strike wave in 1880-82 leading to defeat, there was another sharp fall, followed by a period of recuperation. It was not until May Day 1890 that the first general strike was held. Emile Zola's book Germinal, recently made into an excellent film, dramatically portrays the difficulties of organizing workers' struggles in that period—much of his material came from the coal miners strike at Anzin in 1878. Zola showed how a lot of leftists opposed strikes with Proudhonist arguments and a despair born of defeat. It took two decades for the workers to recover from the impact of the defeat of the Commune. This is quite logical given the bloody massacre of upwards of 30,000 Communards which followed the conquering of Paris by Thiers' mercenary troops.

A comparison has also been made to Russia following the defeat of the 1905 Revolution. In the initial years, workers' struggles plummeted. Lenin cites statistics showing the number of strikers falling from 2.8 million in 1905 to 1.1 million in 1906, 740,000 in 1907 and barely 60,000 in 1909 and 50,000 in 1910, the darkest years of Black Hundreds reaction (V.I. Lenin, “Economic and Political Strikes” [May 1912]). Again, this reflects the fact that the Revolution was decisively militarily defeated. But already by 1911, the proletariat gradually went over to the offensive, and by 1912 the working class was waging sharp battles across Russia, particularly in response to the massacre of strikers in the Lena River gold fields, and Lenin was writing of “The Revolutionary Upswing” (June 1912). So even that period of very sharp reaction was relatively short-lived. By late 1914, antiwar sentiment was rife among the working class, and by 1917 the October Revolution was carried out. The decisive element was not the nature of the period but the course of the class struggle, and the role of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership.

Europe and particularly Germany after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution went through a lengthy period of reaction, lasting over two decades. Marx and Engels waged a sharp struggle

and eventually split the Communist League in opposition to those impressionists led by Willich who sought to produce a revolutionary uprising in Germany through sheer force of will. The founders of scientific socialism warned that the proletariat must go through “fifteen, twenty, perhaps even fifty years of war and civil war” to prepare itself to take power. It is worth asking on what basis they arrived at this prognosis. Marx and Engels spelled this out in their political-economic review which appeared in the final issue of the Neue Rheinische Revue (November 1850):

“With this general prosperity, in which the productive forces of bourgeois society develop as luxuriantly as is at all possible within bourgeois relationships, there can be no talk of a real revolution. Such a revolution is only possible in the periods when both these factors, the modern productive forces and the bourgeois forms of production, come in collision with each other.... A new revolution is possible only in consequence of a new crisis. It is, however, just as certain as this crisis.” (emphasis in original)

Marx' and Engels' prediction of no new revolution for a period of decades was based on the analysis that bourgeois society was undergoing a prolonged period of development of the productive forces. This did, in fact, take place under Louis Napoleon's Second Empire in France, whose fall led to the Paris Commune, and in Germany particularly under the impact of the Bismarckian unification of the country in the Second Reich. But to argue that we are facing such a period today would be a profound revision of the Leninist theory of imperialism.

Mandel, who actually did hold this revisionist view, justifying his policies of calling for “structural reforms” in the Belgian general strike of 1961 and during the French May 1968, tried to disguise this with his various theories about “late capitalism” and the like. In his debate with the ICL, Mandel's device was the fairy tale of a Kondratiev-style “long depressive wave of capitalism,” which he used to argue that Marxists would have to “give priority” to the fact that workers struggles would be “mainly defensive,” claiming that this was Trotsky's policy in Germany “from 1929 on.”

So what about the period from 1929 on? A major parallel between the present period and the 1930s is the fact that the earlier period was marked by the world-historic defeat for the proletariat of the German Nazis takeover of power in 1933, of which Trotsky wrote: “History has recorded no parallel catastrophe” (Transitional Program). He denounced the ultra-left adventurism of the so-called “Third Period” proclaimed by the bureaucratic centrists of the Stalinized Comintern in 1928 and coinciding with the onset of the a severe capitalist economic crisis (the Great Depression). Trotsky ridiculed the CI's claims of an ever-increasing “radicalization of the masses” as an “empty catechism, not the characterization of a process” (see “The 'Third Period' of the Comintern's Errors” [January 1930]). He subjected these claims to a rigorous analysis of French strike statistics and other indicators of the temper of the masses, criticizing the French CP leadership's fatuous description of the strikes as “offensive” where they were in fact defensive.

But Trotsky did not declare that workers' struggles would for a whole period be mainly defensive, as Mandel would have it, and certainly not in Germany. In fighting against the rising Nazi menace, he wrote: “A united-front policy with respect to the Social Democracy must be pursued in the very near future to render possible, on the basis of proletarian democratic representation, the creation of class organs of struggle, i.e., of workers' soviets” (“The Only Road,” September 1932). Already at the outset of this period, in 1928, Trotsky emphasized “the

explosive character of this new epoch, with its abrupt changes of the political flows and ebbs, with its constant spasmodic class struggle between Fascism and communism” (The Third International After Lenin). In the same work, he noted how in the early stages of the campaign against the Left Opposition, “Stalin set himself to accuse us of refusing to recognize stabilization. This accusation became particularly insistent in the period when the 'stabilization' already began to crack anew....” Trotsky and Cannon also pointed out how Bukharin and Lovestone, respectively, drew rightist conclusions as they were overawed by the strength of U.S. imperialism as it emerged newly hegemonic from World War I and the ebb of the post-war revolutionary wave.

Trotsky repeatedly emphasized that the so-called “stabilization” of the mid-1920s was not the result of objective economic causes so much as of the weakness of the subjective factor, that is, of revolutionary leadership. Moreover, by July 1931 he was writing: “The revolutionary tide is now indisputable.” This was in his article, “Some Ideas on the Period and the Tasks of the Left Opposition.” Members of the ICL would do well to reread this little essay. Trotsky emphasizes there that the weak forces of the revolutionary vanguard must focus on propaganda, but he does not counterpose that to participation in the struggles of the working class, as the I.S. leadership has done in Brazil. Trotsky wrote:

“Our strength at the given stage lies in a correct appreciation, in a Marxian conception, in a correct revolutionary prognosis. These qualities we must present first of all to the proletarian vanguard. We act in the first place as propagandists. We are too weak to attempt to give answers to all questions, to intervene in all the specific conflicts, to formulate everywhere and in all places the slogans and the replies of the Left Opposition.... I do not want in any way to say by this that we must stand aside from the real struggle of the working class, nothing of the sort. The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantages of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions and on these questions engage in combat without dispersing oneself in trifles and details. It is in this, it appears to me, that the fundamental role of the Left Opposition now lies.”

And what is more vital, more burning and more principled than the struggle for cops out of the unions, that is, on the fundamental question of the state? This is a battle that was encouraged by the ICL and taken up by the fraternal comrades of the LQB/LM; it was prepared by, and carried out in practice, programmatic points contained in the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Now, in the face of the ICL's ignominious flight from the struggle, it is our duty to see this fight through, for the important lessons it provides to the working class, not only in Brazil and elsewhere in South America but worldwide.

A U.S.-Centric View of the World

Seymour's conclusion, in his 24 April letter, that “our main task is to educate and train” the “relatively few young comrades” until “better times” come around in the future is not only objectivist, it is a profoundly U.S.-centered view of the world today. It is certainly true that in the U.S., where the class struggle is at a low ebb, recent experience indicates that the potential for recruitment will be of a “relatively few young comrades.” However, the situation is very different in Brazil, for example, where at the same time as Lula's PT has demonstrated its bankruptcy and turned sharply to the right, there is a wave of explosive peasant struggles, discontent is rife

within the working class over the government's IMF-dictated austerity policies, and there has been a proliferation of centrist groups in recent years. In South Africa, too, the experience of Mandela's ANC in power will likely produce disillusionment and also opposition in sectors of the working class – e.g., among the truckers of Turning Wheel or the recent wildcat miners' strike against Anglo-American-including in the Communist Party. And in Europe, there have been repeated outbursts of working-class and student-youth struggles against government-ordered cutbacks in recent years.

One need only recall the spectacle of Italian metal workers in the autumn of 1992 heaving bolts at their union leaders following the latter's betrayal in junking the scala mobile, a gain won in the “hot autumn” of workers struggles of 1969 which adjusted wages for the ravages of inflation. In 1994, under the pressure of the workers' discontent, and seeking to use this to put wind in the sails of a new popular front, the reformist union and party leaders (both PDS and RC) staged several one-day “general strikes.” These huge demonstrations eventually brought down the right-wing Berlusconi coalition with the fascists, and put in the Dini government, headed by the former governor of the Bank of Italy, which began implementing, with the reformists' cooperation, the assault on pensions and social services that Berlusconi had been unable to ram through. This is now continuing under the “Ulivo” center-left popular front of the former Christian Democrat Prodi. This turbulent process has put tremendous pressure on Rifondazione Comunista, which ran as part of the “progressive” popular front and has voted confidence in Prodi. The result has been a spate of contacts for the Lega Trotskista d'Italia in the last couple of years, and violent attacks by RC goons.

In France barely six months ago, there was the biggest explosion of workers' struggle since 1968, with six national union mobilizations in the space of a month. That came after the militant Air France workers' strike of 1993 and the mobilizations the following spring, including both student youth and tens of thousands of unionists, against attempts by Chirac & Co. to impose a sub-minimum wage for young workers. Of course, the French rail and public workers' strikes were sold out by the reformist union tops-with the fake-Trotskyists, who have now become incrustated in the middle (and even upper) ranks of the labor bureaucracy, running point for them. But the experience of the December 1995 strikes, with the daily assemblies, the workers' delegations to neighboring work sites, the mass marches-and the stunning betrayal by the reformists, who “knew how to end a strike”-will inevitably have an impact on a new generation of working-class militants. Libération (9-10 December 1995) commented: “After nine days of voting on the strike every morning in a general assembly, they have the sense of participating in a real 'workers democracy.' They seem more like Communards than strikers.”

These workers struggles have, one and all, been defensive struggles against the brutal offensive by capitalist rulers determined to do to West European unions what Reagan and Thatcher did to the U.S. and British labor movement in the 1980s, as the IEC memorandum pointed out. But the balance sheet hasn't simply been one of endless defeats. In some places, such as Russia, the impact of the counterrevolution has been so severe that not only have there been no significant labor struggles, the workers are hardly conscious of their existence as a class. Coal miners, who were the most solid core of the Soviet proletariat, today see themselves in many cases as petty entrepreneurs, demanding a better price for coal. But elsewhere, the impact of the bourgeois offensive has been more mixed.

In Germany, the bourgeoisie sought to buy social peace following capitalist reunification by pumping in hundreds of billions of D-marks into the “new federal states” to keep things quiet as they systematically dismantled East German industry, sent women workers back to the home, deported immigrant workers and fostered xenophobic fascist attacks. But even in the Fourth Reich of German imperialism, the working class has been far from quiescent. This spring and early summer they came out in the biggest union mobilizations since World War II—some 400,000 in Bonn on June 17—to protest the government's offensive against the “social state.” This follows several years in which there have been repeated metal workers', steel workers' and public workers' strikes, in both West and East, as well as mass demonstrations of youth against fascist attacks. The imperialist masters of reunified Germany cannot count on Burgfrieden (civil peace) at home as they pursue their aims of “uniting” Europe under their hegemony.

Defeats are not identical in their impact. The document of the second international conference of the ICL noted that the Soviet, East German and East European workers were not defeated militarily on the field of battle, but centrally because of the erosion of consciousness as a result of decades of Stalinist rule and perversion of Marxism. In a phone conversation at the end of April, after I noted that this was not a “period of defeat” but one opened by a historic defeat brought about not by destruction of the workers' organizations in battle but as a result of massive false consciousness in the proletariat, comrade Robertson remarked that a good formulation would be that “the destruction of the Soviet Union was seen as a defeat, but not as a working-class defeat.” This has consequences today. In 1989-90, East German workers were not smashed—they voted heavily for capitalist reunification, particularly for the Christian Democrats. They then felt cheated when Kohl's election promises of “blooming landscapes” didn't come true, and instead the former DDR was turned into a rusting junkyard. This produced an initial wave of anger, and also continuing pervasive ideological and political disorientation. Such a situation presents important openings for Trotskyist intervention on the terrain of class struggle and through propaganda explaining the contradiction between authentic Leninism, i.e., Trotskyism, and Stalinism.

WV 648 accuses me of “taking advantage” of language and my role in the International Secretariat to push the SpAD into “launching a campaign in 1991 to agitate for mass strikes. This posture of imminent 'mass resistance' negated the critical factor of consciousness which only a Leninist vanguard could produce.” In a fight over this policy at the time, a comparison was made to the Comintern's Sixth Congress (1928) pipedreams of ever-growing “radicalization” of the masses following defeats. I responded in a 25 October 1991 letter to the SpAD central committee:

“I certainly have not argued that there would be a period of 'radicalization' and offensive struggles in this period. On the contrary, I repeated[ly] emphasized the opposite, that the workers' struggles would be defensive in character. but that is very different from asserting that there would be no big struggles, at most skirmishes, and that it is an 'error' to think that 'the losers would make the turn to workers resistance.'...”

“Basically, what's being argued here is that in the period following counterrevolution, it is impossible for the working class to struggle successfully, and therefore to call for such struggles is to deceive the proletariat. This overarching conclusion is neither proven by materialist analysis nor borne out by history. Not all defeats are the same. Even after the

worst defeats, workers continue to fight rearguard actions. And it is not true that all such actions are doomed to failure.”

In fact, in the spring of 1991, there were a number of plant occupations by workers facing mass layoffs or shutdowns, mostly outside the control of the union bureaucrats imported from the West, and a series of weekly demonstrations of tens of thousands of workers in Leipzig, where we were directly counterposed to the SPD, with our bullhorns and banners calling for mass strikes, plant occupations and a fight for a workers government. The I.S. rejects this perspective, but offers no alternative program: this is no accident, for it considered workers' struggle under those conditions illusory.

Today as in 1991, the struggle against the bourgeois anti-working-class offensive requires a fight against the social democracy. The French December 1995 union mobilizations were led by the social-democratic FO labor federation. The reformists pose the struggle as defense of the welfare state, with heavy overlays of nationalism (summarized as a fight against “globalization,” when in fact the capitalist economy has been global from the beginnings of this century, with the dawn of the imperialist epoch). The social-democratic concept of the welfare state in one country, or even all of West Europe, is no more viable than the Stalinist myth of “socialism in one country,” or even in the Soviet bloc. If the capitalists back down on health care and pension cuts, they will respond by instituting a general wage cut through devaluation, or some other ploy, in order to become “competitive” in this “pre-war” period of increased interimperialist competition. Thus even defensive struggles against attacks on unions and social programs require a revolutionary leadership putting forward slogans to turn these battles into an offensive against the capitalist system and to build Trotskyist parties to lead the fight for international socialist revolution.

Although the post-1991 period was opened by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, a defeat of historic proportions for the world proletariat, it is not preordained to be simply a period of defeat, as many on the left have concluded—including evidently the leadership of the ICL. The virulently Stalinophobic left, such as the Cliffites in the English-speaking countries and the Morenoites in Latin America, hailed counterrevolution in the USSR and assumed that the demise of Stalinism would lead to their heyday. They shared this belief with the mainstream European social-democratic tops. When the bourgeoisie responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states by unleashing a broad attack on the welfare state, including going after the sinecures of the social-imperialist bureaucracy whose services were no longer crucial, these various brands of social democracy were thrown into crisis.

The struggles of the working class will initially be overwhelmingly defensive in character. The task of communists is to point the way forward to transforming them into a fight against the capitalist system, as outlined in the Transitional Program. This was anticipated in 1917 by Lenin in his article on “The Impending Catastrophe and How to Fight It,” which led programmatically straight to the conclusion of the need to fight for proletarian power, in the October Revolution. This was generalized in the theses on tactics of the Third Congress of the Communist International which formulated the concept of transitional demands to transcend the traditional separation of the “minimum” and “maximum” programs of social democracy, in which the socialist maximum program was reserved for Sunday speechifying. Communist parties “must extend and intensify every defensive struggle, transforming it into an attack on capitalist society,” the Third Congress theses stated. The central element in achieving that transformation

is building authentically communist, Trotskyist parties in the fight to reforge the Fourth International.

The WV 648 article on our expulsion claims: “In place of the Leninist party needed to bring revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat, Norden increasingly came to objectify certain political formations and layers-particularly in the former DDR and Latin America-as somehow inherently susceptible to revolutionary politics.” In the first place, there are particular layers and groupings that are susceptible to revolutionary politics, and in a reactionary period a communist party would certainly focus attention on them. In his article on “The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement,” written at a time when the civil rights movement was cracking the reactionary McCarthyite consensus of the 1950s in the U.S., James P. Cannon emphasized:

“The Negroes, more than any others in this country, have reason and right to be revolutionaries. An honest workers party of the new generation will recognize this revolutionary potential of the Negro struggle, and call for a fighting alliance of the Negro people and the labor movement in a common revolutionary struggle against the present social system.”

Unlike the laborite (and now scab) “Bolshevik Tendency,” which sneered at the Spartacist League's labor/black mobilizations to stop the KKK as “ghetto work,” the SL has always correctly seen the black question as key to workers revolution in the U.S. It has written of the need to build a “70 percent black party,” which today might be amplified to say a “70 percent black and Hispanic party,” although it has had little success in moving toward that goal-something that is worth analyzing.

The real story is not that I have put forward a series of “get rich quick” schemes, but rather that the I.S. has come to the view that in this period of defeat, there are no “layers or formations” that are particularly susceptible to intervention by the Trotskyists. Thus Seymour writes in his 24 April letter to me:

“In the case of PDS Communist Platform, you saw elements of communist consciousness where none such existed. In the case of Brazilian LM, I believe you refuse to recognize the wideness of the political gulf separating them from us. How could a group of this nature and history, originating and circumscribed within the Brazilian PT/CUT milieu in the 1980s, not have profound differences with us, including differences of which they and we are as yet unaware?”

In the case of the PDS' Communist Platform, the fact is that at the end of 1994/beginning of 1995, numbers of radical-minded youth were attracted to the KPF precisely because it was the object of a virulent red-baiting assault extending from Kohl to the SPD to the PDS leadership of Gysi/Bisky. The SpAD in fact published effective polemics against the KPF, and I polemicized against them in my Humboldt University speech, as well as against various of the “critical” SED currents who later gravitated to the KPF. The SpAD had a number of youth contacts in and around the KPF, both in Berlin and Halle. But for Seymour, and others in the I.S. who earlier strongly supported the Communist Platform work, it is now deemed impossible that there could be any people in or around the KPF interested in communist politics, some of whom could be won through polemical intervention and the test of class struggle to genuine communism (Trotskyism).

As for Luta Metalúrgica (now the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil), it is precisely in the nature of the period that a grouping of heavily minority workers originating in the tumultuous labor struggles at the end of the military dictatorship (not in the “PT/CUT milieu,” which came later) could be pushed to the left by events. The LM comrades first came together during the preparation of the mass, illegal 1984 steel strike, which was opposed by the reformist labor leadership. Nor was the 1988 strike (in which three workers were killed by the Military Police) particularly conducive to social-democratic politics. And the open embrace of sections of the bourgeoisie by PT caudillo Lula in the form of the Frente Brasil Popular posed the question of class collaboration point-blank, exposing the bankruptcy of the PT and also the centrists of the pseudo-Trotskyist Causa Operária group, which the LM comrades had joined thinking it was opposed to the popular front. They have moved steadily to the left, with the 1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations with the ICL marking a definite leap, but one rooted in their whole previous evolution.

In both Germany and Brazil, the I.S. has demonstrated an incapacity to recognize or deal with contradictions that provide an opening for Trotskyist intervention. What is more, in both cases, the ICL leadership has had to revise parts of its own history for factional reasons. Not only is it claimed that Luta Metalúrgica is labor-opportunist, the I.S. now renounces the Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and LM. Not only is the intervention directed at the Communist Platform declared opportunist, in the SpAD's reworked conference document any work directed at the PDS is essentially ruled out. Not only is the 1993 East Berlin immigrant workers hostel defense deemed “entirely tokenistic,” the whole perspective of recruiting youth through a labor-centered fight against fascist attacks on immigrants is labeled “yet another 'get rich quick' scheme” of Norden. Yet WV doesn't mention that this perspective, of recruiting anti-fascist youth in conjunction with defense of immigrants in Germany, was approved in a motion endorsed by the second international conference of the ICL.

The result of the I.S.' increasingly erratic behavior is a pattern of zigzags pointing toward centrism. Certainly its actions over Brazil, in first calling for a struggle over the cops and then fleeing from it as it got hot, claiming association with the work of the LQB/LM posed “unacceptable risks to the vanguard,” were a typical centrist policy-proclaiming fine principles and doing something else in practice. This scandalous flight from the class struggle and the ICL leadership's drawing of defeatist lessons from the destruction of the Soviet Union represent a strong and increasing tendency toward passive propagandism. Yet even as it hardens in this policy, as Trotsky wrote of the early stages of the bureaucratization of the Comintern, “Centrism is quite capable, it is true, of making big zigzags to the left but as the 'evolution' of Zinoviev has once again demonstrated, it is utterly incapable of conducting a revolutionary line in the least systematic” (The Third International After Lenin). Though in a very different situation, this judgement is applicable to the course embarked on by the ICL leadership today.

Reply to a Frame-Up “Trial”

by Jan Norden and Marjorie Stamberg

7 June 1996

In a “Call for a Trial” dated 31 May 1996 and delivered at 23:45 that night, the International Secretariat charges comrade Norden with “defiant and categorical denial of a fundamental condition of membership, that the party has a monopoly over the public political activity (i.e. not personal activity) of its members.” The “same identical charges” are brought against comrade Stamberg. These charges are false: neither of us has ever asserted any such thing, and all of our public political activity in 24 years in the party has been in accordance with Leninist democratic centralism. Starting with its initial false premise, the I.S. proceeds to spin out an entire fantasy of groundless assumptions, wild conjectures and filthy smears culminating in the outrageous slander that “the consequences of Norden's and Stamberg's indiscipline” – which does not exist – “could be extremely injurious to the party's work and its comrades,” and on that basis of speculation based on suppositions based on lies, it calls for our expulsion from the ICL. This is a frame-up.

Included in the catalogue of phony charges are:

- Norden supposedly being “caught in an act of indiscipline” for speaking on the phone with another IEC member, Negrete;
- charging Norden with “failure to declare a faction and instead take his opposition underground,” even though pages of I.S. and IEC motions are attached to the charges condemning his positions and a motion was passed by the I.S. explicitly to limit the circulation of documents by us;
- accusing Stamberg and Norden of a “de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership” over the course of eight months, even though we have continued to play central roles in putting out Workers Vanguard and numerous other party activities;
- insidiously concocting “hefty suspicions” of “political collaboration with non-members”; and
- slanderously speculating about an “outside source of political funding.”

Withdrawal from membership, going underground, political collaboration with and even political funding by outside sources, seeking to wreck the party's work and set up comrades for injury – every one of these charges is false to the core. They are in total contradiction with our entire political history of over three decades of struggle in the cause of revolution and our years of proudly fighting to build the Spartacist tendency and ICL. Does the I.S. expect anyone to believe these charges?

A Fishing Expedition

The only true fact in the whole list of charges contained in the “Call” is that we refused to hand over our phone bills when these were demanded on 30 May. What is the sudden interest in these bills now? It can only be to see the numbers called, and thus to identify the persons (i.e., comrades) we have spoken with. This is a classic fishing expedition aimed at stifling inner-party discussion. Far from denying the party's right to a monopoly of public political activity by its members, we protested that there is no legitimate party interest in this information, that we have done nothing against the rules of our party, and this demand to turn over what amounts to a list of comrades we have talked with was raised solely because of our internal political differences.

We have engaged in no public political activity outside the control of the party. As for communication among comrades, this is protected by the statutes of the SL/U.S., which stipulate that “material exchanged entirely privately between SL/U.S. members, i.e., between individuals or within a tendency or faction” may not be demanded by the Control Commission (CCC). Now these charges against us redefine this key point in the statutes to claim that since Norden and Stamberg “denied and continue to deny vehemently that they are members of any faction” ... “Therefore their communications with Negrete or any other members of the ICL are not protected by confidentiality.” This throws our party rules out the window and opens the door to rampant bureaucratic intimidation.

According to the charges, “The fact that comrades Norden and Stamberg have not submitted any phone bills for eight months indicates that for some time they have not considered themselves to be subordinate to party discipline.” Later they claim that not having submitted these bills constituted “a de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership”! This is monstrous. Since when is turning over your phone bills a standard of membership? Is every member of the ICL or the SL/U.S. or its Central Committee required to turn in their phone bills monthly, or else be deemed no longer members? Of course not! So why are we required to do so? Because we have disagreed with positions taken by the Political Bureau and I.S. That is the only reason for this unheard-of measure.

Since this would be an all-too obvious reprisal, now a story is invented to justify why we in particular must turn in our phone bills. It is alleged that there was an “existing arrangement” whereby Norden, like other members of leadership bodies, submitted “bills for payment of political/organizational calls” made from our apartment. There is an important sleight-of-hand here, for never was there an arrangement that all “political/organizational” calls from our home phone would be paid; rather, we were reimbursed for those calls made carrying out organizational assignments. These alone were submitted to the party for reimbursement. We never asked the party to pay for personal calls, including those to comrades that were not directly connected to specific assignments. If there was a different practice with other comrades, we were never aware of it.

Why were org calls not submitted for payment in recent months? The charges coyly ask, “did Norden unilaterally suspend his political responsibilities...or was he engaged in secret correspondence to be kept hidden from the party?” This cynical question is designed to get around the fact, which the I.S. knows full well, that Norden didn't “unilaterally suspend his political responsibilities,” but rather he was removed from them. Following the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting, Norden was removed step by step from operational responsibility for the work in areas which he previously oversaw. This was immediately true for everything concerning Germany except work on Spartakist; Brosius took over phone contact with the SpAD. On Mexico, Richard D. was as-

signed to maintain regular communication with the GEM. This can be verified simply by looking at the reports and fax traffic. On Brazil, Norden supervised the trip by Negrete and Adam in August 1995, but after that communication with Brazil was handled through other comrades.

This culminated in the January 1996 IEC meeting, where Norden was removed from full IEC membership; thereafter he was no longer responsible for any particular area of work in the I.S., and hence there were no org calls to present for reimbursement. So first Norden is removed from his assignments; then, when he doesn't have the same expenses to submit, this is deemed evidence of an eight-month conspiracy to (a) unilaterally withdraw from membership; (b) go underground; (c) collaborate with non-party members; (d) have someone else pay the bill! How grotesque!

Committee “Discipline”

There is another significant “redefinition” of party statutes contained in the charges against us, namely the introduction, for the first time in the history of the Spartacist tendency, of committee discipline. The charges reproduce a motion passed at the I.S. meeting of 17 April criticizing Norden for not immediately reporting a call from Negrete while an I.S. delegation was in Mexico, ostensibly to aid the discussion of the GEM over “a dispute between the I.S. and Negrete over our work in Brazil” (letter of Parks, 8 April), but actually to purge him and Socorro from leading roles in the work of the Mexican section. Now the charges against us claim that “The above motion indicates that Norden was recently caught in an act of indiscipline which undermined the I.S. and the work of the ICL.” So it is now “indiscipline” for Norden, a member of the I.S., to speak with a member of the IEC, a body on which Norden had served as a full member for almost two decades and was still an alternate, after being punitively deprived of his decisive vote on the committee at the January IEC for refusing to agree with the utterly false line on the work in Germany.

How can one IECer talking with another IECer be a breach of discipline? Not only are communications “between individuals or within a tendency or faction” protected by confidentiality (according to Article VII, Section 6 of the SL/U.S. statutes), but Article VI, Section 7 of the statutes states explicitly:

“There is no such thing as a special discipline of higher bodies. While it is preferable, for example, that the CC have an opportunity to discuss new questions first, members of the CC are not prohibited from discussing disputed questions with other party members or communicating information to them.”

This provision of our statutes is no minor matter, being the product of the experience of the Revolutionary Tendency in the SWP where RTers opposed the concept of “committee discipline” and were bureaucratically prohibited from discussing differences with youth members. Now this same bureaucratic procedure is being introduced into the ICL, in order to ex post facto declare Norden guilty of breaking discipline for talking with another leading member of the international. For some documentation on this question of “committee discipline” see Spartacist Nos. 38-39 (Summer 1986) which reprints three letters by James P. Cannon under the title, “Don't Strangle the Party.”

Party Membership Called a “Charade”

It's particularly ludicrous for the charges to claim, "It would appear that when Norden (and Stamberg) stopped submitting these [telephone] bills it was a de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership, and that since that time, their nominal membership, which they took full advantage of, was a charade." Some "withdrawal from membership"! Does the I.S. think that being editor of Workers Vanguard was a "charade"? Norden continued to edit WV up to the day he was bureaucratically removed as editor after 23 years in the job. Not only that, even after the January IEC, Norden heavily participated in formulating policy for the ICL's work in Brazil, including producing the final version of a major I.S. letter to Luta Metalúrgica laying out our differences over their practice relating to key questions of the party and state. On 25 May, in the midst of the recent uproar, he wrote a seven-page letter with a detailed critique of and suggestions for the draft Mexico article for Espartaco.

In addition, Norden contributed to the last issue of Spartakist with a lengthy and detailed letter on the comrades' approach to the DGB union tops' "Bundnis fur Arbeit" (Alliance for Jobs) and labor struggles in the present period, raising criticisms which were shared by other members of the I.S. He also wrote a major contribution criticizing the reworked "Tasks and Perspectives" section of the SpAD conference document for lacking any concrete perspectives and for taking a policy of ignoring the PDS. Of course, this was characterized in an I.S. motion as "permanent factionalism." Evidently, active participation in the life of the organization counts as the work of genuine (as opposed to supposedly "nominal") members only when it does not involve disagreement.

The same is true in the case of Stamberg. In addition to being a long-time alternate member of the SL/U.S. Central Committee, public spokesman for the SL and member of the WV editorial board, Stamberg initiated and for several years led the ICL's beginning work in South Africa. It was at her initiative and in response to her written proposal in April 1995 that the Johannesburg station was set up. During the last eight months, while she was allegedly being a "nominal" member and going "underground," in fact she was writing major policy documents on South Africa, including correcting misformulations over the "power sharing" Mandela/De Klerk regime, and earlier this year reorienting the station over the question of how to fight neo-apartheid in the schools in South Africa, which is not a simple reproduction of the Jim Crow American South but requires a struggle for permanent revolution. Most recently, Stamberg wrote the South Africa lead article in WV No. 646 (24 May), and at the moment she was suspended she was at the computer in the office working on an article in defense of imprisoned Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu. But according to the I.S. charges, this party work was just a "charade."

While we have faithfully and loyally carried out our party assignments, virtually everything has been dealt with by the I.S. and PB in factional terms. The latest case was a document against our proposal to run a lead article on the upcoming Russian elections in WV No. 647. In April, Stamberg was removed as de facto managing editor, a role she had filled for the last decade and a half, by the formal appointment of comrade Bishop to this position. The purpose was, as stated by several speakers in the PB discussion, to get "control of the paper." Yet as pointed out in the countermotion by Norden against his removal from the Political Bureau and as WV editor, while he has been in charge of the paper it has always been the organ of and expressed the positions of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the SL/U.S. and of the leading bodies of the international, bodies of which he has been a member. But now all that has been "rectified."

The Night of 29 May

The charges abound in utterly false statements. Thus under the heading of “Background,” it is claimed that on 29 May, the day after the motion was passed to poll the IEC to remove him from the I.S., “comrade Norden was caught photocopying material from the party files of the International Secretariat.” Nonsense. Norden went into the I.S. office in full view of everyone, looked through the “Yesterday” folder, asked for the “Today” folder, selected a few items relating to the current fight and walked down the hall to the xerox machine to copy them, as he was entitled to do. Among these items were the motions passed by the I.S., which he had not been given a copy of. He then returned these documents, handing them to Richard D. Two and a half hours later, we received a call at home from Parks saying that Norden had “no right” to copy that material, and if she heard of this happening again, his keys to the floor would be taken. An hour after that a team was outside our apartment demanding all our keys and party equipment in our possession.

The portrayal of the events of the “evening” of 29 May in the charges is thoroughly dishonest. First, they do not mention that we received a phone call at 23:22 p.m. from comrade Brown, who announced that he would ring our buzzer “in two minutes” to demand to be let in to seize the computer and our keys. Exactly two minutes later to the second, as Norden was on the phone to the office asking for confirmation of this outrageous measure, Brown—who was in charge of the five-man repossession squad—rang the buzzer. Meanwhile, Norden was speaking to Parks, who said that this was a decision of the I.S. and PB. When asked why, she said because Norden had allegedly been copying material that he had “no business copying.” Norden replied that he was still a member of the I.S., to which Parks said, “Polls are in, you are off the I.S.” and also removed from the PB. When Norden asked repeatedly if there had been a meeting of the I.S. to confirm the poll, as required by our norms, she replied “no.” When Norden responded, “Therefore it is not valid,” Parks dropped this excuse and declared that the privilege of having keys was being denied “because you are untrustworthy” and “you have no loyalty to this party.”

The charges state that Norden “protested that this was a bureaucratic abuse,” which he certainly did. But the claim that Norden “particularly heatedly denied that the party had any right to retrieve keys to party offices from him,” is a flat lie. He repeatedly and clearly stated that he objected not to the party's right to party property, but to the decision to take it back for no justifiable reason. When Parks declared “it's our property,” he replied that he “did not question for one minute” that it was party property. “What I am objecting to is this decision.” What Norden “particularly heatedly denied” was the vicious, lying charge of “disloyalty.” When he angrily stated, “I object to this procedure. I have done nothing that is disloyal, and I have done nothing that in any way contravenes the norms and rules of our party,” Parks replied haughtily: “You can object all you want. All you need to do is turn over our keys and our equipment.”

According to the charges, “Norden then said that he would put the party's computer and fax machine 'on the sidewalk' in 30 minutes and that if comrade E. Brown or Collins were still there then he would turn his keys over to them.” In fact, early in the call with Parks Norden said he would bring the equipment and keys down to the street, to which Parks replied, “Okay, that's fine.” The second time he said “I will be down in half an hour, and possibly before, with the computer, and the fax machine, and our keys.” When Parks kept yelling, he repeated, “I will get them down there as soon as humanly possible.”

At times, the charges descend to the level of utter absurdity. Thus at one point, it is stated that “since the party has repossessed its fax machine from comrade Norden it is revealed that only Mexico City and Berlin were programmed as his 'one-touch' fast dial keys.” What startling revelations this research has produced! Of course, to any reasonable person, this would seem only logical since Norden was responsible for work in Latin America and Germany. Actually, although we can't verify this since we no longer have the machine, we recall that there was a third “fast dial” key-to the C.O. in New York.

Outright Slander

From untruths in small things as well as big, the I.S. charges escalate to dirty smears, vile innuendo, baseless speculation and wild flights of fantasy in classic witchhunting style. It is claimed that “the outright refusal by comrades Norden and Stamberg to turn over the phone bills can only reasonably be understood as a ploy to shield them from exposure of other acts of freelancing and political activity outside and perhaps against the direction of the I.S. over a protracted period beginning in September 1995.” Freelancing? How – by talking with other comrades?! But this is only the jumping-off point for the escalating slanderous accusations.

The charges declare that refusal to turn in our phone bills raises “hefty suspicions” of “political collaboration with non-members.” Taking this fiction as fact, the charges then go on to ask, “And who was paying the bill? Do they have some outside source of political funding?” The technique is all too familiar. On top of this insidious attempt to smear us as collaborating with sinister unknown outside forces, we get this gem of the frame-up genre: “It is enlightening to ponder the possible extent of comrade Norden's undirected reach in the eight months he took his political activity underground. A reasonable projection can be made through careful examination of the previous year through documentation provided by the treasury.”

Whatever ponderings, musings, conjecture and groundless speculation the I.S. has become capable of, this is a set of formal charges proposing the expulsion of comrades. The documentation from the treasury will show no evidence of collusion with forces outside the ICL, nor can anything else for the simple reason that there has been none on our part, ever! Moreover, we have paid every penny of our phone bills ourselves, except for those organizational calls reimbursed by the party. We resent the despicable attempt to question our loyalty, to smear us as collaborating with and even being funded by an “outside source.” We do not need to prove our loyalty, because we have always been disciplined and loyal to the Spartacist tendency.

The dirty accusations keep piling up. The charges state: “In view of their escalating opposition to the I.S. and particularly over our extremely sensitive relations with our fraternal Brazilian comrades, the consequences of Norden's and Stamberg's indiscipline could be extremely injurious to the party's work and its comrades.” What is this supposed to mean, that we are setting up comrades for injury and repression?! It is on the basis of this vile statement that our expulsion is called for. The charge is totally without foundation in fact and is but the “projection” of the fevered imaginations of the authors of the charges. Norden has stated before, and we repeat here again, that neither of us have had any independent communication with Brazil whatsoever. We have energetically sought to advance the ICL's relations with our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica, seeking political clarity while defending them against threats emanating from the bourgeois state and its agents. There were no acts of indiscipline, and we have done nothing to injure the party's work or our

comrades. On the contrary, we have done everything we can to defend them. We repeat: this is a frame-up, pure and simple.

Norden has outlined the course of the ICL's relations with Luta Metalúrgica and refuted various false claims about those relations in two documents (17 April and 5 May) on the subject. The latest blow-up came over his "Comments on Draft Letter to LQB/LM" (24 May), in which he particularly objected to the draft's accusing LM of seeking "union sinecures and positions of privilege" on the basis of no evidence, and asked to change a formulation in the draft which uncritically repeated the claims of a provocateur in league with the cops concerning a reputed arrangement for the LM spokesman to serve as paid advisor to the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers union. Norden also objected to the categorical statement by Parks that we should not "set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again," and while endorsing the removal of the ICL rep from V.R. in the face of the threat of imminent police repression, he argued it "could be urgently necessary to send someone else to Brazil to aid in defense efforts," rather than staying out "until this matter is resolved," as the draft letter stated.

This is what produced Parks' outrageous statement that Norden was "cop-baiting" the ICL, that he was on a "wrecking operation against his party," supposedly staging "a filthy, dirty provocation against the party," and allegedly trying to "engineer a split with LM against the ICL." It is Norden's criticisms, in a document submitted to the I.S. containing his solicited comments on a series of points raised in an unsent draft letter, that precipitated his removal from the I.S., PB and WV editor!

A Political Purge

The call for the expulsion of Norden and Stamberg for supposed indiscipline is the culmination of a push to drive us out of the party for supposed hostility (repeatedly cited in the charges) and disloyalty (as stated by Parks in her 29 May phone call with Norden and implied throughout the charges). That this is a political purge is made clear from the "particularly relevant motions from recent IEC and I.S. meetings" against Norden and Stamberg which are appended to the charges. These document how Norden has been removed from one post after another, first from full membership in the IEC, now from the I.S., the PB and as editor of Workers Vanguard. Even here the charges resort to distortions, listing endless votes with Emilio opposed, whereas in two instances (on 17 April and 28 May) he presented counterposed motions, which are not deemed "relevant" enough to reproduce.

As this drive has shifted into high gear, motions have been supplemented by attempts to provoke us. Just look at the time sequence in the latest episode. On the evening of 28 May there were back-to-back meetings of the International Secretariat and Political Bureau held to set in motion the removal of Norden from the I.S. and PB and to oust him as editor, declaring him "unworthy of being a member" of the ICL. Both at that meeting and at an earlier NY local meeting there were choruses of demands that we "get out" of the party. The next night (29 May), using the pretext that Norden had copied relevant materials about the fight, a team shows up demanding, on two minutes notice, our keys and party equipment. These were turned over. Later that night, at 1:10 a.m., we received another call, this time from comrade Meyers, the new editor of WV, instructing Norden not to turn up at the office before 4. Why not? No reason was given. Then, when the late-night visit by the hefty repo squad didn't produce a refusal to comply, or

perhaps inspection of the fax machine and computer didn't yield the hoped-for results, we are presented with the demand for our phone bills.

One of the themes in this purge campaign has been howls of outrage over “Norden's failure to declare a faction” (from the “Call for a Trial”). Prior to the 11 May I.S. meeting, a draft motion declared an “undeclared faction of four (Negrete, Socorro, Stamberg, and Norden) identified by their opposition (abstention in the case of Norden) to the motions and decisions voted for by the GEM and the I.S.” When objections were raised to this (see Norden's 10 May document “On the Invention of 'Undeclared Factions’”), this was changed to officially declaring the four to be a “declared group,” without factional rights, of course. Since no one had requested factional rights, this was unexceptionable—except that now in the charges calling for our expulsion, the confidentiality of communication between individual members of the party is declared only applicable to factions or tendencies (and not to individual members, as stated in the party statutes). In other words, if we had acceded to the enormous pressure to declare a faction, we would not be up on charges, but since we refused, we are fair game. This is, of course, a hoax. If the telephone bill ploy didn't work, some other pretext would have been found.

So why this push to force Norden and Stamberg to declare a faction, and why have we refused to do so? In the year-long fight over Germany and now again in the much faster-paced fight over Mexico (which totaled less than two weeks from the beginning to the removal of Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership) and Brazil, all opposition to the line of the I.S. was labeled “anti-internationalist” and fundamentally deviant on the party question. We replied that the Germany dispute was a false fight to find a Stalinophilic deviation, that the alleged facts, analysis and conclusions bore no resemblance to reality. Defenders of the I.S. and IEC line declared that if we thought that, then we must believe that they are bureaucratic witchhunters. Evidently they have set out to prove this over Mexico and Brazil.

We have sought not to leap to premature conclusions over these fights. Norden initially abstained on the Mexico motions because he wanted to hear the tapes of the GEM meeting and see the evidence for the charges of “anti-internationalism.” Having done so, he declared at the I.S. of 11 May that he would now vote against the Mexico motions. At the same time, in several documents and in interventions before the I.S., Norden made clear that he had differences in the past with Negrete, over Mexico and the Brazil work, and laid out what those differences were. Negrete, in turn, voted with the majority against Norden's positions on the work in Germany at the January IEC. It is obvious from this alone that there is no “faction” – declared or not – of a “gang of four.” Yes, there have been some common positions, notably against the purge in the Mexican leadership and to uphold the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica, now called into question by the I.S. motion of 11 May. But by itself this is not a sufficient basis for the declaration of a faction or tendency, which requires a common platform or document.

By upping the pressure on and going after perceived “internal opponents” and trying to force the declaration of a faction, the I.S. clearly has sought to make a preventive strike. The result has been to create a poisonous atmosphere in the party. Thus in the NY local meeting of 14 May, comrade Paul C. – arguing that “the four” must be a faction – quoted the phrase, “If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck.” He was apparently unaware that this was the infamous witchhunting test proposed by Walter Reuther to ferret out Communists in the UAW. Underlying the right to form internal political groupings within the party is the intention of aiding in clarifying party discussion. But seeking to identify which

comrades are talking to each other through examining phone bills and trying to prematurely provoke the formation of factional groupings where there is insufficient political basis for them only results in obscuring political discussion.

With the cascading removals of comrades from leadership bodies, involuntary placing on leave (twice in two months in the case of Negrete), a trial, expulsion (leading to great mirth in the last I.S. meeting that the “gang of four” had been reduced to a “gang of three”), and now suspensions aiming at expulsion, there has not been adequate time for far-reaching discussions.

Ironically, the I.S. motion of 28 May accuses Norden of pursuing “an escalating hostile 'regime fight'” against Parks, whereas in fact there has been a concerted drive to remove him from the leadership of the ICL and now both of us from the membership. In recent months, we have been called Stalinophilic, Castroite, Shachtmanite, Pabloite of the second mobilization, accused of running a Healyite regime, with a touch of Loganism, like the BT, like Hansen, and partly like Goldman-Morrow and Cochran-Clarke. Oh yes, and also believers in Saddam Hussein's war propaganda. To be all that at once is quite a feat. This string of invective, including various mutually contradictory accusations, makes it clear that what we have here is not a serious attempt at political debate but rather a serious attempt at vilification. Norden's several documents on Germany and Brazil have for the most part not been answered, and instead dismissed as “voluminous” (which is at least in considerable contradiction to the charge of having gone “underground”).

So what does this supposed “regime fight” consist of? Over the recent period, and particularly in the past several weeks, the I.S. has taken a series of measures breaking sharply with our Spartacist traditions and norms of internal debate governed by Leninist democratic centralism and instead imposing increasing restrictions and reprisals.

At the meeting of the International Executive Committee last January, after he was overwhelmingly defeated in a vote falsely charging the work in Germany directed toward the Communist Platform of being “Stalinophilic” and no less falsely accusing him of running an internal witchhunt against perceived opponents of this work (of which there were neither, no witchhunt and no opponents of the work at the time), Norden was “reduced” from full IEC member, which he had been since the 1970s, to alternate by a poll of the IEC. This was explicitly presented as an innovation on past Spartacist practice, according to which such changes in the composition of the ICL's leading executive body should be accomplished by an international conference which elects the body, except under extreme circumstances. Norden voted against this. Now this precedent has been used again, first to poll the IEC to drop Negrete from full IEC to alt and then, when he objected, to remove him from the IEC altogether.

More recently, over the Mexico fight, Stamberg spoke strongly in I.S. and New York local meetings in opposition to the removal of Negrete and Socorro from the leadership of the GEM and the characterization of their “regime” as “anti-internationalist.” She wrote a document (8 May) pointing out that these charges had been demonstrated to be false, and criticizing the scandalously loose use of facts by comrade Kidder, who headed the ICL delegation to the mid-April GEM meeting. Stamberg's document was condemned by one of the motions attached to the I.S. charges against us.

On 11 May, the I.S. voted a motion declaring that since the “group” of four was not a declared faction, it had no factional rights-fair enough-and therefore “the majority of comrades

on the I.S.” would decide what documentation is circulated internationally, particularly over the fight about “Negrete's regime in the Mexican section” and “disputes over our approach to Luta Metalúrgica.” In the discussion at that meeting, I.S. Secretary Parks stated: “No we're not going to circulate your documents.... You can write them all you want. You can even mail them to people if you like. It's not any kind of official party discussion-won't be translated. That's what we're saying.” And this body, what Parks calls the “new I.S.,” accuses us of “going underground”!!

On 21 May, a meeting of the I.S. was held to determine which documents concerning “Mexico I.S./IEC Discussion” should be circulated in an international mailing. Norden objected in a letter to the I.S. that 11 documents concerning the trial of Socorro had not been included, and that this selection of documentation left out significant aspects relevant for the comrades' information. He wrote: “In particular, by not including these items, comrades would not be informed of (1) the protest by Negrete against the trial call by the GEM executive committee and his demand that he be placed on trial as well; (2) the objection by Socorro that the trial was moved up by six days, and that instead of the required seven days notice of the trial date she was given only four days; (3) the counterposed motions about the trial at the I.S. meeting of 9 May, which set the trial for 12 May; (4) the discussion about defense counsels in party trials; and (5) Socorro's statement of 15 May on her remarks at the NYC local meeting.” At the meeting, the I.S. voted to include seven of those items in the mailing, while dismissing others as irrelevant or worthless.

So following the “innovations” of (a) removing comrades from the IEC for political grounds, and (b) deliberately restricting the circulation of documents from comrades declared by the I.S. to be a “group,” we now have the additional changes to Spartacist norms contained in the charges against us, namely (c) communications between individual members are not protected by confidentiality, and (d) the introduction of “committee discipline” incumbent on the I.S., even concerning communications with a member of the IEC, which is a higher body of the international. These latter two changes are explicitly contrary to the statutes of the SL/U.S. All of them go significantly in the direction of bureaucratization of internal party life.

The Trial of Socorro

The trial of Socorro was a real eye-opener to events underway in the ICL. The charges-that she had allegedly lost touch with her team for two hours during the huge Mexico May Day march (with hundreds of thousands of participants), that she had her companion Negrete carry her camera bag although he had been placed on leave, and that she had given her phone number to an ex-member-would hardly be the stuff for a party trial. Socorro contested all the facts. The normal course would have been to name a commission of inquiry to investigate. Instead the GEM exec brought charges against her on 7 May of conspiring to violate discipline. She was to be put on trial before the GEM membership eleven days hence. Socorro and Negrete vociferously objected, including that since the membership included only one more comrade than attends the exec which charged her, this could hardly be a fair trial. So on one day's notice, without there being a vote by the I.S., the trial was switched to New York (where Socorro and Negrete were moving) and moved up by six days.

When the I.S. met on 9 May to officially set up the trial (now three days away, with Socorro and Negrete still not arrived in New York), Norden put forward a counter-motion for a

commission of inquiry, pointing out that it would be almost impossible for the accused to adequately prepare her defense. He also proposed that she be allowed to have a defense counsel, as she requested and was originally dismissed by Parks, noting precedents in Soviet Russia under Lenin. When the motion for a trial was passed, Norden requested that the trial body postpone the proceedings for one week in accordance with the SL/U.S. statutes and to allow her time to prepare.

We observed the trial itself which could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered fair. We are well aware of and defend the distinctions between our Bolshevik norms of justice and the Anglo-Saxon juridical system of the U.S. The presumption of our traditions is that all parties to the proceedings are seeking the truth. But this was not the case in the trial of Socorro. The defense was not allowed to make a statement to the court, only to answer questions and to submit questions to be posed to other witnesses. It was so egregious that at one point, when a witness had misunderstood whom the question was coming from, it was put to her again by the prosecution and she changed her answer.

Most striking was the behavior of the trial body, which included all members of the CCC resident in New York as well as Richard D. Not only was Socorro not allowed to present her case, the trial body itself refused to ask obvious questions of the two witnesses from the GEM exec about several statements during the trial which confirmed her version of events. The verdict's stipulation of 18 weeks' reduction to candidacy might be taken as not very severe, but she was outrageously and falsely found guilty of committing a "willful breach of discipline" and "a deliberate provocation" against the party. It is inconceivable that such a trial would have taken place over comparable charges in any setting other than the present factional frenzy. The "trial" was clearly meant to send a lesson to the membership as a whole.

At the New York local meeting two days after the trial, there was a report and discussion on the trial. Stamberg described it as a "travesty" and said it was a continuation of the campaign to oust the Mexican leadership. Norden said the trial should never have taken place, that it was not a fair trial and the verdict was false. During the course of the heated discussion, Socorro made an unconscionable and false remark, comparing the trial to that of some men who had abducted her and raped her several years ago, saying they had gotten more justice from a bourgeois court than she had gotten from this trial, and calling it a kangaroo court. Later that night the Political Bureau was polled on a motion to expel Socorro for her statement. Norden voted for that motion, as did Stamberg later when the CC was polled. Such a statement is not compatible with membership in the party, and Socorro must take responsibility for it, even though she retracted those remarks in a letter to the comrades the next day. At the same time, this enraged outburst was obviously related to the extreme pressure that she had unnecessarily been placed under, particularly considering her diagnosed medical problems stemming from her earlier traumatic experience. And her outburst did not alter one iota the unfair nature of the trial.

Now we have another impending "trial." Under the present circumstances, with frame-up charges based on a bureaucratic rewriting of our party rules, with this clearly intended as the dramatic culmination of the political fight that has gone on over the last several months, with a trial body consisting of a subset of the comrades who brought the charges, and with the recent example of the trial of Socorro in which any defense was totally hamstrung, we see no point in lending credence to this bureaucratic purge trial by our presence. This is not a legitimate party

judicial proceeding but a farce-we protest and reject it as Leninists. We remain true to the Trotskyist program and practices of the Spartacist tendency which are now being trampled on.

Communist greetings,

Jan Norden
Marjorie Stamberg

7 June 1996

No to the Purge of Norden and Stamberg!

by Negrete
7 June 1996

The following was mainly written before I was informed late this afternoon that, due to the statement by Norden and Stamberg that they would not attend their “trial,” a meeting of the Political Bureau will be held tonight instead. I have read the “Reply to a Frame-Up ‘Trial’” by Norden and Stamberg, which B. has faxed to me for translation. The thrust of my letter stands despite the change in procedure. The International Secretariat should withdraw its disgraceful frame-up charges, and the SL/U.S. PB should immediately reinstate these comrades as full members and restore them to the posts to which they were duly elected. All ICL comrades must struggle to put an end to the anti-Leninist methods which are damaging our party.

* * *

Comrades:

I am writing this because of the urgent situation in our international party. In light of this urgency, the fact that I have again been placed on leave – despite my request not to be – is no obstacle to the party circulating this letter for discussion.

I have learned of the upcoming trial of Norden and Stamberg, and have spoken to Norden, who informed me of the charges against him and comrade Stamberg. These charges make a point of referring to “calls with Negrete” as well as to supposed “indiscipline” on Norden's part for “not reporting” a call with me when the I.S. delegation was in Mexico. Are discussions between party members – including between members of the ICL's highest elected bodies – now to be screened, and “unauthorized” ones forbidden? I also consider it highly significant that this new trial is the immediate aftermath of another sharp exchange on the Brazil work, in which the I.S. secretary made a new round of incorrect and damaging statements – including the assertion that we should never set foot in Volta Redonda again, and that all “economically viable” members of Luta Metalúrgica should leave VR. When challenged, she sought to shield herself behind slanders of “cop-baiting,” wrecking, potentially putting comrades in danger, etc. Now the formal charges against Norden and Stamberg include smears such as possible receipt of outside funding and political collaboration with unknown outside forces. I reject these slanders with disgust, noting that Norden's and Stamberg's 24 years of service to our movement are the most powerful evidence against these smears.

Enough! Trotsky taught us to call things by their right names. The so-called “Brazil/Mexico discussion,” also officially called the “fight against Negrete and Socorro,” was based on a series of outright fabrications and lies. In the course of this, young comrades were grotesquely taught that they were “anti-internationalists” if they did not accept falsehoods because a list of important people told them to, and that they would be capitulators to Latin American nationalism and caudilloism, as well as cliquists and splitters, if they continued to speak out about what they knew to be the truth. This can only undermine real internationalism and eventually lead to a genuinely nationalist, anti-Leninist reaction.

The involuntary “leave” I was put on in Mexico was an explicit attempt to silence me and cut me off from the Mexican comrades. The false charges against Socorro were a continuation of the drive to defame us and destroy our credibility with the comrades. That drive culminated in a purge which threw us out of the Mexico office, precipitously threw us out of the country, and has now excluded me from all aspects of this work. Even repeated requests to be allowed to translate materials for the Brazil defense work are ignored (even though I am one of the very few comrades able to translate Portuguese)! The purge continued with another dangerous innovation: throwing me off the IEC, to which I was elected by the 1992 international conference. Then we had a further escalation—the “trial” of Socorro, a sick and shameful travesty of elementary Leninist justice. Gross political distortions and character assassination can only harm our party. And now we have yet another trial, with charges that put forward grotesque slanders, and the name for this is: a frame-up.

The present campaign, driven by elements of the central leadership, has seriously damaged work in Mexico and Brazil, inculcated methods counterposed to elementary Leninist practices, whipped up a hate-filled climate in the party, punitively threw comrades off leading bodies to which they were duly elected, and now pushes to expel the editor of the ICL's flagship publication (Norden) and a comrade who has played central roles in party work for decades (Stamberg). While the hysterical charge was made that an “undeclared faction” was engaged in a “wrecking operation” in the party, the real damage is being caused by this irrational, dishonest, expensive and destructive campaign.

The Norden/Stamberg trial, scheduled for tomorrow morning, represents yet another major step-up in the frenzied campaign of the recent period. I intend to write detailed documents on the avalanche of false statements in the Brazil/Mexico discussion, as well as on the “Socorro trial.” Yet having gone through these events, it is my immediate responsibility to make these observations, relevant to the new trial.

To the organizers of this frame-up: Be advised that I will not cooperate or collaborate with it in any way. The SL/U.S. Central Control Commission thoroughly discredited itself by its disgraceful, flagrantly unfair behavior in the Socorro “trial.” The International Secretariat is discrediting itself by its repeated use of slander and punitive measures in the place of the honest, angular political discussion needed to hammer out the party's urgent tasks. If you demand that I “testify,” write depositions or turn over materials for this frame-up trial, I will not comply. Moreover, I state clearly that it is the duty of all Spartacist comrades to oppose the escalating purge and to struggle as Leninists against this drive, which is accompanied by a series of political mistakes and, as the experience of the past weeks makes clear, points in the direction of the bureaucratization of the party.

A Chain of Willful Fabrications

Having gone through the “Brazil/Mexico fight,” I can state categorically that the current campaign involves a chain of willful fabrications. The fight blew up when Camila and I had questions about significantly inaccurate statements on Brazil in an I.S. mailing cover letter. At the same time as some of these statements were then explicitly corrected, a story was fabricated that I had behaved as a “sexist bully” towards Camila (which Camila herself denied was true) and browbeaten her into posing the questions she put in writing. When witnesses said and wrote that this is not what happened, not only was the content of what they said ignored, but they were

smearred as cliquists, personalists and anti-internationalists.* At the same time as requests by Socorro and myself for a formal investigation of the charge were rejected out of hand, the lie was not only repeated but inflated into a supposed pattern.

The “discussion” then leapt to a series of assertions that I had tried (with Norden's backing) to stop or derail discussion and fights in Brazil over the cops, the courts, Marxist education, youth work, propaganda, etc. Not only was it documented in each case that these assertions were false, and that I sought to push these discussions, but in most cases I actually started them. Despite copious documentation (which I can cite to any comrade who wishes to investigate this), these false assertions are now repeated as unquestionable “truth,” and served as stepping stones to new areas of the frame-up campaign.

In mid-April, an I.S. delegation was sent to Mexico, ostensibly to pursue the Brazil discussion as well as to combat the imaginary threat of a “split against the international.” Rather than discussing Brazil, the delegation whipped together a series of allegations about the Mexican section in order to present an entirely new accusation: that the evil Negrete and Socorro (with that mastermind of evil, Norden, in the background) had led the section into an adaptation to Latin American nationalism, caudilloism and an anti-internationalist split perspective. On the round, several young members spoke to oppose the charge of nationalism, to characterize the delegation's statements as inaccurate, grotesque, personalist, etc. But by the end of the meeting only Socorro and I voted against the delegation's main motion (while three youth members abstained). Why? Because members were fed the line that if they insisted on saying that they knew the picture was untrue, then they were counterposing themselves to the international and defying the authority of a list of members of the I.S., IEC, etc. If you want an example of genuine unprincipled browbeating, you have it right there. While some leading members soon began yelling that we would not be allowed to “drag this discussion out,” the fact is that the “discussion” of these ridiculous accusations on Mexico lasted less than one day before culminating in sweeping, incorrect motions and punitive measures.

Once again the grossly distorted picture was backed up by a series of demonstrably false statements. Yet each falsehood, once it collapsed, gave way to a new one. It was false that the IEC memorandum was not translated, that it was not distributed, that it was not discussed, that it was discussed only once. It was false that the Germany fight was covered up, that it was discussed only once, that it was discussed very briefly, etc. The treasurer and H. both stated it was false that I had yelled at the treasurer about my SP. It was false that the fight in France, the fight in Italy, the “unlimited general strike,” the fight with Y. Rad, the fight over Quebec, etc., were not discussed, that discussions did not occur in meetings, that materials were not translated (dozens were), etc. It was false and absurd to state that I cited “cultural differences” as an argument for building a different, non-Leninist type of party in the Third World. The statement that the “Negrete regime” did not tolerate debate or criticism is as patently false as the idea that the section was anti-internationalist, when it is well known that, despite its tiny size, the GEM was in the front ranks of a series of international campaigns.

* I have been informed that when GEM comrade S. went to Eugene, P. confirmed again that he was present throughout the discussions when Camila returned from Brazil, and that my version was accurate.

It was false that Arturo's notorious "Multivac" document was not circulated, was not sent to New York, was not discussed formally by the GEM, that it was discussed formally only once by the GEM, etc. It was false that he was denied the standard ability to conduct internal contact sessions, that he was called a Maoist (in fact it was reading entire texts out loud in classes that was first called a "Maoist practice," and that was subsequently withdrawn), etc. It was false that there were no Cannon books in the Mexico office, as Parks claimed at the 17 April I.S. meeting. The discussion of "Negretnesque attitudes" was totally distorted and taken out of context. It was slanderously false that Socorro abused her post as office manager (note that Parks' 16 November 1995 report on her Mexico trip cited Socorro's "critical work" as office manager as an example of good functioning). And so forth. It was totally false-as everybody who visited Mexico knows – that there was a poisonous atmosphere in the section, squelching the development and education of young comrades, particularly women. Again, Parks' report on her "tour of inspection" last fall states the exact opposite.

The above is only a sample of the false statements piled one on top of the other in that fight. Yet a number of well-meaning comrades have urged that all these "details" be overlooked in favor of the "big picture." But first of all, the rules of the Fourth International tell us to "be true in little things as in big ones." And secondly, in this case the "big picture" is made up of a lot of "little" lies and fabrications, which keep getting bigger.

The Trial of Socorro

This pattern was escalated with the Socorro trial, held on 12 May. I want to go into this because it gives a picture of what party disciplinary proceedings have recently become. While I do not have access to the depositions and tapes from the trial, I do have extensive notes and a vivid recollection of this outrageous event.

The political accusations against Socorro and myself, and the conclusions drawn from them, were not holding up – from the allegation that I had blocked discussion of the cops and courts and opposed Marxist education in Brazil, to the flash flood of statements about suppressing documents, abusing posts, isolating the section and fostering anti-internationalism in Mexico. This "big picture" kept shifting like a kaleidoscope precisely because each allegation or "hypothesis" failed the most basic tests cited from Lenin (rather than "taking somebody's word," calmly examine the documents) and Trotsky (base yourself not on "psychological divinations" but on objective verification).

Given the pattern of making, and then tacitly vacating, political accusations; given the trouble with getting everyone to swallow the ridiculous picture of the Mexican group as an anti-internationalist caudillo-ridden "boot camp"; given that the two leading Mexican comrades had initially opposed key statements regarding the "regime"; that several Mexico youth members had denounced accusations sprung on the section at the 14 April meeting and three had abstained on the final vote – given all this, the trial makes a kind of sense. The ground was to shift to disciplinary action. The objective was not to find facts but to build a "case." In line with that, the trial body itself never posed a single question that was not part of the prosecution's case. Everything that went against this case was ignored or dismissed. In this sordid procedure, the "prosecution" and the trial body broke the organization's rules, acted in a brazenly unfair way, and based themselves on bald-faced, proven lies.

The trial was set in motion when a false report that Socorro had violated discipline and security on May Day was presented by Camila. When Socorro found out about this on 2 May, her request to attend the exec point scheduled to discuss this was flatly denied. The two leading members of the exec then refused to read her written statement on the events before voting for a motion against her based on the false report. During the trial, Arturo testified that this was because of being “eager” to get the situation over with. When Socorro insisted that the allegations were false, she was put on trial.

To my knowledge, the only other trials in our tendency's history were those of the brutal wife-beater S. Green and the vicious psychopath Logan. Socorro was supposedly put on trial for insisting – with first-hand knowledge by witnesses to back her up – that it was false that she had willfully become separated from the sales team she was linked with (at a march of a quarter million people traversing a long stretch of central Mexico City), that she had argued with Camila over the phone and that she had sought to set up a meeting with an ex-member. Other false accusations were later added, and she was denounced because she asked me to carry her bag at May Day when I had been placed on “leave” (against my will). While Socorro was put on trial for asserting that she told the truth about May Day, I was not put on trial despite the fact that I asserted exactly the same thing and demanded to be put on trial with her.

The body formally pressing charges against Socorro was the executive committee of the Grupo Espartaquista de México. The body initially scheduled to try Socorro was the GEM membership-yet all but one of the members of the GEM sat on the exec which brought the charges against Socorro in the first place! When Socorro objected to this, the venue of the trial was simply abruptly moved to New York. When I pointed out to Arturo that this would preclude her being able to question most of the witnesses, he yelled “You don't understand this is a fucking political question and a fight!” In other words, the “trial” was admittedly a continuation, in juridical guise, of the “political question” of what was called the “fight against Negrete and Socorro.” In this context, it is noteworthy that, while Parks' 16 November 1995 Mexico report had stated that the GEM functioned like a “good old-fashioned Spartacist League local,” by the 14 April meeting Arturo was declaring: “Negrete represents the old school, which we want to combat and destroy.”

When the trial venue was moved, the trial date was changed in a way that blatantly violated the SL/U.S. organizational rules, which state that the accused shall be given seven days' written notice of the trial date and charges (in order to be able to prepare). The new trial date was four days and one hour after we were notified of that date; we received notice one hour before Wednesday, 8 May. Since in the course of Socorro struggling to be allowed to have me as her counsel, we had just been told to consult party bulletins as well as historical sources, on Wednesday evening we went to the Mexico office largely to do so. We were abruptly thrown out, with no justification whatsoever. On Thursday we traveled for ten hours from Mexico to New York, arriving just before 3 a.m. Friday. On Saturday we attended a grueling nine-hour I.S. meeting focusing heavily on our supposed crimes in the Brazil and Mexico work. On Sunday there was the nine-hour trial (videotaped over Socorro's objections). On Tuesday there was the heated New York local meeting.

Representatives of the trial body were told of Socorro's documented medical condition (post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD, a condition repeatedly referred to in WV articles on Geronimo Pratt], caused by being abducted, raped and having her life repeatedly threatened,

which led to a trial several years ago whose preliminary stages she had to attend). We noted that this condition, together with the need for preparation time, were powerful reasons to grant Socorro's formal request that the trial be postponed. Yet this request was flatly denied-even a one-hour postponement was refused!

Depositions from witnesses in Mexico were solicited by the prosecution without the defense having the opportunity to pose crucial questions. When we asked to do so in writing, our entire series of questions for those eight witnesses was thrown out by the trial body, at the same time as it continued to solicit depositions for the prosecution even while the trial was going on. Throughout the proceedings, this body acted with undisguised bias against the defendant, brazenly leading the two prosecution witnesses, who dutifully said "yes" to ever-wilder assertions regarding Socorro's supposed actions and motivations. Close to half the defense questions for these two witnesses were squelched. With bald-faced lying and repeated self-contradictions from their witnesses, the prosecution/trial body finally cut the process short, pulling the second of their witnesses off the stand.

As a last-ditch effort, the prosecution/trial body whipped up the pure fabrication that there was a secret "signal" (nodding the head) that meant "leave the Angel Monument," and that Socorro willfully disobeyed this signal. Yet there was no such agreed-upon signal! Moreover, Arturo's written deposition made no mention of such a signal, instead reporting that he had instructed C. to tell Socorro the team was leaving the monument (which all accounts, including César's written deposition, agree he did not do). C.'s second statement, solicited by phone towards the end of the trial to prop up this weak reed of the prosecution's "case," was thoroughly confused and did anything but confirm this tawdry after-the-fact invention.

Written depositions and oral testimony clearly showed that, rather than abandoning the sales team led by Arturo, she was left at the Angel Monument without being informed, and then the team failed to wait at the Red Tubes building as arranged. Upon finding nobody waiting at the Red Tubes checkpoint, Socorro called in to the office, and testimony by the witnesses from the GEM exec at the trial stated that Arturo had been informed that Socorro had called in and been instructed to proceed to the next checkpoint (the Hemiciclo). Why did the trial body not pursue this point, which gives the lie yet again to the claim that Socorro was AWOL for two hours? Far from refusing to follow the instruction to proceed from the Red Tubes-which Arturo's team had left shortly after arriving there, despite the arrangement to wait-to the Hemiciclo, she did so forthwith, arriving there with a number of other comrades.

Far from disappearing for two hours, Socorro was seen and greeted along the march route during that period by a whole series of comrades, including members of Arturo's sales team. Far from hiding the fact that she had seen the Morenoite Enrique, Socorro reported it to Arturo, and Arturo as well as other leading members had seen him themselves; in fact Arturo said there was no problem.

Far from having me present in defiance of instructions, my presence at the march was known to Arturo and Camila from the beginning. Moreover, at the Hemiciclo Arturo explicitly told Socorro and me to proceed alone to the Zócalo-in doing so we were following instructions, not breaking them. Even the GEM motion passed after the events, while criticizing after the fact the duration of my presence, states "Negrete could certainly go to the demonstration." (Moreover, the trial verdict characterizes the 2 May GEM exec motions as "correct.")

Far from seeking to meet with the ex-member P. – who she and I were instrumental in having dropped after he went AWOL for weeks – she told him she was too busy and asked him to speak to Arturo, which he did. And so it went with all the allegations. The fact was that P. had been with the party throughout May Day; he was at the office before the march, sold during the march, returned to the office afterwards and talked with many comrades, including the leadership. Yet again, the trial body never followed this up in its questioning. To portray things as if Socorro was trying to set up a secret meeting with him is simply absurd. Regarding the phone call with Camila: in its verdict the trial body simply “takes Camila's version” as true – without ever mentioning that I was present next to Socorro during that phone call and upheld her version.

The real evidence showed Socorro was telling the truth. This included information in written depositions by H. (“We underscored that it would be safer if she was somewhat independent”), V., C. and Arturo himself, as well as the fact that B., Ca. and others (including I. and I., members of Arturo's brigade) saw Socorro along the march route between the Angel and the Hemiciclo. In the teeth of the evidence, the trial verdict cynically asserts the opposite of the truth on every point. At the same time it invents out of the whole cloth the statement that Socorro engaged in “ruses” in order to carry out supposed “plans” to carry out the supposed crime of...having me present at May Day. That this is a chain of fabrications will be proved again, ten times over, as soon as one of the weaker links breaks and one or more of the fabricators decide to spill the beans.

That the formal sentence at her trial was to reduce Socorro to candidate for 18 weeks (one for each year of membership) was in fact a ploy: this supposedly made the whole travesty “all right,” nothing to get upset about, even trivial – a line of argument remarkable for its cynicism, particularly in light of the great amount of energy, time and money spent on this violation of elementary Leninist justice. The damage was done – and not just to Socorro (who was expelled a day later when, after being pushed beyond endurance, she made an angry and highly incorrect comment which she soon withdrew in writing). Above all, the damage was done to the party itself.

For comrades who were not present at the 11 May I.S. meeting, the 12 May trial and the 14 May New York local meeting, a flavor of the atmosphere can be had through a small sample of some remarks. At the I.S. meeting, a member of and reporter for the I.S. delegation to Mexico screamed at Socorro: “You hate the party's iron boot on your neck!” Iron boot? Another comrade, arguing for the existence of this “faction,” quoted the famous McCarthy-era adage that “if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck.” F. from Washington ranted that Socorro was a nationalist from “Aztlán” and race-baited me as a white Quetzalcóatl teaching the Indians what to do. [Etc.] Listen to the tapes and ask yourself if this was a rational, communist political discussion.

In her role as prosecutor at the trial, Spencer went red in the face screaming invective against the defendant and me. (She displayed a particular obsession with calling me Socorro's “burro,” a term bizarrely reproduced in the verdict itself.) While waiting for the final verdict, we asked Spencer where the trial body was. Her answer was “They're out digging your grave.” Spencer then “justified” this as “feeding your paranoia.” At the New York local meeting two days later, discussion was punctuated with hate-filled screams of “shut up” and “get out.”

No, Socorro's trial was not a trivial event. It was not just a bad taste left in your mouth that will eventually go away. That it was part of the escalation of an irrational vendetta is shown for all to see by the staging of another trial in less than a month.

What Is Real Loyalty to the Party?

There is little to say to those who are self-conscious fabricators and liars; they know who they are in any case, and some even boast of it. To those who go along with these events or wish to overlook them, it is imperative that they stop and think. I know that some comrades are aware that what is happening is wrong, or have serious doubts, but are going along with it anyway. This is a disservice to the party and to yourselves as revolutionary militants; it can lead only to cynicism and demoralization. Moreover, as has already been shown, those who are pushing this drive will demand more of you than passive acceptance; you will be asked to show your "100 percent agreement" through active participation in this dirty campaign. Comrades: the methods of dishonesty, character assassination and toadying are counterposed to the basic tenets of Leninism and to the rules of the Fourth International as stated in the Transitional Program reproduced on the back of the SL/U.S. membership card. Only the truth is revolutionary.

At the trial of Socorro, the prosecution made lengthy speeches (one posturing peroration lasted 18 minutes), while the accused was repeatedly shut up and denied the chance to make a statement. Yet after the shameful "verdict" was read, Socorro made a courageous and powerful statement insisting that she had not broken discipline and that she had told the truth, as a Leninist. Her statement ended with a quotation from a speech by James P. Cannon. (The speech is "Internationalism and the SWP," which was previously misused by Kidder in the most absurd way to argue that in a party fight...facts don't matter!) Cannon notes:

"In his appeal to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, Trotsky said: 'That party member who changes his opinion at command is a scoundrel.' He meant by that that such a member is disloyal to the party; because the least the party can expect from the most inexperienced, the newest rank-and-file member is that he be honest with the party, tell the party honestly what he thinks, and not change his opinion when he gets the command from this or that leader, or this or that committee...."

He stresses that while abiding by revolutionary discipline,

"No one should change his mind because authority tells him to. That is not the mark of a revolutionist.... Trotsky said that a Bolshevik is not only a disciplined man but also an independent thinking man, who will raise his point of view again and again, until either he convinces the party he is right, or the party convinces him that he is wrong."

The hysterical campaign underway within the organization is counterposed to this tradition of Trotsky and Cannon upon which our organization is based. This campaign has brought repeated violations, by the frame-up organizers, of the basic rules of Leninist democratic centralism. It is counterposed to the construction of the healthy revolutionary party, based on the ICL's program, that the world's proletariat and oppressed so desperately require.

It is time to call a halt, and for each comrade to think about where these events are leading. It is not for nothing that Marxist Bulletin No. 3 (Part II) begins with this quotation from comrade Trotsky:

“Each compromise with the revolutionary conscience prepares a greater compromise on the morrow, and therefore renders it more difficult to break away.”

Loyalty to our international party means breaking away from the false methods used in this frame-up campaign, so as to adhere to and push forward the revolutionary program of Trotskyism that our tendency has advanced over the course of more than three decades. For these reasons, I state again that it is my duty as a communist to refuse to comply, collaborate or cooperate with this frame-up trial and that I call on all those who are devoted to the principles upon which our party was built to oppose these destructive, anti-Leninist methods.

Down with frame-ups and witchhunting methods!

For the communism of Lenin and Trotsky, long live the ICL!

Negrete

[Translation]

LQB Reply to ICL Letter Breaking Fraternal Relations

Volta Redonda, 4 July 1996

To the International Communist League

Comrades,

After receiving the 17 June 1996 letter signed by Parks, breaking Fraternal Relations between the ICL and the LQB [Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, formerly Luta Metalúrgica], the comrades of our organization were in a state of shock. The disloyal break came like a lightning bolt out of a clear blue sky. Now we are analyzing and studying the situation. When Cirrus handed the letter to comrade R., on the 18th, she did so without saying a single word, and he only learned of its content on his way back to Volta Redonda. This not only goes against our hopes of a Trotskyist fusion with the ICL, but, as the ICL representatives were fully aware, the day you cut off relations was one day before the union assembly called to separate the municipal guardas [police] from the municipal union! Everything indicates that the ICL did this in such a hurry because it wanted to cut any association with the LQB before that meeting. It is still hard for us to believe that you have done this, but we must face reality squarely.

Yet this shock did not cause an irresponsible and desperate short circuit. We were obliged to keep a cool head, particularly in the current situation of hard-fought struggle to separate the municipal guardas from the municipal workers union (SFPMVR).

This struggle is even harder-fought now, since the bourgeois courts have suspended Geraldo from his post as president of the union, due to his struggle for the separation of the guardas. This suspension was carried out by request of the pro-police faction [in the union] led by Artur Fernandes, using as a pretext the cost of the 11 April bulletin with the excellent article by Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" whose 10,000-copy press run exceeded the 3,000 copies normally distributed by the union.

Comrades, we went over your 11 and 17 June letters again and observed that they were written as if our campaign to separate the police from the union were non-existent. The ICL encouraged this struggle and we took it on. Now you pretend that it is not even happening. In the days before the letter of 17 June we spoke with ICL representatives about this struggle and Arturo said we should leave the union, a position which we unanimously rejected.

Eight days after delivering the letter breaking relations, Cirrus asked I. what he thought of the 17 June letter. He answered: "We think that the breaking of Fraternal Relations is a grave error which will harm the cause of the international working class." We would add, also in his words (as he wrote in his 1 July report): "for us the breaking of fraternal relations ONE DAY BEFORE THE MEETING TO THROW THE GUARDAS OUT OF THE UNION is an act of cowardice, and we feel stabbed in the back."

It was necessary to have in-depth, on-going discussions about whatever differences existed, in order to arrive at a principled fusion, without allowing these discussions, however tense they might have been, to lead to hysteria or precipitous actions by either side. We of the LQB thought we were fighting together with you to reforge the Fourth International. The ICL dealt a heavy blow to that task when it broke relations; when we protest against that blow, this is part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International.

Before the 17 June letter, there was a series of important advances in the Fraternal Relations (as recorded in several prior letters). Thus we thought we were on the road to a fusion. We were very proud and hopeful to have established fraternal relations with an international organization with the heritage of James P. Cannon, Richard Fraser (who formulated revolutionary integrationism) and fighters like Martha Phillips. This was a victory against the petty-bourgeois nationalism, prejudice, belief in the myth of Brazilian “racial democracy,” male chauvinism and popular-frontism of organizations like Causa Operária, the T-POR [Loraites], LBI/PBCI, Morenoites and others.

We also believed that the hard-fought political struggle for the disaffiliation of the municipal guardas from the SFPMVR would bring our organizations closer together, on the road to fusion.

But now you have abandoned us, without a discussion, without the possibility of a debate over this break, since it is presented as a fait accompli. “We are radical and we don't turn back,” Cirrus told M.C. on the telephone a day after the 19 June meeting. But what you did was not “radical” at all. It was running away from the class struggle on the question of the police-a question which has importance for the entire working class, not only in Brazil but throughout the world, since in a very concrete way it shows the need for total independence from the bourgeois state, the struggle for the revolutionary political independence of the working class, as well as a class-struggle fight against the oppression of blacks and other oppressed groups. We are sure that proletarian revolutionaries like Cannon would have condemned the type of cowardly abandonment that you have now carried out.

In his discussion with us, the ICL's Arturo brandished his sword as a scholar of Latin American Trotskyism, saying the fraternal relations between the ICL and the LQB were a precipitous product of Abrão's and Norden's search for success, since only “syndicalism and nationalism” are to be found in Latin America. It seems Arturo used this sword to help cut fraternal relations. In Latin America, pseudo-leftist, populist and reformist rhetoric have been dominant, serving as a kind of opiate to conceal the oppression and exploitation of the masses. The ICL could advance politically in the world, including this continent, only by putting into practice its revolutionary and internationalist discourse. This is the opposite of breaking fraternal relations in the midst of the bitter struggle for the separation of the police from the SFPMVR. This behavior may remain indelibly in the memory of the international working class, and cannot be covered over by self-justifying rhetoric from an organization that says it wants to forge the vanguard of the international working class.

Surely Menshevik organizations like the LBI/PBCI, CO, the PSTU [Morenoites], the Loraites, centrists around the world, the “Bolshevik Tendency” and other opportunist anti-Spartacist groups will try to exploit the ICL's flight for their own objectives, seeking to discredit the genuine Trotskyist program. It seems Causa Operária already knows about the break carried out by the ICL, since two days ago a CO member tried to talk to comrade J., asking if it was true

that the LQB and Spartacists are no longer together. It is regrettable that the ICL's shameful action has helped these popular-frontists, who seek to sow confusion and opportunism. We must also ask: What impact will this have on those who, after serious discussions, joined the international campaign for "Police, Hands off the SFPMVR"? You speak of the "trade-union opportunism" of the LQB (as if we were a group of union bureaucrats, when in reality we have been under heavy fire from the bourgeoisie and their agents for months because we fight for Marxist principles) and its non-Bolshevik practices. But these statements will not go beyond liquidationism when you have abandoned the struggle on the question of the guardas and have broken the effort which we jointly undertook to forge a Trotskyist party. That, comrades, is not a Bolshevik practice. The Marxist struggle of the LQB speaks louder than rhetoric. Everyone knows what it means to struggle politically to throw the Brazilian police out of the unions. "Trade-union opportunists" occupy themselves with tasks that involve greater rewards and fewer dangers.

In your previous letter, dated 11 June, Parks wrote that Norden and Abrão wanted to destroy the LQB's Fraternal Relations with the ICL. Then on 17 June, six days later, you wrote to break the Fraternal Relations!!

All ICL members should ask: Why were relations broken on that day? The answer is to be found not only in the content of the 17 June letter but also in the declarations which the ICL representatives made to us during meetings on 15 and 16 June. They repeatedly talked about the union meeting planned for 19 June. They said that we had to abandon the work in the SFPMVR, and that is the meaning of what you wrote in the motion of 5 June and subsequent letters. ICL representative Arturo said we were "putting in danger" the LQB, the union itself and the ICL's possibilities in Brazil. He spoke of the danger of a "bloodbath," the possibility of a "confrontation," etc., etc.

But the reality is that there was no bloodbath on the day of the union assembly called to disaffiliate the guardas. The meeting was carefully prepared. We fought to increase the ranks' consciousness of this question-which has been strengthened even further now that the workers observed how the guardas harassed union meetings and acted as strikebreakers during the 21 June general strike. On 13 June a union conference was held, to which delegates had been elected on the slogan (among others) of disaffiliating the cops. The SFPMVR received the support of other unions and thousands of union leaflets have been distributed weekly, to keep working-class public opinion alert. (Now the expense for printing leaflets has been used by Artur Fernandes' pelego [sell-out bureaucrat] faction to get the bourgeois "justice" system to suspend Geraldo.) The leaflets are distributed in the SFPMVR, to workers at CSN [National Steel Company], city workers in Belo Horizonte (where, as Workers Vanguard reported, police murdered street children as a "protest against low wages") and five universities in this region, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

When the attempt was made to carry out the 19 June union assembly, Artur's faction yanked away the microphone when Geraldo was reading the resolution from the union conference calling for the disaffiliation of the guardas. The police, "invited" by Artur and sent in by the municipal Popular Front government, closed the Municipal Chamber where the meeting was to be held. The class struggle is not an easy matter; it means an effort to advance the working-class program. But not only was there no bloodbath, there were not even any arrests that day.

On 21 June, the day of the general strike, our comrades led the strike in Volta Redonda, where the SFPMVR was the only union that stopped work. Because of his courageous action of leading 150 workers that were blocking the municipal garage, our comrade M. was arrested, but he was released within a couple of hours. As we mentioned, the workers observed how the municipal guardas and police acted as strikebreakers, and this strengthens the struggle to separate the cops from the union. We are going forward with this struggle, which now includes fighting the suspension of Geraldo and the court intervention into the union. At this moment we are mobilizing union assemblies to carry out this historic step of disaffiliating the guardas-but without your help.

On the same day that Artur Fernandes got the “justice” system to suspend Geraldo and intervene in the union, Artur went on the radio attacking the LQB and the “Police Out of the Unions” campaign, reading an article from the LBI's Luta Operária newspaper, which calls the “Police Hands Off the SFPMVR” campaign a farce. In other words, the LBI is advising Artur Fernandes, who provokes attacks, and now court intervention, against the union. These facts must be publicized to the entire revolutionary movement to unmask the centrists of the LBI and PBCI. You should have been participating in that struggle against them. But you have fled, fearing a “bloodbath” and that problems could be posed for the work of the ICL.

While in the class struggle one cannot guarantee that the bourgeoisie will not carry out repression – since if that were so it would not be the class struggle – as revolutionaries it is our duty to do everything possible to minimize the dangers. That is what we are seeking to do, on the basis of our experience in the strikes at CSN, the municipal workers' strikes, etc., and our study of Marxism. Why didn't you measure seven times before cutting? Why didn't you investigate the situation for yourselves before drawing such fundamental conclusions? You pretend you had to break with us over questions of “opportunism.” But the facts show this is only “leftist” rhetoric to cover up a rightist action. The previous letter from Parks (11 June) points out that the ICL correctly spurred the struggle for the separation of the guardas, but it is written cynically as if we were doing nothing about this question-and this when the ICL knows that is not true. We are struggling because we agree with carrying out the programmatic point made by Trotsky and the ICL on this basic question.

This has appeared in many LM/LQB leaflets and also in those of our companheiros who are members of the SFPMVR. A few examples: the 6 May leaflet by the MEL [Municipários em Luta-Municipal Workers in Struggle], with a headline in large letters saying “The Ranks Are Resolving: Police Out of the Union, A Reaffirmation of the Municipários em Luta Program!” The text of the leaflet begins: “On Monday May 6 at 6:00 a.m., the Garage workers decided unanimously at their assembly that: The police should not be part of nor interfere in the SFPMVR and the workers movement in general. Because they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.” (How would this be possible if we really had “no base” in the union or the city of Volta Redonda?) The leaflet for the 13 June conference, point 7 of which was on the municipal guardas. The leaflet of 18 June which reported on the conference, unmasking the Popular Front and the centrists, called for a “revolutionary workers party” that “would have to be internationalist with a multiracial composition of men, women and youth” in the struggle for socialism, explained the campaign for “Police Hands Off the SFPMVR and the Workers Movement” and said that one of the main programmatic points is “the complete independence of the workers movement, and thus the unions, from the bourgeois state and its state apparatus.”

Also: the 28 June leaflet which called for mobilizations because the “Artur faction, the Popular Front, Military Police and the municipal guardas are trying to suspend Geraldo and destroy the SFPMVR,” reported the 19 June provocation by the Artur faction and stressed that “among the main points” of the union conference was “Disaffiliating the municipal guardas from the SFPMVR, since they are not part of the working class” and that “police (any kind of police) are not part of the workers movement” but rather repressors against workers and blacks. The leaflet calling today's assembly against the suspension of Geraldo, which finishes with the following slogans: “The union is ours, not theirs! For the class independence of the workers! Out with the bosses' intervention and repression! Down with the suspension of Geraldo! Bosses' courts, Military Police and guardas: get out of the SFPMVR! Defeat the intervention provoked by Artur's coup faction! Respect for the ranks and the workers! Workers of the world, unite! Bourgeoisie, hands off our union!”

That is in the SFPMVR. And what do our enemies, like Artur's faction, have to say? They attack the 13 June conference and “members of Luta Metalúrgica” for demanding the “disaffiliation of the municipal guard, etc.” (June 1996 leaflet published by Artur's faction).

In addition, you have the three LM/LQB bulletins on these questions.

We want the unity of words and deeds. But in reality, you comrades are saying one thing and doing another.

The discussion on the police was initiated by Abrão in 1994 and led to a very strong political fight against the opportunists of the LBI in Fortaleza on this question. [In January] Abrão and J. stressed the position that the separation of the cops should be achieved as quickly as possible—a correct fight. Later there was discussion on tactics.... Artur Fernandes' faction carried out, and continues, the worst kind of provocations against the LQB to derail the struggle (slanders about a plan to pay “ten minimum wages” when there was no agreement or attempt to receive anything, the staging of an “assault,” etc.) Without fearing the immense obstacles, we are involved in that struggle at this very moment, with the help of the international solidarity campaign you initiated, and we believe this struggle is very important for bringing revolutionary consciousness to the working class here and internationally, since in many countries the opportunists have the position of supporting the police as part of their reformism, and this struggle is part of the fight against pro-capitalist trade-unionism. It could have been the pride of the whole ICL to move forward in Latin America—where the left has backed the police—through a struggle of this importance. It would also have repercussions around the world, for example in South Africa, the U.S., Europe, etc.

But when it came down to the wire you had an attack of nerves and erroneously broke Fraternal Relations – an action which when it comes down to it means no solidarity, fraternity, support, etc. It is not logical to make (correct) criticisms about the way the MEL slate was put together and to say (correctly) that, while the MEL program originally talked about the question of the police in general, it did not explicitly call for the disaffiliation of the guardas – and then run away from the struggle when we try to improve the MEL program and put the program of Trotsky and the ICL on this question into practice.

Marxism teaches that before drawing major conclusions it is necessary to seriously study the facts. This is part of dialectical materialism. But we believe that in Parks' draft letters there were many affirmations that were not based on facts, together with many furious statements

(psychological pressure techniques frequently used by Causa Operária—we can cite their polemical documents against LM), without a Marxist consideration of the situation. But not only that. In the draft letters, and in recent letters sent to us, we see deductions which are drawn from a “reality” that does not exist. There is a name for this: idealism, or even illusionism. Every Marxist must face the reality of the class struggle which, like a “Twister”-type tornado, will shatter the glass houses of those who try to hide from it.

In Parks' letter of 11 June she writes that various comrades thought that the draft letter “was not very good.” That is true enough, since in that and other documents (including the motion of 5 June which evidently served to prepare the break) we have seen the repetition of lies and slanders against us, including some from the bourgeois press (Artur's absurd slander about the “ten minimum wages”), others made by Cirrus and Adam, etc., etc. And we must say that, yes, in the workers movement this practice is “not very good.”

Why didn't you ask us about the facts? Because you wanted to break relations and the facts were an obstacle to that objective? It has been said that we are ignorant of Marxism (something Causa Operária also liked to say), but we have the following quotation from Trotsky, which might be useful for comrades who write about things that don't exist:

“A critical attitude toward information is an organic part of the political physiognomy of every politician” (from “Factions in the Struggle” in the book In Defense of Marxism).

We are writing systematic accounts of the facts, based on documents. For the moment we think it is very important that for all ICL members to know the following:

– It is not true that we are “trade-union opportunists” or “nationalists.” We are internationalist communist revolutionaries who are fighting to implement this program. That is why we are under constant attack from the bourgeoisie and its popular-front agents, the centrists and also types like Artur Fernandes. These attacks have included many slanders, and are we are very shocked that you have repeated some of those slanders.

– Not only did we not receive any payment from the SFPMVR, there was never any agreement or attempt on our part to receive anything, and Cerezo never asked for anything! You already have the transcript of Geraldo's radio interview (18 March) where he clearly declared, against Artur's lies, that Cerezo's actions as an advisor were “free advice” and “without any charge.” (In the same interview Geraldo emphasized that he supports LM's class-struggle program.) Geraldo repeated this fact in his 2 July declaration where, besides writing about his support to the LQB program and about the question of the cops, he stated that “brother Cerezo and Luta Metalúrgica do not receive and have never received payments of any type from the union” (attached find the declaration of the union accountant backing this up), and that statements about a formal or informal agreement for such payments, or any attempt by LM/LQB to receive them, “are LIES and SLANDERS.”

– We are not carrying out an irresponsible and adventurist “confrontation” on the question of the guardas in the SFPMVR. Neither is it true that what is going on is a vulgar “struggle for power within the union,” or a struggle to maintain an official union position as “advisor” (which has not even existed since February—see the March 1996 leaflet by Artur's faction regarding the 20 February executive board meeting on and Geraldo's 18 March radio interview). Our struggle is for class-struggle positions, among other things to throw the guardas and police out of the

unions, against the popular front, for internationalism, for a revolutionary workers party, against the oppression of blacks and women, etc. You have spoken of taking these struggles to the union ranks. This is exactly what we are doing (for example with the election of delegates for the 13 June conference, the 19 June assembly, today's assembly of 150 workers, leaflets, etc.) and that is what you have abandoned.

– It is not true that the LQB “doesn't have members” in the SFPMVR, as affirmed in the 5 June motion of the ICL's I.S., which you gave to us.

– It is not true that the work in the SFPMVR is “the only current public work of the LQB/LM.” Besides recruitment and work among other sectors, we have distributed the three LM bulletins, plus the MEL leaflets on the question of the cops, at several universities as well as other locations. We are studying Marxist texts and will continue with the publication of a newspaper, despite the damage done by your breaking of relations.

– On the same point, it is not true that we did not want to publish a newspaper, because even before Adam left Brazil we were already dealing with the layout.

– We had no unity discussions or negotiations with the bigoted opportunists of the LBI.

– Etcetera.

Thus, there have been many false declarations-so many that we believe they must have served a harmful political objective contrary to the interests of the fight for the international party of the proletariat.

Despite the breaking of Fraternal Relations, we are interested in reestablishing the truth.

Comrades Adam, Cirrus and Arturo asked us several times what we thought of the struggle with Norden, Abrão and other comrades. We answered that before judging, we wanted to see all the documents, since critical analysis is a part of daily life for all Marxists. You refused, arguing that these documents were internal to the organization, and you only sent copies of decisions after the accomplished fact. But then why ask our opinion about things we couldn't investigate? Reading those documents now (after the accomplished facts), we observe that the LQB occupied at least 60 percent of the discussions. Events around Germany, which supposedly involved democratic discussions, spilled over as a contentious precedent, projected onto the LQB as if we had been contaminated by the hands of the comrades recently expelled from the ICL (one of whose major sins was supposed to be their work for a fusion with the LQB). This suggests a spirit of revenge, and this impression is reinforced by the enraged polemic against Norden and Abrão. This is the idea we get from reading and investigating the documents on the expulsion process.

Now we have come to a strong conclusion: it seems to us that there was a relation between the comrades' expulsion and the breaking of Fraternal Relations. Not only that, but the fight against these comrades was in large part due to the fact that they protested against accusations concerning the LQB-accusations they said were false. And we know that those accusations are indeed false and are lies, and that several political positions drawn from them are absurd (like to hide the fraternal relations and international affiliation, to leave Volta Redonda instead of maintaining work here while extending it to the large cities, and many other things).

After having seen how this method was used with us now, we must have strong doubts about the other “fights with Norden and Abrão” which you mention as part of their supposed “desertion from Trotskyism.” Especially when, in the literal sense, it is you who have deserted from a very important class struggle to put into practice the slogan (crucial for workers, blacks, women, landless peasants and all the oppressed) that the police must not be part of the workers movement.

For your information: those comrades never tried to communicate with us during those fights, until after they were expelled. But now we are discussing with them and we have observed that while they continue to insist on debating all principled questions for the Leninist party, they have not abandoned us.

We have learned much through the discussions, debates, struggles and work with the ICL. We repeat: when you abandoned the joint effort with us to go forward to a fusion, this caused harm to the proletariat and to genuine Trotskyism. We continue to base ourselves programmatically on the Declaration of Fraternal Relations and the programmatic conquests of the ICL (which must be political conquests of the whole international proletarian vanguard) on proletarian opposition to the popular front, on the Russian Question, the “Tribune of the People” (particularly the black and woman questions, central to the question of permanent revolution in Brazil), the struggle for the Leninist party as part of the fight to reforge the Fourth International. We must continue to seek a principled fusion with the ICL at the same time as we explain the errors and fight against incorrect methods (breaking of fraternal relations when we are under attack from the bourgeoisie, lies, expulsions, running away from the struggle to separate the guardas, etc.).

In her letter, Parks proposes that we carry out common work. We hope the ICL will continue with the international “Police, Hands Off the SFPMVR!” solidarity campaign, which is even more important now. We would like to do joint work on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We believe it is very important to discuss, in a calm and rational way, the breaking of fraternal relations, the real political reasons for this profound error, and our responsibilities in the world struggle to reforge the Fourth International. We will go forward.

We await your reply.

Revolutionary greetings,

[signed]

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

P.S.: This letter was written before we received the translation of the Workers Vanguard article on the breaking of relations, which we will analyze over the next days.

We attach some of the reports and documents on the facts; others will be sent in the next days.

A Note on the “Bolshevik” Tendency

Hoping to derive some profit from the recent purge in the ICL, the “Bolshevik Tendency” has published a gloating leaflet which reads like a blend of the National Enquirer and cut-rate Kremlinology. While clothed in smarmy personalistic “analyses,” it should be clear to all that the BT's “critiques” come from the right.

The immediate issues crystallizing the recent purge campaign had to do with Brazil, where in tandem with our expulsions the ICL leadership disloyally broke relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. This accompanied a cowardly, headlong flight from class struggle over the effort to separate police from the Volta Redonda municipal workers union. But it will be evident to those who know the BTs that class struggle in a largely black, turbulent place like Brazil is hardly their cup of tea. What the SL has always said about the BTs is true. They are rightist liars and slanderers who ran away from the pressures and dangers of being a red in the Reagan years.

I personally witnessed the BT's lies, provocative behavior and unashamed orientation to the white labor aristocracy from the beginning. For example, I was less than ten feet away from Bob Mandel on the SF Greyhound picket line when he was supposedly the victim of an attack by SL members—an attack that never happened! This slandorous invention was cooked up precisely when the SL was being witchhunted by the state. I saw how they accused the SL of a “ghetto” orientation while blaming us for firings during the 1983 phone strike; how they tried to rush the stage at a Geronimo Pratt demonstration in Oakland; and many other incidents that proved to the hilt the SL's characterizations. Since then the BTs have continued to make their nature clear. They called for workers defense guards (sic) to stop “violence” like the Los Angeles upheaval, and joined “Copwatch,” a group with the professed aim of police “accountability” (so it was no surprise when their former long-time spokesman Gerald, now of the “CWG,” said “We are not anti-police”). They rejected “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan” with classic Stalinophobic arguments. They immersed themselves in unprincipled pop-frontist coalitions during the Gulf War. Now they have published an entire pamphlet in defense of crossing picket lines! Any genuine revolutionary can only scorn the BT.

Their supposedly Soviet-defensist posture of support to the August 1991 “Gang of Eight” coup in the Soviet Union should fool no one: they gave after-the-fact “military” support to Stalinist has-beens who didn't militarily lift a finger against Yeltsin (not even cutting his phone lines to Washington) and assured the capitalists of their support for “market reforms.” At the same time, the BT rushed to declare the Soviet degenerated workers state dead and gone. Writing off all perspective of struggle in the then-USSR, they sought to get the Russian Question off their backs while donning a bit of “defensist” window-dressing. Thus it is no accident that their line parallels that of virulent national-centrist outfits in Latin America like the Argentine PBCI and its partners in the Brazilian LBI, open advisors to the pro-police faction in the Volta Redonda municipal workers union.

The bottom-feeding scavengers of the BT live off anti-communism. Thoughtful members of the ICL must face this harsh reality: running away from a class battle in Brazil has more in common with the BT's Second International-tinged pseudo-Trotskyism than with the program and traditions on which the Spartacist tendency was built.

A Mountain of Mendacity

“All members of the Party must make a calm and painstaking study of 1) the essence of the disagreements and 2) the development of the Party struggle. A study must be made of both, because the essence of the disagreements is revealed, clarified and specified (and very often transformed as well) in the course of the struggle, which, passing through its various stages, always shows, at every stage, a different line-up and number of combatants, different positions in the struggle, etc. A study must be made of both, and a demand made for the most exact, printed documents that can be thoroughly verified. Only a hopeless idiot will believe oral statements. If no documents are available, there must be an examination of witnesses on both or several sides and the grilling must take place in the presence of witnesses.”

– V.I. Lenin, “The Party Crisis” (January 1921)

One of the striking aspects of the recent “discussions” in the ICL has been the appearance of systematic distortion and outright lying as a method of political combat. Those who shoot from the hip often shoot themselves in the foot. Revolutionaries must be vigilant against sloppiness with facts, as in all details of party work. However, mistakes will inevitably be made – otherwise we would not be a living movement engaged in political combat. But it is a qualitative shift from mistakes to the appearance of deliberate falsification in party discussion. This is invariably an early sign of political degeneration: the lie is a weapon of the bureaucrat. Ultimately, it is a reflection of the values of the ruling class, as anyone who has witnessed a bourgeois election—from Russia to the U.S. – can testify.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in response to the liberal moralizing of John Dewey:

“In the period of its revolutionary ascendancy, that is, when it actually represented the proletarian vanguard, [Bolshevism] was the most honest party in history. Wherever it could, of course, it deceived the class enemies; on the other hand it told the toilers the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Only thanks to this did it succeed in winning their trust to a degree never before achieved by any other party in the world.

–Their Morals and Ours (February 1938)

The Spartacist League and International Communist League have always been proud of Workers Vanguard's deserved reputation for political honesty, and when we did make mistakes they were corrected, either in a small notice when it was a minor question of fact or in an article discussing the significance of the error. This was the case with all party publications, and was a lesson we learned from James P. Cannon, Trotsky and Lenin's Bolsheviki. It is stunning, therefore, when party leaders now openly defend repeating untruths.

Thus in the Mexico fight, when Jane Kidder was caught out repeating a false statement, she defended relying on hearsay and falsehood: “Well, one can only deal with what one is told,” she wrote (letter to S., 6 May), adding: “In political struggle, as in war, you have to engage on the basis of the information you are given even if sometimes that information is partial or even false.” Comrade Stenberg responded in an 8 May letter to comrades: “How about checking to see whether it's true or false?” She went on:

“Her [Kidder's] statement is certainly a gauge of the level of accuracy advanced throughout this fight. But what is remarkable, and possibly a first in the Marxist movement – here is a document whose whole purpose is to gather quotes from communist leaders to buttress her argument that facts in politics are not important and frequently counterproductive! Lenin's statement reprinted over the masthead of the first issue of the Militant, that no one should take anybody's word for it, demolishes Kidder's argument.”

But after Kidder's “evidence” of secret factionalism evaporated, she didn't withdraw the charge, she went ahead developing new “facts.”

In the foregoing pages, we have responded to and refuted the mountain of misrepresentations and inventions that have been pumped out for more than a year, first over Germany, then over Mexico and Brazil. Much more is contained in the documentation of this boiling fight as it shifted from one terrain to the next, and we intend to publish key documents so readers can judge for themselves. Certainly from the International Secretariat's 142-page bulletin on Norden's “Group”: Shamefaced Defectors From Trotskyism, no one could know what we have fought for, since, while complaining that we wrote “at least 392 pages” of internal documents, they reprint only one document, our final appeal against the frame-up purge trial.

In addition to the lies and distortions on the central questions in dispute, the article on our expulsion in Workers Vanguard No. 648 (5 July) piles on a whole new litany, going back a quarter century to discover that Norden has always been deviant on just about everything. A thinking worker might wonder that if all this were true, why would the SL have kept him as editor of WV for the last 23 years, as well as a member of the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the SL/U.S. and of the International Executive Committee and International Secretariat of the international Spartacist tendency and then the ICL for over two decades? The answer is: it isn't true.

We can only respond briefly here to the grab bag of assorted falsehoods retailed (or rather, wholesaled) in the WV 648 article. To begin with, there is the claim of “Norden's stated position in favor of 'one-man rule' over the party press (and over any aspects of our international work in which he was personally involved).” This blatant lie is a favorite of International Secretary Parks. Norden corrected this vicious slander when she raised this in the fall of 1994 in a fight over the party press. What he had stated was the need for “one-man management” in carrying out the line decided by the Political Bureau. The buck has to stop with one individual in the production of the party press, which often proceeds at a pounding pace; this is a basic component of Leninist democratic-centralism. The same is true with regard to a factory or an army. This in no way is counter to the principle of collective decision-making. On the contrary, it is the only way to coherently carry out those decisions, as we relearned by making some mistakes through ignoring this maxim. There is a long history of this principle in the communist movement: see Lenin's 1920-21 polemic on the trade-union question, for example.

Digging deep into the annals of party history, the WV account discovers that “early on in his time in the party, Norden viewed the 1973 Indochina 'peace accords' as the end of the war against U.S. imperialism by the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.” This is false. Rather than relying on such “recovered memory,” we went back to look at our files. The facts are these: at a meeting of the SL Political Bureau on 28 January 1973, there was a discussion about the line for WV on the Paris peace accords. Comrade Robertson argued that the agreement was not

simply a betrayal, that each side made a gamble and the Americans were not likely to go back in. Norden argued that the ceasefire was a sell-out compared to what could have been achieved, reflecting the Stalinists' strategy of betrayal, but not a liquidation since U.S. troops were out and the North Vietnamese were not. At the end of the discussion, Robertson summed up, saying that the point about the strategy of betrayal should be included in the analysis. The product was the PB statement, written by Norden in collaboration with Robertson, titled "There Is No Peace! The Civil War Goes On" printed in Workers Vanguard No. 16 (February 1973). Anyone reading it will see that the points made by both of us were included in the final statement.

Generalizing its false statement, the WV 648 account goes on to claim:

"From the question of the survival of Sandinista Nicaragua against U.S. imperialism in the 1980s, to the capacities of the army of Saddam Hussein's Iraq to inflict serious damage against the imperialists during the Persian Gulf War, Norden always stood at the extreme end of a tendency to impressionistically overdraw (and often fantastically so) the military factor. Correspondingly, this meant conjuring up an anticipated flood of anti-imperialist struggle while seriously downplaying the crucial and related factors of political consciousness and material economic reality."

Mixing sweeping unsupported assertions with the trademark half-truths and windy verbiage, this is a classic of the Parks/Kidder school of prevarication. WV's analysis of how Chamorro's "dollar democracy" won the Nicaraguan elections was preceded by many articles on Nicaragua referring to "Washington's War to Make Nicaragua's Economy Scream," how "War-Weariness Fuels Counterrevolution," and the drastic effects of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Sandinistas' conciliation of domestic and international capital.

On the Persian Gulf War, WV's coverage of the course of the war was flawed. We criticized this in the 1994 SL conference document, which stated: "The coverage in Workers Vanguard leading up to the outbreak of the Iraq war did not foresee the swift and one-sided U.S. victory and predicted heavy American losses. A subjective desire to see U.S. imperialism defeated and humiliated here colored an objective assessment of the likely outcome of the war. There was an underestimation of the effect of the withdrawal of Soviet military advisers on Iraq's war-fighting capacity (especially its air defenses) and an overestimation of Saddam Hussein's willingness to risk his army to secure the annexation of Kuwait." We support that self-criticism, and did so at the time. However, what is now being raised is a very different claim.

The WV coverage was flawed in misestimating the military situation, as did many others who focused on the maxim that you can't win a war in the air. But as far as an "anticipated flood of anti-imperialist struggle is concerned," there were sizable antiwar mobilizations in the early days, and a tendency to radicalization among many of the youth participating. If a genuine ground war had developed, with significant U.S. casualties, significant anti-imperialist struggle could have developed. In fact, Pentagon chiefs cut off the further advance of American forces into Iraq in good part because they were worried about the consequences on the home front, where the "Vietnam syndrome" was by no means dead. And the fact is that the Iraqi forces were not routed, as U.S. war propaganda pretended, but rather they were massively withdrawn from Kuwait by the nationalist dictator Saddam Hussein, who decided not to put at risk the main support for his regime, the army. Colin Powell's memoirs quoted Bush worrying about "undesirable public and political baggage" resulting from scenes of carnage in Kuwait, and post-

war analysis by the New York Times (23 October 1994) noted: “Much of Iraq's crack troops, the Republican Guard, had not been destroyed.”

But the really big lie in this list from the WV 648 article is the claim of “Norden's infatuation with Castro's Cuba.” This is false from start to finish. Norden has never supported Castroism. In fact, in 1969 he wrote an article against the strategy of Guevarism and peasant guerrilla warfare for the radical Guardian. Over the years, he has written numerous articles with a Trotskyist analysis of the Castro-Stalinist regime published in WV. In 1976-78 he wrote a four-part series under the title “Stalinist Rule in Cuba” (WV Nos. 100, 102, 141 and 219). In 1979 there was a two-part series under the title “For Workers Political Revolution in Cuba!” (WV Nos. 223 and 224), as well as an article in the following issue “In Defense of the Cuban Trotskyists.” Every article Workers Vanguard published on Cuba combined the call for workers political revolution to oust the Castro regime with the call for unconditional military defense of the deformed workers state. This charge is absurd.

The article refers to Norden's supposed “Stalinoid bent” toward Cuba, “expressed, perhaps most grotesquely, in initial attempts to alibi the Stalinist show trial and execution of General Ochoa on charges of international drug dealing.” This is a lie-Norden never alibied the Stalinist show trial of Ochoa! He did say he did not want to rush into print without reading the key available materials, because the initial reportage in the U.S. press retailed standard U.S. propaganda, about supposed official Cuban drug trafficking, that is dubious in the extreme. The WV article on the Ochoa trial (WV No. 500, 20 April 1990) which Norden wrote did, correctly, say that “For Castro to lie about this [alleged official drug trafficking] would be to invite an invasion.” That in no way claims that Castro can't lie, or that Stalinists can't lie, as was grotesquely charged in a WV editorial board discussion. The clarification that was published in WV on this does not retract that statement: on the contrary, it explains why it is true, as anyone who reads it can verify for themselves.

Given this grotesque distortion of the Ochoa article, which denounced the “Stalinist Show Trial in Cuba,” it seems only fair to ask: does the ICL now renounce this article as well, as it has just about everything else touched by the hand of Norden?

Unlike the “new I.S.” and the “new WV,” who have made lies and distortion into a policy, we stand by the rules of Trotsky's Fourth International, which require of its adherents: “To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives.” This has been and will continue to be our guideline in the struggle for international socialist revolution.

– Norden and Stenberg
July 1996

Jan Norden was editor of Workers Vanguard from issue No. 19 in April 1973 to No. 646 in May 1996; a member of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S., as alternate from 1973 and then as full and a member of the SL Political Bureau since 1976; and a member of the International Executive Committee of the international Spartacist tendency and later the ICL since it was formed in 1974, as well as a member of the editorial boards of the German and Spanish-language editions of Spartacist.

Marjorie Stamberg played a key role in the SL's regroupment with the left wing of East Oakland Women, and was active in trade-union work; she was an alternate member of the Central Committee of the SL/U.S. since 1979, as well as a member of the editorial board, functioning as managing editor of WV since that time; she was Spartacist candidate for New York state assembly in 1978 and for mayor of New York City in 1985; and was instrumental in shaping the work on South Africa.

Negrete was a leading youth activist from 1973 and a member of the National Committee of the Spartacus Youth League from 1974; he was later active as a trade-unionist in the San Francisco Bay Area for almost a decade, and became a candidate member of the SL/U.S. CC in 1987; he led the Mexico City station from 1988 and the Grupo Espartaquista de México from its inception, was a full member of the IEC from 1992, the editor of the GEM newspaper Espartaco and an editorial board member and then coordinator of Spanish Spartacist.

Socorro was an SYL activist from 1978 and long-time union member; she was a member of the San Francisco SL exec, and later a member of the exec of the GEM who planned and oversaw the restoration work on Trotsky's monument in Mexico City in 1995.