

Clerical Reactionary Vicente Fox Inaugurated

Mexico: NAFTA's Man Targets Labor

No Illusions in PRD— For Proletarian Class Independence!

Hailing the inauguration of Vicente Fox of the Catholic reactionary National Action Party (PAN) as Mexican president on December 1, his U.S. imperialist masters will now be watching closely to make sure he delivers on his promises to further open Mexico to U.S. economic penetration. The former chief of Coca-Cola's Mexican operations, Fox has proclaimed his goal of expanding NAFTA, U.S. imperialism's "free trade" rape of Mexico. Wall Street is particularly eyeing the lucrative nationalized oil, petrochemical and electrical industries which Fox has long vowed to sell off.

At the same time, Washington is worried that the fall of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) after 71 years in power will unleash even more convulsive worker and peasant unrest, particularly by the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) unions which have been firmly in the corporatist grip of the PRI. Since the elections in July, Mexico has been rocked by strikes of airline workers, Volkswagen auto workers and, most recently, 450,000 CTM sugar workers, who have struck



AP

Inauguration of right-wing PAN president Vicente Fox poses sharper attacks on women's rights and on combative Mexican proletariat. Volkswagen workers rally during recent strike.

repeatedly over the last six years. Last month, government employees blockaded traffic in Mexico City to protest the refusal by outgoing PRI president Ernesto Zedillo to pay the traditional bonus at the end of each six-year presidential term, forcing the government to make a partial payment.



J. Guadalupe Pérez

Fox took office with vague promises of "change," vowing to uplift Mexico's impoverished masses. Yet his populist-sounding schemes are to be financed through increased imperialist investment, the elimination of sales tax exemptions that benefit the poor, and other such "reforms." Fox's cabinet is chock full of

businessmen such as former World Bank economist Luis Ernesto Derbez and Francisco Gil Díaz, an acolyte of economic "shock therapy" braintruster Milton Friedman.

At the same time, Fox has brought a number of "leftist" intellectuals into his
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Racist Terror in the "New South Africa"

Report from Johannesburg

The following is a report, edited for publication, sent by a Spartacist South Africa comrade in early November.

There has been a spate of racist atrocities committed against black South Africans that the proponents of the existence of a supposedly "new, democratic, non-racist South Africa" and their left tails wished they knew

nothing about. A few incidents are selected to give you a feel. Hardly a day goes by without such reports in the bourgeois media, though the majority of cases go unreported.

As I write this letter, the country—including newspapers, radio stations, etc.—is talking about video footage broadcast by SABC's [South African Broadcasting Company] TV3 Special Assignment show of six white Afrikaner cops goading dogs to attack defenseless black men. The cops, from the dog unit in Benoni, eastern Johannesburg, were filmed in January 1998 laughing as they used three immigrants from Mozambique as training bait to incite police dogs against blacks. The front-page article of the *Sowetan*, the bourgeois daily widely read by blacks, uses the deliberately misleading phrase, "to incite police dogs to be vicious on human beings," to describe the scene. This is rubbish, as the white fascist

continued on page 7



Reuters

Protest outside Pretoria courthouse against racist cops who tortured black immigrants with police dogs.



Moscow, Beijing and the Vietnam War

Chicago, IL
3 December 2000

To the editor:

Comrade Diana Coleman’s excellent forum on the Vietnam War, printed in the last issue of WV [“Defend the Gains of the Vietnamese Revolution!” WV No. 747, 1 December], led me to reflect on how important the SL’s program with respect to that war was in my recruitment to revolutionary Trotskyism during the early 1970s. Both the Cleveland Marxist Caucus (of which I was a member) and the Buffalo Marxist Caucus (with which we were closely associated) had as primary concerns the absence of a revolutionary working-class perspective toward the black question in the U.S. and toward Stalinism in any of the self-described socialist organizations we had encountered during that period. As for myself, the SL’s program of revolution-

ary integrationism was a slam-dunk. Then and now, it is simply the only program which recognizes the centrality of the black question to the American socialist revolution and does not concede to black nationalism.

Maoism was then in full flower among SDS-inspired antiwar activists as the “Marxist” alternative to Soviet-style “revisionism.” This perplexed many of us both because Mao’s “Red Book” had virtually nothing to say about proletarian socialist revolution and because we were aware that Mao, no less than Brezhnev, was committed to a policy of peaceful coexistence with the imperialists who were then attempting to massacre not just the revolution in Vietnam but the entire population of that country. Yet it was not clear to us how to combine our support for the victory of the North Vietnamese/National Liberation Front (“Viet



National Guardian

Protest against Vietnam War, 1965. Against nationalist treachery of Moscow and Beijing Stalinist bureaucracies, Trotskyists demanded united Communist defense of Vietnamese Revolution.

Cong”) forces while maintaining our criticisms of Stalinist class collaboration with imperialism.

In reviewing the SL’s propaganda, we discovered that, virtually from the beginning of the antiwar movement, the SL had raised the call to extend the Soviet nuclear shield to Hanoi, cutting against both the craven pacifism of the early movement and the desire of the bureaucratic caste in the USSR to appease the U.S. imperialists by “moderating” Soviet military support to the Vietnamese. While the USSR was the main provider of military hardware to North Vietnam, it never delivered the SAM-3 missiles (which it provided to the anti-Communist nationalist Nasser in Egypt) and latest MIG fighters that could have cleared the skies over Hanoi of the American B-52 bombers. Thus, the SL raised the call for military assistance by the USSR of the “highest technical quality” (including the SAMs and MIGs).

Many of us were then aware that the rupture in relations in the 1960s between China and the USSR had led Mao to block the transport of Soviet military supplies to Vietnam across Chinese territory. It was true that in the 1960s, the Beijing regime had sent some amount of military aid, including troops, to North Vietnam, particularly helping in building highways. But this aid had been withdrawn by the time Mao toasted Nixon in the Great Hall of the People in 1972 as the U.S. escalated its vicious bombing and mined Haiphong harbor. Mao refused to restore the assistance in repairing infrastructure in North Vietnam that had been withdrawn, notably the thousands of railway workers who could have helped maintain transport in the face of the countless B-52 bombings.

It was only the SL that raised the demand for Russian-Chinese joint military collaboration and united Communist defense of the Vietnamese Revolution. It was this demand that clarified for us the nationalist nature of the bureaucratic castes that ruled in China and the USSR (and the other deformed workers states) and the necessity for proletarian political revolutions to defend the social revolutions that were in place and that was at issue in Vietnam. One SL slogan in par-

ticular put this bluntly: “For International Communist Unity Through Political Revolution, from East Berlin to Hanoi!”

As Comrade Coleman pointed out in her forum, the Ho Chi Minh-led bureaucratic caste that ruled in North Vietnam was no less averse to selling out to the imperialists, usually with pressure to do so from both the USSR and China. After Nixon’s re-election and with the beginning of “peace” talks aimed at establishing a “coalition” government and a “neutral” Vietnam, the SL raised the demand “All Indochina Must Go Communist!”—a demand that maddened the Maoists of various stripes. That demand, in combination with the demand for labor strikes against the war, convinced us that international socialist revolution was the only answer to Stalinist betrayal.

With the overturn of the social revolutions in the USSR and East Europe and with those in China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba now at risk because of the policies of the bureaucratic castes whose rule is predicated on the nationalist premise of “socialism in one country,” the SL’s interventions during the Vietnam War seem prescient. Not so. They were merely the application, at a particular juncture, of the Trotskyist program of unconditional military support to the gains of those social revolutions and the necessity for proletarian political revolution to ensure the defense of those gains.

Most of the thousands recruited to one or another variant of Stalinist or social-democratic organization during that period have long since given up the fight for socialism and retired. Those among them who remained active celebrated the overturn of the October Revolution in the USSR and are now engaged in the pursuit of the reform of “their” imperialists. Those then inspired to a just outrage against racist U.S. imperialism have now either disappeared or become running dogs for their imperialist masters. The prime lesson of Vietnam then and now is that it is absolutely necessary to forge revolutionary working-class parties as sections of a reborn Trotskyist Fourth International.

Comradely,
Ed Clarkson

For a Socialist United States of Europe!



TROTSKY

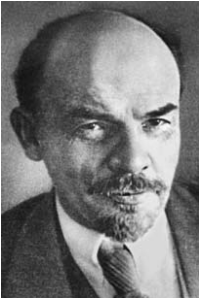
The sharp differences that broke through the facade of “unity” at the European Union summit in Nice are an expression of the increasing rivalries among the major imperialist trade blocs—headed by Germany, the U.S. and Japan—and among the West European powers themselves. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained after the outbreak of World War I, there can be no capitalist European superstate nor any lasting

agreements among the imperialist bourgeoisies, whose drives for profits and new areas of exploitation inevitably come into conflict with each other. Only international proletarian revolution can end the threat of new imperialist wars presaged by trade war and transcend the outmoded nation-state through the construction of a world socialist economy.

A United States of Europe under capitalism is tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies. Under capitalism, however, no other basis and no other principle of division are possible except force. A multi-millionaire cannot share the “national income” of a capitalist country with anyone otherwise than “in proportion to the capital invested” (with a bonus thrown in, so that the biggest capital may receive more than its share). Capitalism is private ownership of the means of production, and anarchy in production. To advocate a “just” division of income on such a basis is sheer Proudhonism, stupid philistinism. No division can be effected otherwise than in “proportion to strength,” and strength changes with the course of economic development. Following 1871, the rate of Germany’s accession of strength was three or four times as rapid as that of Britain and France, and of Japan about ten times as rapid as Russia’s. There is and there can be no other way of testing the real might of a capitalist state than by war. War does not contradict the fundamentals of private property—on the contrary, it is a direct and inevitable outcome of those fundamentals. Under capitalism the smooth economic growth of individual enterprises or individual states is impossible. Under capitalism, there are no other means of restoring the periodically disturbed equilibrium than crises in industry and wars in politics.

Of course, *temporary* agreements are possible between capitalists and between states. In this sense a United States of Europe is possible as an agreement between the *European* capitalists...but to what end? Only for the purpose of jointly suppressing socialism in Europe, of jointly protecting colonial booty *against* Japan and America.

—V.I. Lenin, “On the Slogan for a United States of Europe” (August 1915)



LENIN

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PDC Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

“We Do Not Forget Them!”

Earlier this month, the Partisan Defense Committee held its 15th annual Holiday Appeal benefits in New York City, Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area. The Holiday Appeal raises funds for the PDC's program of sending monthly stipends and holiday gifts to class-war prisoners and their families. Thousands of dollars were raised, every penny of which goes to the 16 imprisoned black activists, labor militants, members of the Philadelphia MOVE commune and their families. With this act of solidarity, the PDC has revived and kept alive the tradition of non-sectarian, class-struggle defense of those imprisoned for championing the rights of labor and all the oppressed begun by the International Labor Defense in the 1920s.

Over 300 trade unionists, students, socialists and other activists came together to express their solidarity, to organize and to discuss revolutionary politics. As in previous recent years, a particular focus of the benefits was the class-struggle fight necessary to stop the legal lynching of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to free this eloquent and courageous fighter against racist injustice.

At the Bay Area event, a speaker for the Labor Black League for Social Defense, initiated by and fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, said, “Mumia's notorious frame-up exposes the truth about the death penalty and the racist system of capitalist injustice that we all live under.” Pointing to a Jamal defense rally in San Francisco last

**Bay Area
Holiday Appeal
benefit,
December 3.
Annual PDC
campaign raises
thousands for
those imprisoned
for championing
cause of labor
and the
oppressed.**

laws according to their own class interests. The revolutionary movement is a menace to their system.... Everyone who takes an active part in the struggle for the liberation of the working class takes a chance of going to prison.”

James P. Cannon said this in 1921. Today the ruling class of America, represented by both capitalist parties, Democrat and Republican, are itching to see Mumia Abu-Jamal, outspoken fighter against racist injustice, silenced forever. In the hands of the multiracial working class lies the power not only to win freedom for Mumia but freedom for all of us. But if labor's power is to be brought



the Stone Age by NATO. We fight for socialist revolution in the U.S., bastion of world imperialism.

Think about some of our other class-war prisoners, like the Ohio 7, who most of the fake left, in their quest for respectability, have turned their back on. These committed activists were judged guilty by the bourgeoisie for their alleged role in a radical group that took credit for bank expropriations and bombings against symbols of U.S. imperialism. But that was no crime. Trotsky said: “We Marxists consider the tactic of individual terror inexpedient.... But we understand only too clearly the inevitability of such convulsive acts of despair and vengeance.... People come cheap who are capable only of fulminating against injustice and bestiality. But those who are able to act as well as conceive, sacrificing their own lives if need be, are the precious leaven of mankind.”

The bourgeoisie wants Mumia dead because they see him as a black revolutionary embodying what they fear most: black and red. Whipping up racial and ethnic hatred has long served the capitalist rulers by obscuring the *class* divide between labor and capital. While the forcible subjugation and segregation of blacks at the bottom of this society is the foundation stone of American capitalism, it is also its Achilles' heel. Black workers remain a significant and active component of organized labor, integrated into strategic sections of the proletariat in whose hands lies the power to break the chains of racist oppression and capitalist exploitation. A revolutionary perspective for the U.S. must confront the special oppression of black people and the poisonous racism which divides the working class and cripples its struggles. There will be no social revolution in this country without the united struggle of black and white workers led by their multiracial vanguard party. And there is no road to black freedom other than the conquest of power, state power, by the American proletariat.

We warn working people and anti-racist youth that the capitalist Democratic Party is no less the enemy of labor and blacks than the Republicans. Malcolm X said, “Either party that you align yourself with is suicide. Because both parties are criminal. Both parties are responsible for the criminal condition that exists.” The politics of “lesser evilism” perpetuate the racist hellhole that is America.

Capitalist democracy is nothing but a screen for the iron dictatorship of capital. Marx said that capitalist democracy means that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representative of the oppressing

class shall represent and repress them in parliament. In the U.S., do you even get that? The disenfranchised blacks in Florida, the Jewish Holocaust survivors whose votes were counted for proto-fascist Buchanan ought to call up Fidel Castro, who kindly volunteered to send elections observers to Florida. Better than the Justice Department any day! People should get the oppressor of their choice. But our job is to smash the illusions in the whole electoral system, so the working class can proceed on the road of class struggle and revolution.

Both labor and blacks have gotten nothing but the shaft from Clinton and could expect nothing more from Gore. Yet the AFL-CIO tops poured millions of dollars into the Gore campaign, while seeking to squelch any labor struggle that might jeopardize the Democrats' electoral chances. In L.A., a militant and popular transit strike was defused by a combination of Jesse Jackson, black front man for the racist Democrats, and the treachery of the labor bureaucracy. And the Catholic cardinal in L.A. got into the act, too, in pushing the heavily Hispanic SEIU county workers to go back to work. The labor bureaucracy's support to the Democratic Party is the political expression of its all-sided program of class collaboration, tying working people to their class enemy.

But there is a sense of resistance and protest afoot. There haven't been many strikes, but those that do happen are popular and have won economic gains. There have been mass black protests in the South, for example against the Confederate flag. A new generation of left-liberal student youth has taken to the streets to protest the WTO and IMF. So far these protests have been channeled into support for the Democratic Party or Nader's third capitalist Green Party. And the labor bureaucracy, working in the interests of U.S. imperialism, is working to channel outrage about Third World sweatshops into racist protectionism and anti-Communist China-bashing. But it doesn't have to be this way.

To lead struggle forward, the multiracial working class of this country needs its own party, a revolutionary workers party that doesn't respect the property rights of the bourgeoisie, one which says: We produce all the wealth of this country, it's ours and we're going to take it. A workers party which understands that labor must champion the cause of all the oppressed, which inscribes on its banner “Finish the Civil War!” A workers party which champions the cause of the desperate immigrant, saying anyone who made it to this country has the right to stay—Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! A microcosm of such a workers party in action was seen on the streets of New York City in October 1999 when the Spartacist League and PDC led the masses in struggle against the KKK (and the Democrats and the ISO, I might add).

Let me end on a quote from the same article by Cannon. Speaking of the class-war prisoners, he says: “They know that we, who are on the outside of the jails, have not forgotten them nor our sacred obligation to appeal to the all-powerful workers in their behalf. The day is coming when the toiling masses of America will hear that appeal and act upon it. Then the prison doors will be opened and the prisoners set free, for the masses have an authority higher than that of any court. To redouble our efforts to hasten on the day of liberation is the pledge we make to our imprisoned comrades.” Free Mumia! Workers of the world, unite! ■



Revolutionary Contingent at May 13 Bay Area protest calls for mobilizing social power of labor in fight to free Mumia.

May, the LBL spokesman contrasted the call for a “new trial” raised by reformists like Socialist Action—pushing the notion that Jamal will get justice in the capitalist courts—with the banner carried by the Revolutionary Contingent built by the SL, the LBL and the Spartacus Youth Club: “There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!”

The LBL speaker was followed by SL spokesman Diana Coleman, whose speech we publish below.

* * *

“Every war has its hazards; the class war more than any other, for the organized workers wage it for the largest stakes in all the world's history—for the Earth and all its fruits, for the complete expropriation of the present-day ruling class.... The ruling class today is the capitalist class. They maintain themselves in power by force and violence. They make the

to bear on behalf of Mumia, it must be mobilized independently of the very forces of the capitalist state that have worked to frame up Mumia. Our Marxist strategy is the independent political mobilization of the working class.

The Labor Black League speaker spoke compellingly about the “new trial” slogan, which is based on the belief that capitalism can be reformed. I want to say a few words about “Refuse & Resist,” who call for a campaign “focus(ed) on President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno.... We must say to them: the evidence is in your hands. The time has come to act.” This is beyond gross. Of course, Clinton, Reno and Gore are all adamantly *pro*-death penalty. When I think of Janet Reno “acting,” I think of 86 people in an interracial religious commune near Waco, slaughtered in cold blood. When I think of Clinton “acting,” I think of tens of thousands of babies starving in Iraq because of the U.S./UN blockade and Serbia bombed back to

Nice, France: Cops Rampage Against Leftist Protesters

For a Workers Europe— For Socialist Revolution!

DECEMBER 12—The French city of Nice was turned into a police state last week as the capitalist rulers of Europe gathered to wrangle over the future of the European Union (EU). Tens of thousands of cops were called out by the government of Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin to occupy the streets on December 7 and disperse the many thousands of youth who came from countries around the continent to protest outside the summit. As the assembled heads of state cynically debated the terms of a “Charter of Fundamental Rights,” the tear gas fired to brutally suppress the rights of those protesting outside was so thick that it drifted into the meeting hall.

Police repeatedly attacked demonstrators with truncheons and stun grenades; dozens were arrested. Two young Basque militants from Spain, José Ramirez and Anna-Liza Romero, remain behind bars, sentenced to one month in jail in a kangaroo court without even the defense lawyers present. Meanwhile, some of those arrested—and imprisoned up to ten weeks—at the September protest against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Prague continue to face criminal charges. The workers movement must demand the immediate release of Ramirez and Romero. Drop all charges against the Prague and Nice protesters!

Revealing the fraudulence of the right of free passage supposedly ensured by the EU’s 1995 Schengen agreement, a train bringing some 1,500 supporters of Ya Basta and other Italian leftists to Nice was turned back at the French border. When a group of 5,000 in Nice tried to occupy the local train station to protest the exclusion, they were viciously attacked by the cops, while Italian cops waded into protesters on the other side of the border. Schengen’s intent from the outset was to close the gates of racist “Fortress Europe” to impoverished immigrants from Africa, the Near East and East Europe. Now border crossings are slammed shut to leftist protesters from within the EU in the name of “national security.” Down with the racist Schengen accord! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

As cops bloodied protesters, the bourgeois media railed against “*casseurs*” (hoodlums)—the racist cry previously leveled at militant youth of North African descent—aiming particular fire at the Basque and Corsican nationalists among the demonstrators. Paris has waged a decades-long campaign of repression against Corsican separatists. Beginning with Socialist president François Mitterrand in the 1980s, France has also colluded with Spain in rounding up and terrorizing Basque separatist militants. Down with anti-Basque repression! For the right of self-determination of the Basque people in both France and Spain!

Many youth came to Nice to protest capitalist oppression, austerity attacks and anti-immigrant racism perpetrated by the EU capitalists. These attacks have provoked tumultuous defensive struggles by the working class, particularly in France. The recent truckers blockades against exorbitant fuel prices which rocked the West European capitalist states were widely supported by workers and youth. In Nice the day before the police dragnet, tens of thousands of workers mobilized by a coalition of European trade unions marched through the streets. A team of supporters of European sections of the International Communist League sold several hundred pieces of lit-

Fake Lefts Plead for Reformed “Fortress Europe”

erature in various languages to these trade unionists, who particularly welcomed our articles in support of the truckers against the social-democratic governments.

But the pro-capitalist trade-union misleaders, who denounced the truckers blockades as “bosses’ strikes,” help enforce the austerity, union-busting and anti-immigrant attacks carried out by their social-democratic colleagues in government. With the blessings of their masters in the Jospin government—which kept its cops at bay that day—the labor tops’ aim in Nice was simply to allow the workers to blow off steam and to beg the capitalist governments “for a truly social Europe.”

In essence, this was the same line pushed by the “leftist” organizers of the following day’s protest, which followed on the “anti-globalization” demonstration against the World Trade Organization in Seattle last year and the subse-

must disgust all those who want to do politics otherwise” (*Libération*, 8 December). Alain Krivine’s Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) has joined with ATTAC in a “Collective for Another Charter,” which also includes the French Communist Party and the Greens, both of which currently hold ministerial portfolios in Jospin’s capitalist government. Buried inside ATTAC is Socialisme Par en Bas (SPEB)—affiliated to the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the late Tony Cliff, which declared itself “over the moon” when Labour’s Tony Blair was elected prime minister.

The rampage by Jospin’s cops itself exposed the reformist illusions promoted by the fake left and provided an object lesson in the Marxist understanding of the state as an apparatus of repression to maintain the profits and rule of the capitalist class. The idea that the imperialist powers can be pressured to ensure



Italian riot cops attack protesters barred by France from crossing border to join demonstration in Nice.

quent protests against the IMF and World Bank in Washington, D.C. and Prague. The radicalized youth attracted to these protests want to combat the hideous conditions created by “free market” capitalism around the world. But the protest organizers seek to channel these concerns and the striving for social justice into national-chauvinist appeals to their own imperialist bourgeoisies. They revel in the “spirit of Seattle,” which focused on appeals to the U.S. government to impose “humane” labor standards around the world and was politically dominated by the chauvinist protectionism and anti-Communist China-bashing of the AFL-CIO labor tops. In Nice, the European fake lefts appealed to the Labourite and “Socialist” governments—which they loyally support—for a more “humane,” “social” *capitalist* Europe.

No Illusions in “Humanitarian” Imperialism

One of the organizers of the Nice protest was the “anti-globalization” group ATTAC, which despicably echoed the violence-baiting by the French bourgeoisie. An ATTAC spokesman railed, “One can’t stop acting for fear of the *casseurs*.... But such paramilitary practices

“human rights” is nothing but vile social-patriotism. What about the dirty history of French colonialism in Algeria and Indochina; of British imperialism in Ireland, the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Middle East; of German imperialism’s Holocaust of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), Soviet POWs and others during World War II; of the Dutch in Indonesia and the Belgians, Portuguese and Italians in Africa?

Imperialism is not a *policy* that can be steered in a more benevolent direction by mass pressure. It is, in the words of V.I. Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party and the October Revolution of 1917, the “highest stage of capitalism.” Writing at the height of the interimperialist slaughter of World War I, Lenin denounced the notion of a European capitalist “superstate”: “From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism—i.e., the export of capital and the division of the world by the ‘advanced’ and ‘civilised’ colonial powers—a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary” (“On the Slogan for a United States of Europe,” August 1915).

We oppose the EU because it is a bloc for capitalist cooperation *against the*

working masses and oppressed minorities of Europe and for competition for markets and spheres of exploitation against their American and Japanese imperialist rivals. The ICL team went to Nice to win leftist workers and youth to the fight for new October Revolutions—for a workers Europe as part of an international socialist society. We fight to *break* workers and leftist youth from the social-democratic traitors and to forge revolutionary workers parties.

Fake Lefts Promote Imperialist Intervention

The EU summit revealed the growing fault lines not only between the West European powers and the U.S. but within Europe as well. The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state ushered in increased interimperialist strife, previously held in check by the need for anti-Soviet unity. The summit was called to work out terms for bringing in the former deformed workers states of East Europe and to renegotiate the organizational weight of the respective imperialist states inside the EU. Since its counterrevolutionary annexation of East Germany in 1990, reunified German imperialism has demanded a more dominant role in determining EU policy. The imperious demands of the German Fourth Reich provoked an uproar in other European capitals—especially its enemies in two world wars, Britain and France—and decisions on virtually all major questions posed at the summit remain up in the air.

A major source of conflict with the U.S. was the implementation of a European “Rapid Reaction Force.” A pan-European military force as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated NATO alliance was first proposed the day after NATO’s terror war against Serbia ended last year, reflecting widespread apprehension among the European bourgeoisies over Washington’s military predominance. Only days before the Nice summit began, U.S. defense secretary William Cohen bluntly warned a meeting of NATO ministers in Brussels that any military operations carried out by the EU must be planned and overseen by NATO. In a riposte which he later modified, French president Jacques Chirac insisted that the proposed European military force must be “independent” of NATO. The U.S. warning got little media attention in Europe except in Britain, whose bourgeoisie has long been torn between loyalty to its American cousins and pursuit of economic interests on the continent. In the upshot, Blair worked out a “compromise” that simply postponed a showdown.

In a statement for the Nice protests posted on its Web site, the LCR declared that the proposed military force would be directed “against the people.” But the real problem for these social-chauvinists is that Europe would be forced to intervene militarily “alongside and under the supervision of the United States.” The fake left’s ideological prostration before imperialism reflects their many years’ support to Western imperialism against the Soviet Union in the name of “democracy” and “human rights.” Today, the reformist and centrist European left is increasingly acting as spokesmen for the interests of their own imperialist bourgeoisies against Washington.

During the bombing of Serbia, the LCR echoed the imperialist war cry of “poor little Kosovo.” Its newspaper *Rouge* (1 April 1999) published a “Call

Escape from Florida Cuban Kid Goes Home

In what has been billed as the “reverse Elián” case, Arletis Blanco fled Miami with her five-year-old son Jonathan on November 12 to return to her native Cuba after five years in the U.S. The FBI and State Department immediately moved to get the child back, and local authorities issued a warrant on Blanco for allegedly kidnapping her son from her divorced husband, who did not have custody in any case. The very idea that a Cuban émigré would voluntarily return home provoked a mixture of outrage and incredulity on the part of U.S. imperialist spokesmen, their counterrevolutionary *gusanos* (worms) and the capitalist media.

If the *gusano* scum did not rampage as they did when Elián González was returned to his father in Cuba after being abducted to “the free world” a year ago, it is perhaps because they have been preoccupied with barricading Miami election commission offices to ensure the presidential ballot goes to Republican George W. Bush. The right-wing *Washington Times* (4 December) raged that the Clinton White House had allowed the kid to be in the clutches of the “Cuban despot” Fidel Castro. The *Miami Herald* (29 November), a veritable mouthpiece of the *gusanos*, squealed over “a child yanked from a loving parent” and spoke darkly of how he would suffer persecution in Cuba.

The anti-Communists are especially livid that Blanco—who was accompanied by her Cuban-born boyfriend and their 18-month-old daughter—had the nerve to tell the world that her children will have a “brilliant” future in Cuba, where they, “because of the tranquility, will have more freedom.” She explained that she decided to flee when her life was threatened after she had uncovered a

scam by her *gusano* boss, Juan Emilio Suarez, at a Key Largo petroleum company. Suarez, described as a member of Alpha 66, the most murderous of the CIA-sponsored anti-Castro paramilitary groups, sold gasoline used to run boats into Cuban waters. He then diverted the



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Arletis Blanco, back in Cuba. Below: Cuban children at July demonstration demanding return of Elián González carry banner against U.S. blockade.



AFP

planes. We say: **Drop the charges now! Hands off the Cuban Revolution!**

The U.S. government’s very real embezzlement of \$120 million in Cuban funds is part of the starvation embargo imposed at the outset of American imperialism’s 40-year counterrevolutionary drive to overturn the gains of the Cuban Revolution. In response to the relentless pressure of American imperialism, in late 1960 the petty-bourgeois Castro government expropriated U.S. corporations and their local capitalist henchmen. As reflected in the Clinton administration’s release of Elián González, a growing sector of the American ruling class now sees the embargo as a failure—not least because other imperialists are moving in on the Cuban market—and looks to “constructive engagement” to foment capitalist counterrevolution from within.

The Spartacist League has since its inception stood for the unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. Though ruled by the Castroite Stalinist bureaucracy which denies the working class political power, the planned, collectivized economy has brought enormous gains to the Cuban working people, including free medical care, jobs, housing and education. **Down with the imperialist embargo of Cuba!**

While the Cuban deformed workers state has managed to hold out for nearly a decade in the absence of the lifeline once provided by the Soviet Union, Castro’s introduction of the U.S. dollar into the Cuban economy in the mid-1990s and growing investment by other imperialist powers have indeed strengthened and emboldened counterrevolutionary forces within Cuba. We fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and install a revolutionary-internationalist government based on workers (soviet) democracy. Above all, we seek to forge a multiracial revolutionary workers party which will smash U.S. imperialism from within through socialist revolution. The proletariat in power will extend comradely and generous assistance to the economic development of Cuba. ■

by Public Figures” cosigned by LCR leader Daniel Bensaïd whose key demand was for intervention by military forces under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE):

“NATO was not the only, and above all not the best, linchpin for an accord. The conditions for a multinational police force (particularly composed of Serbs and Albanians) could be found under the auspices of the OSCE to enforce a transitional accord.”

A similar statement was signed in Britain by the SWP’s Alex Callinicos.

Now these social-chauvinists are calling on the EU imperialists to intervene in the Near East in the guise of “supporting” the oppressed Palestinian people against the U.S.-backed Zionist regime. The Cliffite SPEB cosigned a leaflet for an October 28 demonstration in Paris with the following appeal:

“We demand meaningful sanctions against the state of Israel by the French and European governments and a complete break in all military, university, cultural, technological and economic cooperation. We also demand that the European Union break the association agreement which ties it to the state of Israel.”

Then the LCR signed onto a declaration along with the PCF, the Greens and the fake-Trotskyist Lutte Ouvrière (LO) which calls on “the leaders of the European Union and the French authorities who assume its presidency to exert max-

imum pressure on the Israeli government as long as it continues to violate international law and the resolutions of the UN” (*Le Monde*, 23 November). An earlier appeal for intervention in the Near East cosigned by Bensaïd declared: “As for France, she must not shirk her responsibility of playing a role which is commensurate with her vocation and her traditions in the region” (*Le Monde*, 5 November).

France’s “traditions” in the Near East are exemplified by the brutal crushing of the independence struggle in Syria in the 1920s, including the 1925 air and artillery bombardment of Damascus. The SPEB and LCR appeal for intervention to the same French imperialists who joined with Britain in 1956 to launch a war in league with Zionist Israel against Nasser’s Egypt with the aim of reversing the nationalization of the Suez Canal. At the time, the French/British invasion was opposed by the U.S., which asserted its role as chief imperialist overlord of the Near East (and its huge oil reserves) against the former colonial masters. Today, with France chafing at Washington’s pre-eminent role in the Near East, the LCR and the Cliffites promote the ambitions of the EU imperialists against their American rival.

Reforge the Fourth International!

Despite an occasionally more leftist veneer, the right-centrist British Workers Power (WP) joined in tailing counterrevolutionary forces from Polish Solidarność to Russia’s Yeltsin during the Cold War and in promoting the war aims of the NATO imperialists in the Balkans. WP openly campaigned for the defeat of Serbian forces by the Kosovo Liberation Army tools of NATO imperialism, shared

a platform in London with enthusiasts for NATO bombing and cheered the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo under the guns of the imperialist powers.

This is fully in keeping with WP’s abject Labour loyalism, supporting the installation of Blair’s government. WP came to Nice with its own alternative charter of reformist demands. In its call for Nice posted on its Web site on November 20, WP spiced its opportunist program with the streetfighting rhetoric of the anarchist milieu, declaring that the task was “to surround the summit and by direct action prevent them from achieving their stated goals.” Sounding like a jingoist veteran of trench warfare and mustard gas attacks in World War I, a leader of WP’s French affiliate, Pouvoir Ouvrier (PO), trumpeted in a later posting how their attempt to break through police lines in Nice “was like going ‘over the top’ in 1914—full on charge through the gas into their lines.”

Unlike the LCR and LO, whose platform for a joint slate in last year’s European Parliament elections (in which Krivine himself won a seat) did not even mention “socialism,” much less “revolution,” WP sprinkles a few references to socialist revolution in its November 20 statement. But the vast bulk of WP’s declaration consists of a long litany of reforms addressed to the social-democratic governments WP supports. If anything, WP is even more explicit than the reformists in defending the notion of a European capitalist “superstate.” WP writes: “Does this mean that the answer for Europe’s workers is to force ‘their own’ national states to quit the EU as small capitalist states or to fight to break it up? No!” In a parody of parliamentary cretinism, WP even calls for “a sovereign

European Constituent Assembly”!

Previously a diplomatic appendage to the anti-Soviet NATO alliance, the European Union is today an unstable adjunct to the economic, military and political priorities of the European capitalists, who recognize the need for some level of collaboration in order to compete with the much larger American economy. Throughout Europe, social-democratic parties and popular-front coalitions of working-class and bourgeois parties have been put into government since the collapse of the Soviet Union with the express purpose of destroying the “welfare state.”

The fake left spreads the illusion that these governments are a “lesser evil” which can be pressured into serving the interests of the oppressed. The reformists and centrists offer a caricature of German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, who preached that the capitalist system could transcend repeated economic crises and wars through “ultra-imperialist” peaceful cooperation among the capitalist states. Two world wars, countless imperialist neocolonial military adventures and escalating trade war today prove this to be a lie. In this epoch of imperialist decay, the capitalist nation-state is an obstacle to the further development of the productive forces and of humanity as a whole.

We stand for a fundamentally different program and perspective. The Spartacist League/U.S. fights to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party in the bastion of world imperialism to bring down the most murderous power on earth. Along with our comrades in Europe and internationally, we seek to reforge the Fourth International of Leon Trotsky to lead the fight for new October Revolutions around the world. ■

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips a week in December.

Our next issue will be dated January 5.

Spark: Fake Socialists Salute Confederate Flag

The racist oppression of black people is the bedrock of American capitalism. And nothing symbolizes that oppression more than the Confederate flag. When 50,000 people marched against the racist banner in Columbia, South Carolina last January, we wrote: “They came because they know what the Confederate flag stands for: black enslavement and racist murder, KKK cross-burnings and church bombings, the lynching of any who would fight for the rights of blacks and labor” (“Down With the Confederate Flag of Slavery!” WV No. 728, 28 January). Against the racists who uphold this rag as a symbol of Southern “heritage,” protesters’ signs declared, “Your Heritage Is My Slavery.”

But the self-styled “socialists” of a small group called Spark obscenely pander to the racist rabble. While acknowledging the flag’s heritage of slavery and segregation, *Spark* (24 January) proclaimed in a headline, “The Confederate Flag: A Double-Edged Symbol,” writing:

“The Confederate flag became a symbol of the South’s resistance to regional domination by the North. It is the symbol taken up not only by the former plantation owners, but also by many poor whites as a distorted expression of their opposition to the exploitation of industrial and financial capital.”

One would never know from reading this article that Marxists, including Karl Marx himself, organized support to the North in the Civil War that smashed the slave system. The Civil War was the last great bourgeois-democratic revolution. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the victorious Northern capitalists, who sealed an alliance with the ex-slaveholders in the Compromise of 1877, overturning the radical-democratic Reconstruction period. Wherever the Confederate banner flies it is a reminder that there is much unfinished business from the Civil War—the second American revolution—to take care of. We say: Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!

Not so Spark. Spark writes that South-

ern politicians waved the Confederate flag to gain support against the civil rights movement. But it echoes their “states’ rights” rhetoric, uncritically talking of “sentiments many people in the region had that the South was dominated by big financial capital coming from the North, and more specifically by Wall Street and the New York bankers.” “New York bankers”? You don’t have to be Woody



WV Photo

SL supporter Richard Bradley cuts down hated flag of slavery flying in San Francisco Civic Center, 1984.

Allen to know what that means in the mouths of Southern white politicians—or, for that matter, of the Nazi skinhead scum from the U.S. to Europe who rally for genocide beneath the flag of slavery!

Unable to answer our criticism of their disgusting defense of the flag of slavery, a leading Spark member physically attacked one of our comrades at the University of California at Los Angeles on November 14. This attack was successfully repulsed. This is not the first time this reformist outfit and its French patron, Lutte Ouvrière (LO), which occasionally masquerade as Trotskyist, have substi-

tuted the fist for the brain to defend their wretched capitulations to racism and other expressions of social backwardness. When LO assaulted a comrade of our French section in May 1999—breaking his arm in four places—for exposing LO’s social-chauvinist support to its own ruling class in the Balkans War, this gangsterism provoked an outcry among many on the French left.

The political hallmark of LO/Spark is abject workerism—adaptation to and glorification of backward consciousness, including racism, within the working class (see the Spartacist pamphlet *Lutte Ouvrière and Spark: Workerism and National Narrowness*, May 1988). Flowing from this workerism is a deepgoing antipathy to struggles against the special oppression of blacks, immigrants, women and gays, which are deemed divisive. LO has excluded the militant gay rights and AIDS activist group ACT-UP from its annual fete outside Paris. It long denied that Le Pen and his gang were fascists, seeking to find common ground with supporters of Le Pen’s National Front. In 1994, at the height of a government campaign to brand youth of North African descent as “criminals” and “terrorists,” LO demonstratively backed the racist anti-Muslim frenzy in a way even Le Pen’s fascists did not dare do. When 19 young women were expelled from school for wearing Islamic headscarves, LO organized a *counterdemonstration* in Lille against high school students striking to defend the women (see “France: Racist Edict Targets Schoolgirls” in *Women and Revolution* No. 44, Winter 1994-Spring 1995).

In the U.S., this workerism leads Spark to justify the most backward racist prejudices. Outrageously portraying the Klansmen who lynched James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas two years ago as poor misguided workers, *Spark* (15 June 1998) presented the following disgustingly sympathetic account of the racist killers:

“The three young white men who dragged Byrd to his death had already spent time

in prison for theft and drug dealing. Like many other poor working class whites, they had little to show for their lives, little hope for something better. While in prison, they seemed to have responded to racist appeals, to the ideas which are peddled wholesale throughout the white working class seeking to blame black people for the problems that white working people confront in this class society.”

In tailing after the most backward sectors of the working class with its sub-reformist drivel, Spark implicitly embraces the notion that all white workers are racist and rejects any possibility of mobilizing the multiracial labor movement in the fight for black freedom. Before attacking our comrade at UCLA, the Spark thug dismissed the 50,000 who turned out at Columbia, South Carolina as a “bunch of petty-bourgeois” at a “Democratic Party election rally.” For them, it mattered not at all that many of the marchers were working people, including a contingent of the largely black International Longshoremen’s Association Local 1422, which three days later waged a bitter battle against hundreds of union-busting cops on the Charleston, South Carolina waterfront.

The Democrats did indeed try to channel the anger of the Columbia marchers into support for this party of racist American capitalism; as our headline declared, “Racist Democratic Party Hustles Black Vote.” We fight to break workers and minorities from the Democratic Party and win them to the fight for socialist revolution to overthrow racist American capitalism. Spark’s appeals to the most backward consciousness serve only to reinforce illusions in the Democrats. In contrast to the reactionary workerism of Spark/LO, we stand with Lenin, fighting to forge a revolutionary workers party that will act as the tribune of the people in combatting every manifestation of injustice and oppression. One example of that was our successful mobilization in 1984 to tear down the Confederate flag of slavery raised by Democratic mayor (now Senator) Dianne Feinstein in San Francisco. One of the first acts of a revolutionary workers government would be to tear down every Confederate flag and monument, replacing them with the red flag of the working class and monuments to our heroes, from Frederick Douglass, John Brown and Harriet Tubman to the countless working men and women who gave their lives in the fight to establish unions in the South. ■

Free Leonard Peltier!

American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Leonard Peltier, one of America’s most prominent political prisoners, has been buried alive in federal prison hell-holes for over 23 years, unjustly jailed for a crime the government knows he did not commit. Peltier was framed up for the shooting deaths of two FBI agents killed during the Feds’ massive siege of the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota in 1975. Denied adequate medical care for an eye disease, Peltier is today nearly blind. Yet the FBI continues its vendetta to keep this courageous fighter for Native American Indian rights behind bars for the rest of his life. With Peltier’s petition for executive clemency finally awaiting review by President Clinton after being held up by Janet Reno’s Justice Department for seven years, the FBI is lobbying furiously to make sure it is denied. ***Freedom now for Leonard Peltier!***

AIM fell within the government’s cross hairs in 1975 because it was attempting to combat the enforced poverty of Native Americans and the continued theft of their lands by the Feds and the energy companies, which were intent on grabbing the rich uranium deposits under Sioux land in western

South Dakota. Pine Ridge became a war zone as the hated Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the FBI trained and armed thugs to terrorize and crush Indian activists. Between 1973-1976, these killers carried out more than 300 attacks, murdering at least 69 people.

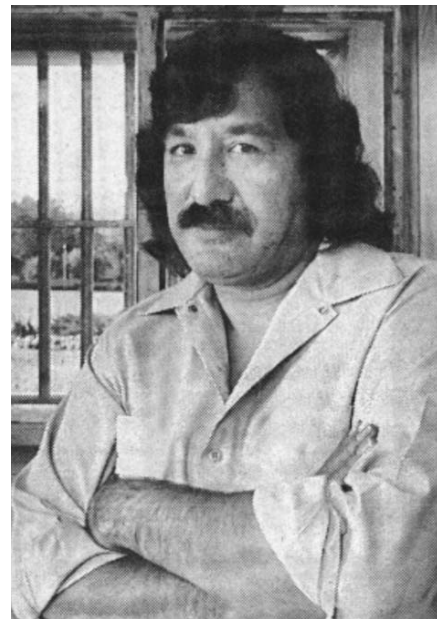
When 250 FBI and BIA agents, SWAT cops and local vigilantes launched an assault against Pine Ridge in June 1975 and the FBI came up two agents short, Peltier and three others were charged with their deaths. Charges were dropped against one of them, while AIM supporters Dino Butler and Bob Robideau were acquitted in a trial in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as jurors stated that they did not believe the government witnesses and that it seemed “pretty much a clear-cut case of self-defense” against the murderous FBI raid.

The government went into overdrive to assure a conviction against Peltier after the Feds had dragged him back from refuge in Canada. The prosecution concealed ballistics tests which showed that Peltier’s gun could not have been used in the shooting, while the trial judge ruled out any possibility of another acquittal on grounds of self-defense by refusing to allow any evi-

dence of government terror against Pine Ridge activists. At the trial, the prosecutors claimed that Peltier shot the agents at close range; by the time of a 1985 appeal hearing the lead government attorney admitted, “We can’t prove who shot those agents.”

The Feds’ conspiracy against Peltier and other AIM leaders was orchestrated right from the top, through the FBI’s notorious “Counter-Intelligence Program.” COINTELPRO was launched against the Communist Party and was then deployed to “neutralize” radical organizations in the 1960s, particularly the Black Panther Party, whose members were framed up and imprisoned by the hundreds while 38 were killed in cold blood. Despite the massive evidence of Peltier’s innocence, the courts have repeatedly turned down his appeals, just as his requests for parole have been denied again and again since he became eligible in 1993. At a hearing last June, in a decision now under appeal to the U.S. Parole Commission, the parole officer outrageously turned Peltier down cold without even bothering to look at the materials his lawyers submitted.

Around the world, Leonard Peltier has come to symbolize racist American



Eli Reichman

AIM leader Leonard Peltier has been imprisoned for over 23 years as result of FBI frame-up.

repression of this country’s indigenous peoples; more precisely, of the relative few who survived centuries of hideous oppression and mass murder. The Partisan Defense Committee has repeatedly protested his continued imprisonment and contributed to his defense. For more information contact the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, P.O. Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, (785) 842-5774.



Racist terror in the “new South Africa”: televised videotape of sadistic cop attack on three black immigrants in 1998.

SABC video

South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

kept on urging the dog to “vat die k---r” (get the k---r). This is the racist epithet for blacks understood by not only cops but also most dogs owned by South African whites.

I have never experienced such crude, naked, barbaric brutality in my life. As the immigrants were screaming in horrifying pain, the dog handler was watching any kick or move in response to pain, answering with mean punches and army boot kicks. The helpless, innocent men had to defend their lives against both cops and dogs attacking simultaneously. These guys were left bleeding profusely from multiple dog bite wounds in an old mine dump “secret location” with no medical attention.

Black life is getting ever cheaper in South Africa, “new” or old. How did the video cassette get to the media? These racist pigs were having a *braai* (barbecue) and brought the video of blacks screaming for their lives as entertainment. One of those in attendance was hard up for money and sold it to the media.

One of the annoying aspects of this incident is the hypocrisy of the capitalist ANC [African National Congress] ministers, expressing shock and demanding the arrest of the racist cops. They were not shocked. They were shown the video well before the broadcast, so their reaction of shock and anger in front of TV cameras was stage playing. People’s reaction to this is very widespread, particularly in the townships, workplaces and so forth. I have even heard unconfirmed reports about one of the workers’ hostels, which is mainly Zulu, planning a protest march by all, irrespective of language group or political affiliation.

It is criminal for the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the pro-capitalist COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions] misleadership not to take up the necessary struggle to mobilise the combative South African proletariat to protect their international working-class brothers against the reaction of the neo-apartheid, ANC-led bourgeois state. Keep Left, which is buried in the SACP and is associated with the British Socialist Workers Party of the late Tony Cliff, calls to “lock up racist police” (*Keep Left!*, November 2000). This echoes the national police commissioner who blames a few “rogue elements.” Keep Left support cops in the unions. Preaching illusions that the bourgeois state can be reformed is in line with Keep Left’s unswerving electoral support to the ANC.

Black or white, cops are attack dogs of the bourgeoisie. Cops and security guards out of the unions! Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Workers have no country!

In another recent incident, Eugene Terreblanche, leader of the neo-Nazi Afrikaans Weerstandbeweging (Afrikaans Resistance Movement), attacked two black men working in a petrol station, leaving one of them, a breadwinner, permanently paralysed with brain damage. His assailant spent less than a year of a six-year jail sentence in prison. In September, a white Sasolburg employer tied and dragged his black employee at the

back of a van for five kilometres [three miles] through the black township at night, leaving pieces of flesh in the streets. The ANC government arranged for the case to be heard 70 kilometres away from the protesting local black community. In August, a black girl teenager was painted white and paraded naked in the streets of Louis Trichardt [a resort town in the Northern Province] for allegedly shoplifting.

At the formerly whites-only Bryanston High School in Johannesburg, a black “intruder,” Lindelani Khanyile, nearly lost sight in his left eye and was not able to write the half-yearly examinations after a premeditated attack in June by three of his white fellow students. The school found the three guilty and suspended them, but the decision was

student with a pair of scissors after Babeile had been pushed from behind. A *Sowetan* article of 18 September reports: “Activists and witnesses in Babeile’s trial said that the magistrate rejected evidence that the youth had been provoked when he stabbed Christoffel Erasmus in the neck. He was allegedly taunted and physically attacked by a group of about 10 white boys who hurled racial abuse at him during lunch that day.” Babeile was convicted and imprisoned in an ANC government jail in 1998, sentenced to five years, two of which are suspended. His appeal against the nature of his conviction was rejected this June by the Kimberly High Court.

In Natal, a white farmer destroyed all the graves of black people on his property, fearing their use as evidence in land



Waselehu/i-Africa

Unemployed gold miners from Lesotho. As South Africa’s unemployment rate soars, ANC regime targets immigrant workers.

reversed by the ANC head of the province’s education department “because they showed remorse.”

Meanwhile, Andrew Babeile from formerly whites-only, mainly Afrikaaner Vryburg High School in Huhudi township in the North West Province is languishing in jail following the stabbing of a white

claims. The list goes on and on. This year, several workers, members of the NUMSA metal workers union, were fired for solidarising with a co-worker who refused to wash the boss’s dog.

But what has been even more worrying is the manifestation of these racist attacks in a more organised fashion. A

Jailed for Speaking Out for Mumia

Free Clark Kissinger—Drop All Charges!

The following protest was sent by the Partisan Defense Committee on December 6 to Attorney General Janet Reno.

This afternoon, Clark Kissinger, a political activist for over 30 years, was handcuffed and dragged away to a Philadelphia jail. His “crime”? Exercising his rights, supposedly protected under the First Amendment, to speak out against the threatened execution of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. We demand: Free Clark Kissinger! Drop all charges!

Mr. Kissinger was targeted by the state and federal police for his role as an organizer and spokesman on Jamal’s

behalf. He was one of 96 of Jamal’s supporters arrested at a Liberty Bell protest in July 1999, charged with “failing to obey a lawful order,” the legal equivalent of a traffic offense. Because they demanded a jury trial, Kissinger and six others were given a one-year “supervised probation,” the conditions of which were meant to prevent him continuing his efforts opposing Jamal’s execution. Today, Kissinger was ordered to jail for 90 days, for violating the police-state probation conditions by speaking at a protest for Jamal outside the Republican National Convention (RNC). The protests outside the RNC

were met with mass arrests on bogus felony charges, with bail of up to a half-million dollars imposed.

This prosecutorial and court vendetta is solely intended to silence Jamal and his supporters to prepare the way for his legal lynching. Shortly before condemning Mr. Kissinger to jail, U.S. Magistrate Arnold Rapoport declared, “A trail of disruption follows this man wherever he goes.” The “trail of disruption” haunting the forces of “law and order” screaming for Jamal’s execution is the growing support for Jamal worldwide, including unions representing millions of workers.

The prosecution of Jamal’s supporters with such a vengeance is testament to the fact that the effort to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal is supported by the highest levels of the American ruling class and its agents of repression. We demand hands off all Mumia supporters. Free Clark Kissinger! Drop all the charges and restrictions!

(continued from page 1)

administration, including former members of the Communist Party like Jorge Castañeda, the new foreign minister, who previously stumped for the left-talking bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, but this year cynically supported Fox as a “democratic” alternative to the PRI. This “left”-right bloc with the PAN is an expression of the fake left’s embrace of the “death of communism” internationally since the destruction of the Soviet Union. In an *Espartaco* supplement (June 2000) issued before the elections, our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) proclaimed: “Not One Vote for the PRI, PAN or PRD! For the Political Independence of the Proletariat!” (see *WV* No. 739, 28 July).

In his first act as president, Fox ordered the “withdrawal” of 1,500 troops from positions encircling EZLN Zapatista peasant insurgents in the state of Chiapas while promising to pursue a “peace” agreement. But 60,000 troops remain there, and those “withdrawn” have simply been moved to their barracks. After years of tailing the PRD, the petty-bourgeois EZLN now welcomes Fox’s “peace” moves and is sending “sub-commander” Marcos to Mexico City in February. The London *Economist* (28 October) summed up Fox’s “democratic” credentials: “He is, say some, a *caudillo*, a strong-arm ruler with dictatorial instincts in the best Latin American tradition.” And standing behind its Mexican lackeys is the U.S. imperialist colossus, which has funneled vast quantities of military aid to the war of terror against the peasant insurgents in Chiapas, Guerrero and elsewhere.

Since the imposition of NAFTA in 1994, U.S. imperialism has planted its boot even more firmly on the neck of the very dependent Mexican bourgeoisie. Direct foreign investment, dominated by the U.S., has more than tripled. Mexico is now the U.S.' second-largest trade partner, with nearly 90 percent of Mexico's exports going to the U.S., almost half of them from the foreign-owned *maquiladora* factories that import materials or parts to assemble finished goods for re-export. Since 1994, prices for basic necessities like tortillas rose over 400 percent while real wages plummeted by some 25 percent and are barely two-thirds what they were 30 years ago. And the more interconnected the Mexican and U.S. economies become, the more devastating a recession in the U.S. would be for semi-colonial Mexico.

Fox dreams of a North American “common market,” including utopian visions of an “open border” with the U.S. and equalizing wages between the two countries, promoted as well by Castañeda. But while demanding wider access to cheap labor in Mexico, the American bourgeoisie is not about to



AP

Mexican military occupation of Chiapas, backed by Pentagon, to smash Zapatista peasant insurgents.

open its doors to unrestricted immigration by impoverished Mexican workers and peasants. In a 1991 joint statement of the GEM, the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Trotskyist League of Canada, we denounced NAFTA as “an expression of the U.S. ruling class’ belief in its ‘Manifest Destiny’ to dominate the Western Hemisphere” and declared: “Stop U.S. ‘Free Trade’ Rape of Mexico!” (WV No. 530, 5 July 1991). We demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

As the U.S. and Mexican economies are increasingly interpenetrated, there is a tremendous opportunity for joint class struggle uniting workers in Mexico and the U.S. against the imperialist exploiters. This requires a political struggle against the AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy, which pushes protectionist poison against Mexican workers and binds workers in the U.S. to the imperialist rulers. The SL/U.S. seeks to forge a workers party to lead the multiracial proletariat in a workers revolution that sweeps away the racist U.S. bourgeoisie, the main enemy of the world's peoples. The vast resources of a workers America will be used to lift the working masses of Latin America out of poverty and to right the many wrongs perpetrated by the bloodsoaked imperialists.

We reprint below an abridged version of an article from *Espartaco* No. 14 (Autumn-Winter 2000) on the recent elections which focuses on the need to break Mexican workers from the corporatist and nationalist misleaders of the labor movement.

* * *

In the aftermath of the electoral victory of Vicente Fox Quesada of the PAN, December 1 will mark the end of seven decades of PRI rule. After its presidential electoral defeat, the PRI has also lost a myriad of city and state governments and now faces a stampede. Internal groups within the PRI demand the expulsion of Zedillo, while the previous CEN (National Executive Committee) has been almost completely replaced. The army and navy are both involved in drug trafficking scandals, while various former government functionaries, members of the PRI, face court proceedings or are on the run. The bourgeois-nationalist PRD, on the other hand, was left way behind in the electoral race, losing some of its most important bastions. It barely managed to keep the top government post in Mexico City. Facing its defeat, the PRD now tries to pose

as a “firm opposition” to the rightist, clericalist PAN.

During meetings with Canadian businessmen, Fox announced his plans for a "full opening," i.e., the privatization of the petrochemical and electrical industries, looking to form a North American Common Market modeled after the European Union. American imperialism is far from happy with the idea of a common market on those terms. And Fox will encounter many problems in trying to introduce his pro-imperialist plans in Mexico. According to the pro-PRD bourgeois newspaper, *La Jornada* (18 August), 75 million Mexicans live in poverty (i.e., nearly 75 percent of the population). After breaking the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico] strike, which deeply polarized Mexican society for nearly ten months, the bourgeoisie still faces the problem of the persistence of the EZLN peasant guerrilla struggle and constant demonstrations of unrest within the working class, the peasantry, teachers, students and others.

The recent Volkswagen strike—declared “nonexistent” by the Conciliation and Arbitration Board [equivalent to an anti-strike injunction]—the flight attendants strike which was halted by threats of government occupation (invoking a national emergency law), the sugar workers strike last year, the DINA [bus factory] strike and others more recently, and various calls for strikes—such as by STUNAM [UNAM campus workers], which demanded a 50 percent wage increase—show that within the working class there is deep unrest and a will to struggle. The workers recognize that there have been important changes in Mexico’s political structure, and they have great expectations of finally being able to satisfy their and their families’ daily needs. But any illusion that the election of the PAN is an indication of the “democratic convictions” of the bourgeoisie is deadly. No stable bourgeois democracy can exist in this country. The weakness of the Mexican bourgeoisie itself, subordinated to imperialism and seeking to contain the proletariat, does not leave it room for this luxury characteristic of the bourgeoisies of developed countries.

We Spartacists are guided in our struggle for socialist revolution in Mexico by the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution. Countries of belated capitalist development like Mexico are characterized by a combined and uneven devel-

opment whereby the most modern forms of capitalist exploitation coexist with the most primitive production methods. The national bourgeoisie is simply too weak and subordinated to imperialism to achieve elementary democratic tasks, such as the solution of the agrarian problem, women's rights, free education, national emancipation, etc. By contrast, imperialism has created a powerful, young proletariat whose numbers and cohesion have grown apace with imperialist investment. Capitalism thus generates its own gravedigger. It is up to the proletariat to satisfy these democratic demands by establishing its own class rule through a socialist revolution, rallying behind itself the masses of the poor and oppressed of the city and countryside and fighting to extend the revolution internationally, particularly to the powerful multiracial proletariat in the U.S.

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Many of those who voted for the PAN did so in order to throw the PRI out of the presidency and not out of devotion to the right-wing, reactionary politics of the PAN, the main spokesmen for so-called "neoliberalism." The bourgeoisie and its media try to paint the PAN's ascendance to power as the consolidation of "democracy" in Mexico. In reality, the victory of the PAN foreshadows frontal attacks against workers, women and minorities. A heated national debate has erupted over the PAN's attacks on abortion. Thus, the misogynous and reactionary politics of the PAN are being felt from Baja California, with the case of Paulina, a teenager who was raped and was then forced by the PAN state government and the church to bear the child, to Guanajuato, where "reforms" penalizing abortion in rape cases were finally vetoed by the governor under the pressure of public opinion.

Meanwhile, seeking to take advantage of the situation to recover some of its lost supporters, the PRD is posing as a “friend” of women through the introduction of the so-called “Robles Law,” which accepts a deformed fetus and danger to the mother as grounds for legal abortion. The PRD’s pathetic and timid opposition to the PAN and the church does not even begin to address the needs of women in Mexico today. While recognizing their narrowness, we defend these laws against the attacks of the reactionaries. But despite its occasional “populist” rhetoric, the PRD is a bourgeois party, pillar of the system of capitalist exploitation and imperialist rule. We fight for: Free abortion on demand! Full democratic rights for homosexuals!

The oppression of women is rooted in the system of capitalist exploitation, and therefore putting an end to it cannot be separated from the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. The struggle for women's emancipation has a strategic character for socialist revolution in Mexico, where imperialist investment has integrated ever greater numbers of women into the productive process as proletarians, particularly in the *maquiladoras* in the north. Won to the program of socialist revolution, these women proletarians will be vanguard fighters for the social liberation of all the oppressed and working people of Mexico. For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

The Mexican proletariat has to go from being a class in itself—defined solely by its relation to the means of production—to a class for itself, one conscious that it has to take power and create a socialist society where those who labor rule. The indispensable tool for forging this consciousness in the working class is a Leninist-Trotskyist party. In Mexico, the main obstacle to the proletariat's acquisition of revolutionary consciousness is the ideology of bourgeois nationalism, promoted since the Mexican Revolution, which seeks to erase the fundamental division of society into classes with counterposed interests, presenting both exploiters and exploited as simply "Mexicans" oppressed by Yankee imperialism. The Grupo Espartaquista de México,

[illegible]



Casasola Archive

Left: Lázaro Cárdenas utilized nationalism as ideological weapon to subordinate working class to his bourgeois regime in the 1930s. Right: Women workers in 1920s organized by CROM labor federation, predecessor to CTM.



no credit

section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), has set itself the goal of forging a revolutionary, internationalist party capable of leading the working class to power.

Break the Corporatist Stranglehold over the Unions!

In Mexico, the main trade-union federation, the CTM, has been directly tied to the capitalist state through the PRI, which propped up its rule for more than 71 years with the mythology of the Mexican Revolution, trying to pose as the party that represents the Mexican people and their interests. The CTM unions are organically part of a bourgeois political party, which was moreover the ruling party of an essentially one-party state. We oppose such corporatism as one of the most open forms of subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

Mexican corporatism affects all unions, not just the CTM and other PRI-affiliated unions. Despite the fracturing of PRI corporatism, there has not been an open struggle by the proletariat against control by the capitalist class. This is due to the hegemony of bourgeois nationalism within the working class, propped up by the trade-union bureaucracies, the labor lieutenants of capital. As we explained in *Espartaco* No. 10 (Autumn-Winter 1997): “But in the absence of a revolutionary party fighting for the political independence of the working class, the workers and their organizations will continue to be pawns of the parliamentary ambitions of bourgeois-nationalist politicians. As Cárdenas seeks to generate a more ‘populist’ and ‘national’ face for this regime of bourgeois austerity, he can count on political support from ‘independent’ unions” (reprinted in *WV* No. 672, 8 August 1997).

The CTM union bureaucrats typically rule with an iron fist of repression. The so-called “independent” unions are indeed more democratic, and we Marxists are certainly not indifferent to that. However, the “independent” union tops tie the workers to the Mexican bourgeoisie through other means, through nationalist ideology and illusions in “democratic” reform of the capitalist state. Revolutionaries seek to intervene in the unions to replace the bureaucratic and nationalist leaderships with a leadership opposed to *all* bourgeois parties.

In his article “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940), Leon Trotsky explains:

“Inasmuch as the chief role in backward countries is not played by national but by foreign capitalism, the national bourgeoisie occupies, in the sense of its social position, a much more minor position than corresponds with the development of industry. Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianizes the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country. In these conditions the national government, to the extent that it tries to show resistance to foreign capital, is compelled to a greater or lesser degree to lean on the proletariat. On the other hand, the governments of those backward countries which consider it inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital destroy the labor organizations and institute a more or less totalitarian regime. “Thus, the feebleness of the national bourgeoisie, the absence of traditions of municipal self-government, the pressure of foreign capitalism, and the relatively rapid growth of the proletariat cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime.”

Trotsky wrote the above in part based directly on the case of Mexico at the time. Many Mexicans look back with fond nostalgia on the reforms under Lázaro Cárdenas. What’s important to understand, however, is precisely the continuity of the present Mexican state with the Cárdenas period. Nothing essentially changed for 50 years in the way the Mexican unions and state are organized and how they function. Trotsky explained that the fact that the main role in colonial and semicolonial countries is played not by national capitalism but by imperialist capitalism does not obviate but instead reinforces the need for direct links with the state. This is the most important social basis for the bonapartist and semi-bonapartist character of governments in the colonies and backward countries in general. Trotsky emphasized:

“Does this mean that in the epoch of imperialism independent trade unions are generally impossible? It would be fundamentally incorrect to pose the question this way. Impossible are the independent or semi-independent reformist trade unions. Wholly possible are revolutionary trade unions that not only are not stockholders of imperialist policy but that set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism. In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that

they are conscious of being, in addition the organs of proletarian revolution....

“As a matter of fact, the independence of the trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state, can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International.”

Permanent Revolution vs. Cardenista Nationalism

With the end of PRI domination, Mexico is experiencing important political changes. For revolutionary Marxists, it is necessary to draw the lessons of the past to understand the present and be able to lead the struggles of the proletariat to victory.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 was a confirmation in the negative of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. The political and social relationships in the country were insufficiently mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses. Thus the Mexican Revolution produced only very partial results directed entirely against the working masses. The Constitutionals, bourgeois victors emerging out of the revolution, were unable to effect the aims of a national-democratic revolution. They had to confront not only the opposition of recalcitrant wings of the bourgeoisie and Catholic church but also the constant challenge of the proletariat in the cities and the impoverished peasantry in the countryside, all the while tacking and veering vis-à-vis U.S. imperialism. By the end of the Mexican Revolution, American capital had actually strengthened its economic stranglehold on the country at the expense of its imperialist rivals.

Both to achieve victory in the civil war against [insurgent peasant leaders] Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata and to consolidate their rule in the aftermath of the revolution, the Constitutionals had to lean on the proletariat for political and military support, at the same time politically subordinating the working class to their rule. The first post-revolutionary Mexican labor federation, the Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM), illustrates this point.

The CROM founding convention was called under the auspices of and funded by the government to undercut the [anarcho-syndicalist] Casa del Obrero

Mundial. While the program passed at this convention opposed any cooperation with the government (!), under the leadership of Luis Morones the CROM quickly became a servile ally of the government, dependent on government subsidies for its “dues.”

Shortly after founding the CROM, Morones and his cronies launched the PLM (Mexican Labor Party) in order to support the presidential candidacy of Constitutionalist general Alvaro Obregón. But even before the PLM was proclaimed, the CROM had made a deal with Obregón that he would create a labor ministry to be run by “a person closely identified with labor interests” and that the CROM would be granted special status and access to state support and facilities.

Once in power, Obregón did not deliver on his promise for a labor ministry. Nonetheless, he placed many government departments under the control of the CROM and PLM and permitted the heads of these departments to levy “spontaneous contributions” from their employees for the direct benefit of the PLM and CROM, including especially their leaderships. At the same time, Obregón promptly created the National Agrarian Party (PNA) as a counterweight to the PLM.

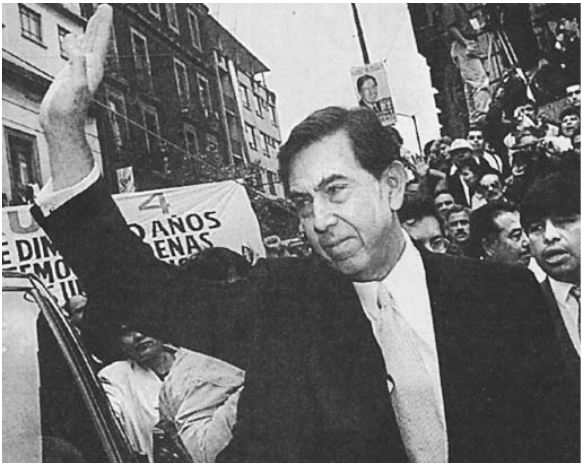
In 1924, Obregón faced an armed challenge led by Adolfo De la Huerta, a former ally, when Obregón decided to designate as his successor Plutarco Elías Calles, who was considered a “radical” by the *hacendados* [large landowners] and Catholic hierarchy. Having lost popularity within the army because of cuts in the military budget, Obregón defeated De la Huerta with the support of American arms shipments. Obregón also had the support of peasant militias organized in the PNA and of armed workers from the CROM.

Similarly, Calles mobilized the peasant PNA to help crush the Catholic fundamentalist guerrillas of the *Cristiada* [peasant-based uprising against anti-clerical provisions in the constitution], at the same time using his control over the CROM as a base of support against rebel bourgeois factions and against all working-class opposition. During Calles’ regime, the CROM signed a “social pact” with the state: in exchange for parliamentary seats, government posts and government approval of union organizing campaigns, the CROM aided in the persecution of leftists and dissidents and in strikebreaking, such as in the railroad strike of 1926.

Calles successfully sought to play sectors of the working class against each other. When the CROM leadership, already discredited by its cynically overt class collaboration, sought to improve its reputation among the working class by reneging on its “social pact,” the government responded by cutting the CROM’s funds and supporting—for an extremely short period—dissident labor groups. The conflicts ended in armed confrontations between the CROM and the dissident workers groups. Calles, through his puppet Emilio Portes Gil, then attacked the latter. With the *Cristiada* rebellion contained, any threat from Obregón eliminated and relations with

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Carlos Mamahua



AP

January 2000: Cops beat striking campus worker during yearlong UNAM student occupation. Mexico City administration under PRD of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (above) repeatedly mobilized riot cops against student strikers, workers.

Mexico...

(continued from page 9)

U.S. imperialism stabilized, Calles had little further use for the badly compromised CROM/PLM. In 1929, Calles founded the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), claiming that it was the party “of the Revolution,” regimenting and co-opting within it the majority of the rival bourgeois factions.

The worldwide depression at the end of the 1920s was an international catastrophe in the capitalist countries. The economies in countries subordinated to imperialism, like Mexico, were particularly hard hit. The number of unemployed in Mexico tripled between 1929 and 1933, while the minimum wage covered but a third of the basic needs of working-class families.

The new “Six Year Plan” of 1933 reflected the concerns of the bourgeoisie in the face of an upsurge in working-class struggles, seeking to reduce Mexico’s economic dependence on the United States and offering social reforms to lessen worker discontent. This was how General Lázaro Cárdenas, one of the spokesmen for social reforms, came to be designated as successor to the “maximum leader” Calles.

The Cárdenas Myth

Many workers and poor people in the city and the countryside see in Lázaro Cárdenas a “progressive” and “anti-imperialist” figure; sectors of the “populist” bourgeoisie invoke his name before the workers. However, Cárdenas’ “legacy” was the consolidation of the Mexican bourgeois regime. It was Cárdenas who took Calles’ PNR and transformed it from a machine of personal power into an instrument capable of organizing Mexico’s political forces into a corporatist structure.

Cárdenas was neither a socialist nor an anti-imperialist. In fact, at the end of his government in 1940, the Mexican economy was more dependent on the United States than ever before. His intention was to modernize the country for the benefit of the Mexican bourgeoisie, never to put its rule in question. Given the weakness of the domestic bourgeoisie, like his predecessors Obregón and Calles he required the support of the working class against both the bourgeois factions opposed to the nationalist reforms and the excessive expectations of the imperialists. Ever since the Mexican Revolution, the bourgeoisie has used nationalism, opportunist anti-clericalism and a socialist-tinged populist rhetoric as an ideological weapon in consolidating its power against competing factions and justifying its repression of workers’ struggles and peasant insurrections. Cárdenas was simply its best exponent.

Cárdenas sought to undercut Calles and his other rivals by winning support from within the PNR and the army. He also sought to repair the relations between the state and the church. The famous “socialist education,” institutionalized in the constitution two months before Cárdenas took power, had no other objective than to raise the level of education of the poor and workers to make them more suitable for wage labor and more productive for the bourgeoisie. He took the side of the workers in important struggles in order to gain their confidence, bringing them under the control of the iron-fisted CTM bureaucracy.

Cárdenas often called on the workers to organize in a single federation—under his influence—with the perspective of co-opting the federation in his plan for a party of “sectors”: military, worker, “popular” and peasant. This is an illustration of corporatist bonapartism. At the same time, he opposed the organizing of peasants by the workers federations and sought to organize the peasants as a counterweight to the workers. Thus the PRI’s predecessor, the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM), was formed in 1938 by the PNR, the CTM and peasant, military and “popular” sectors.



no credit

As imperialist oil investments were concentrated in Venezuela at the end of the Depression, massive layoffs continued in Mexico. In 1935, workers in Tampico conducted three general strikes in solidarity with the oil workers. Strikes continued until 1940, when Cárdenas unleashed the forces of the state to repress strikers at the old Azcapotzalco refinery. This was the context in which Cárdenas expropriated the oil industry.

The expropriation of the railroads came about in a similar context. In May 1936, 45,000 railroad workers went on strike. The strike was declared illegal by the Conciliation and Arbitration Board and was suspended under threat of army intervention. Throughout the country, there were protest rallies against the government in solidarity with the workers. The following month, the newly founded CTM organized a national 24-hour strike in protest against the repression of the railroad strike. The economy came to a halt: there was no transportation or electricity. A year later, Cárdenas expropriated the railroads.

In August 1936, an agricultural workers strike in the Lagunera region brought out more than 20,000 workers, among whom the Communist Party (PCM) had some influence. That October, the Cárdenas government issued a decree expropriating and distributing the land in the area and establishing the basis for agrarian reform.

We defend nationalized industry against privatizations. The nationalizations were a blow against imperialism, and we stand for the right of colonial and semicolonial countries to exploit their own natural resources. In “Mexico and British Imperialism” (1938), Trotsky explains:

“The oil magnates are not rank-and-file capitalists, not ordinary bourgeoisie. Having seized the richest natural resources of a foreign country, standing on their billions and supported by the military and diplomatic forces of their metropolis, they strive to establish in the subjugated country a regime of imperialistic feudalism, subordinating to themselves legislation, jurisprudence, and administration. Under these conditions expropriation is the only effective

means of safeguarding national independence and the elementary conditions of democracy.

“What direction the further economic development of Mexico may take depends decisively upon factors of an international character. But this is a question of the future.”

The Mexican bourgeoisie is subordinated to U.S. imperialism, but it is not just a puppet. Cárdenas took advantage of interimperialist rivalries to maneuver and make lucrative economic agreements for Mexico. For example, he infuriated American imperialism by selling oil to the Nazis. He also mollified the Mexican proletariat and tweaked the nose of American imperialism by giving political asylum to Leon Trotsky, founder and leader of the Fourth International, co-leader with Lenin of the Bolshevik Party and organizer of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The left-nationalist posture of Cardenism was necessarily very brief—just as long as necessary to derail workers’ discontent.

In Mexico’s case, the struggle against privatizations and the bourgeois assault in the service of the imperialists must be linked to a fight for revolutionary unity with the powerful multiracial American proletariat. The struggles of the Mexican and American proletariat are politically and economically linked, even more tightly since the imposition of the NAFTA “free trade” rape of Mexico by American imperialism. The GEM fights to win the Mexican proletariat to an international revolutionary perspective joining their struggles with those of their class brothers and sisters in the U.S., through combatting the nationalism that chains the proletariat to its bourgeoisie. Correspondingly, our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. fight to break American workers from the reactionary nationalism and racism against blacks and immigrants that infect the workers movement and serve to tie the workers to the ruling class.

The Main Enemy Is at Home!

The CTM was born out of a workers movement in ascendancy, which also



Castillo/AP

Left: Support rally for 1934 oil workers strike, one of wave of militant struggles that led to Cárdenas’ nationalization of oil industry. Above: Troops escort tankers to break 1989 oil workers strike protesting arrest of union head.

gave rise to the great national industrial unions. Founded in 1936, the CTM was politically tied to Cárdenas and his government from the beginning. In fact, much of Cárdenas’ initial support had its basis in Lombardo Toledano’s General Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Mexico (CGOCM), a predecessor of the CTM, and in the Proletarian Defense Committee, founded in 1935, through which the Stalinists, the CGOCM, the SME [electricians] and others supported Cárdenas against Calles. The glue that bound the CTM in absolute prostration to the Cárdenas government was the nationalization of oil in March 1938.

The CTM bureaucrats (including the Stalinists, Lombardo Toledano and Fidel Velázquez) and the PRM itself felt compelled to make ritualistic references to “socialism” to deceive the workers. Thus the original slogan of the CTM was “for a society without classes,” and the “Statutes of the Mexican Confederation of Workers” stated:

“The proletariat of Mexico will fight fundamentally for the total abolition of capitalist rule. However, given that Mexico gravitates in the orbit of imperialism, to reach the above-mentioned objective it is indispensable to first attain the political and economic freedom of the country.”

—CTM, 1936-41, Secretaría de Divulgación Ideológica, CEN del PRI (1981)

At bottom this is the Stalinist conception of two-stage revolution—which they stole from the Mensheviks—according to which it is necessary to fight *first* for a “democratic revolution” and only later speak of a socialist revolution. In reality, this has always been a recipe for proletarian defeats.

The role played by the then completely Stalinized PCM was crucial in subordinating the Mexican working class to the bourgeoisie by means of nationalism. At the beginning of the Cárdenas regime, the PCM still upheld the Stalinist “third period” policy and maintained as late as 1935 that Cárdenas and Calles were seeking the same objective: to strengthen the domination of Yankee imperialism. The PCM criticized Lombardo Toledano because although he had broken with the CROM, he still maintained that one had to collaborate with the government. However, this only covered up the PCM’s own class collaboration. In his efforts to consolidate the political subordination of the working class to a supposed “anti-imperialist” wing of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, PCM general secretary Hernán Laborde explained in June 1935 that the slogan was: “With Cárdenas, No; with the Cardenista masses, Yes!” And the PCM was the left wing of the CTM!

The PCM carried out a “self-criticism” in light of the policy of the popular front proclaimed at the Comintern’s Seventh Congress in July 1935, at which fascism was declared the main enemy and that, therefore, it was necessary to build a “united front” against it. In reality, the Comintern was adapting to “democratic” imperialism and it was with those bourgeois forces that it sought to form a so-called “united front.” In countries under



Casasola Archive

CTM labor congress provides platform for candidate of Lázaro Cárdenas’ bourgeois-nationalist PRM, predecessor of PRI, composed of labor, peasant, military and “popular” sectors.

the yoke of “democratic” imperialism, this “united front” conducted under the rubric of the “fight against fascism” meant the betrayal of any struggle for national liberation and independence. Thus, the PCM maintained at the Seventh Congress, in Laborde’s words: “It is necessary to recognize that the *fascist danger* has made us relegate to the background, in a way, the main enemy, which in the conditions of Mexico is imperialism, particularly Yankee imperialism” (cited in Marcela De Neymet, *Cronología del Partido Comunista Mexicano, Primera Parte, 1919-1939* [1981]).

If Laborde begrudgingly accepted unity with “democratic” imperialism against fascism, in most periods the refrain of Stalinists and other class-collaborationists is the “anti-imperialist united front.” This is a recipe for unity with their own national bourgeoisie “against imperialism.” We Spartacists insist that in Mexico the main enemy is at home: it is the Mexican bourgeoisie, lackey of imperialism. Although it wasn’t a mass party, the PCM had a certain influence within the working class, derived from the authority of the October Revolution. In the final analysis, the PCM, tailing Cárdenas, has the main political responsibility for short-circuiting the development of class consciousness in the Mexican proletariat, preventing it from seeing the necessity of building a party to fight in its own class interests.

PRI, PAN, PRD: Parties of the Bourgeoisie

The worn-out corporatist rule of the CTM over the workers movement is in its death agony; it is necessary to draw the lessons of history to avoid falling into the same bourgeois traps. The trade-union

Auxilio UNAM campus cops off campus and out of STUNAM!

Particularly after its humiliating electoral defeat, the bourgeois PRD tries to present itself as a “friend” of workers, women and oppressed minorities, such as homosexuals. After pushing reforms that broadened—to a very limited extent—legal abortion in Mexico City, it published an ad in the bourgeois papers protesting the decision of the Conciliation and Arbitration Board declaring the Volkswagen strike “nonexistent.” Similarly, it “opposed” the government takeover of the ASSA flight stewards strike, and now the PRD deputy and leader of the union, Alejandra Barrales, is proposing a law banning government takeovers.

But the PRD has more than once demonstrated its anti-worker nature, using its *granaderos* [riot police] to attack CGH [UNAM general strike council] students at various points during the combative student strike in defense of public education. These attacks also targeted the SNTE teachers union, workers in Chapingo and many others. This is what remains of Cardenista “populism.” Today the PRD and its trade-union pimps do not have any need to use “socialist” rhetoric to deceive the proletariat, like the CTM and even the PRM had to in their time. The verbiage of bourgeois nationalism is enough. Even so, the purpose is the same: to keep the working class regimented, lulled to sleep with “democratic” illusions in its “own” bourgeoisie.

The PRD has no other purpose than to maintain the regime of capitalist exploitation: it is an enemy of workers, women and the oppressed. Under capitalism, the laws exist to prevent the independent mobilization of the proletariat in struggle for its conquests. The working class can-

Protesters against proposed anti-abortion laws included mother of Paulina, a 13-year-old Guanajuato girl who was raped and then forced by PAN state government and church to bear the child.



Paola García/Reforma

the gangster CTM bureaucracy and their desire for trade-union democracy simply to prettify the PRD and its trade-union pimps. Using pseudo-Marxist justifications, the IG argues that there is a *class* difference between the trade unions affiliated to the PRI and those close to the PRD, using the violence and bureaucratic practices of the CTMers as their apparent criterion. But demagoguery cannot substitute for a Marxist class analysis. For Marxists, violence, dishonesty or lack of democracy do not determine the class nature of things! At bottom, for the IG the class character of the various trade-union organizations is defined by what bourgeois party controls them: the PRI or PRD.

Attempting to give an “orthodox” justification for its line that the PRI-affiliated unions are not unions, in a supplement to *El Internacionalista* (Octo-

policeman (see “IG’s Brazil Cover-Up: Dirty Hands, Cynical Lies,” WV No. 671, 11 July 1997). When the bourgeois state ruled in favor of their opponent, the IG declared that the SFPMVR had ceased to be a trade union, claiming that it had become a formation organized by the bourgeois courts because the presidency was in the hands of the IG’s political opponents, *who had previously been their slate partners!*

The IG now speaks of “police unionism,” making an analogy with the workers organizations established by the tsarist police agent Zubatov in Russia at the turn of the last century. They seek to include in this category the Mexican CTM and CT [Congress of Labor] (“Class Struggle Against ‘Police Unionism’ in Brazil,” *Internationalist*, April-May 1999). With their traditional style of “selective” quotation, the IG seeks to give the impression that the Bolsheviks refused to work in such organizations. But Lenin condemned those who argued that revolutionaries should refuse to work in trade unions led by reactionaries, explaining that the main leaders of the reformist trade unions in the imperialist centers were nothing other than Zubatovs with a different disguise: “The Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux and Legiens are nothing but Zubatovs, differing from our Zubatov only in their European garb and polish, and the civilized, refined and democratically suave manner of conducting their despicable policy” (“*Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* [1920]).

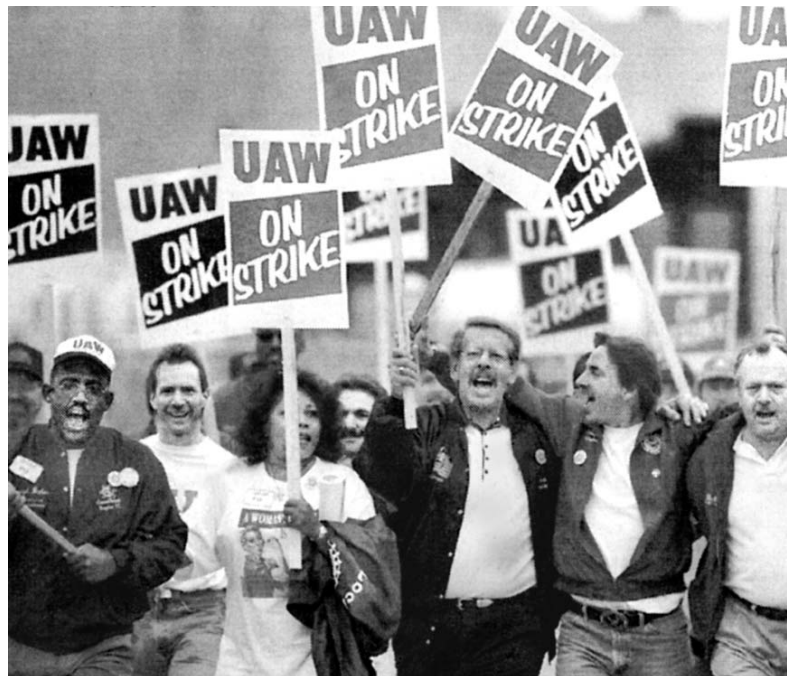
In their most recent polemic against us, the IG tries to answer these arguments by maintaining that “Trotsky himself insisted that in cases where there is no alternative, it is necessary to work within fascist ‘unions.’ This however does not make them into true workers unions. Revolutionaries also do work within the conscript armies, but this does not change the class nature of the armed fist of the bourgeois state” (*El Internacionalista* supplement, June 2000). This anti-Marxist analogy between the CTM and the bourgeois conscript army is nothing but the “justification” for a *union-busting* policy: Why should the workers defend against bourgeois attacks an organization which is not qualitatively different from a bourgeois army?

In Mexico in 1989, [then-president] Salinas jailed the leader of the oil workers, Joaquín Hernández Galicia. No one but the ICL protested this attack and explained to the workers that it was a blow against the working class. No one but the ICL demanded freedom for the jailed oil workers leaders. Whatever the pretext used by the bourgeois state to intervene in the unions, their only purpose is to further subordinate them to the class enemy. Nobody else opposed Salinas’ blow against the oil workers because all the other “leftist” organizations shared—and still share—the IG’s line.

Leninism and the Trade Unions

Demonstrating that its purpose is far from bringing any political clarity to the workers, in its dozens of pages of polemics against us on this question the

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AP



Schwarz/Maclean's

1998 GM Flint strike, Mexican auto workers in Chihuahua plant. Against chauvinist AFL-CIO tops, SL/U.S. fights for class struggle by U.S. workers in solidarity with workers in Mexico.

leaders who are the “alternatives” to the PRI *charros* [cowboys] do not represent any class-struggle option. Their rhetoric and methods may be different—sometimes—but their role is the same: lieutenants of capital within the workers movement. Take, for example, one Miguel Hernández Bello, a dissident trade-union leader in SUTERM [electrical workers] who showed up at the offices of Vicente Fox to beg him, pathetically, to intervene to guarantee that the internal SUTERM elections in November would be “democratic.” Fox didn’t even let him in. And these are the “independent” trade unionists! The illusion that the PAN president-elect is going to “guarantee” democracy in the unions is no different from illusions in the “impartiality” of the bourgeois Conciliation and Arbitration Boards.

When the state intervenes in the trade unions, its only intention is to regulate and increasingly subordinate the unions to the capitalist class and its state. The bourgeois state has no business inside the workers movement. The working class must clean its own house! Bourgeois state out of the unions! The police are not “workers in uniform” but the guard dogs of the bourgeoisie. The presence of policemen inside the unions represents a threat to the very existence of the unions: Police out of the unions!

not play by the bosses’ rules. Down with the Conciliation and Arbitration Boards! For the political independence of the proletariat—Break with all the parties of the bourgeoisie: PRI, PAN, PRD!

IG: “Left” Apologists for Bourgeois Nationalism

The Mexican pseudo-left helps the PRD in its efforts to keep the working class tied to its class enemy, blinded by the ideology of bourgeois nationalism which seeks to deny any differentiation of society into classes with counterposed interests. Among these pseudo-leftists is the so-called Internationalist Group (IG), formed by a handful of defectors from our organization, the International Communist League. Demoralized by the triumph of counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe, they deserted from revolutionary Trotskyism to seek class forces alien to the proletariat and vehicles other than its Leninist revolutionary party to advance the struggle for the emancipation of humanity.

Instead of the Trotskyist perspective of the urgent struggle for the political independence of the proletariat, the IG verbally sides with one set of union bureaucrats, the “independents,” against those in the CTM. The IG seizes on the quite justified hatred of the workers toward

ber 1998) the IG quotes from Trotsky’s “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”:

“In Mexico the trade unions have been transformed by law into semistate institutions and have, in the nature of things, assumed a semitotalitarian character.”

But they conveniently omit the next paragraph from Trotsky’s writing which unmasks the IG’s political line:

“From the foregoing it seems, at first sight, easy to draw the conclusion that the trade unions cease to be trade unions in the imperialist epoch. They leave almost no room at all for workers’ democracy which, in the good old days when free trade ruled on the economic arena, constituted the content of the inner life of labor organization. In the absence of workers’ democracy there cannot be any free struggle for influence over the trade union membership. And because of this, the chief arena of work for revolutionists within the trade unions disappears.

“Such a position, however, would be false to the core.”

In Mexico, the IG’s capitulationist political line has been limited up to now to mere rhetoric. However, in Brazil these centrists put their politics into practice, dragging the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda (SFPMVR) into the bourgeois courts on three occasions in an intrabureaucratic struggle to keep the presidency of the union in the hands of their comrade Geraldo Ribeiro, a *former*

Mexico...

(continued from page 11)

IG has never bothered to explain to the millions of workers still organized within the CTM and, in general, by the CT, how and when their trade unions “stopped” being unions. The labor bureaucracies, based on their social position at the head of the trade unions, negotiate the terms of exploitation with the bourgeoisie, using the power of the organized working class as their trump card.

Thus, at the same time that the CTM and the PRI-affiliated unions in general are characterized by their servility to the bourgeoisie and its state, they are also forced to mobilize their base every once in a while. Last year, for example, there was a large strike of thousands of sugar workers organized by the CTM. Of 245 strikes in 1998, a total of 198 were by PRI-affiliated unions. According to the IG, the CTM is not a trade-union federation because it is organically connected to the PRI; but the PRI no longer controls the state. Thus the convulsive struggles which encompass even the PRI-controlled unions are dismissed by the IG as impossible (or perhaps we should say “nonexistent”).

For revolutionaries, who do not seek “influence” for its own sake attained through maneuvers with the labor tops but rather the revolutionary adherence of the more advanced sectors of the working class, the point is to win them to our whole program. Trotsky continued in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”:

“From what has been said, it follows quite clearly that in spite of the progressive degeneration of trade unions and their growing together with the imperialist state, the work within the trade unions not only does not lose any importance but remains as before and becomes in a certain sense even more important work than ever for every revolutionary party. The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organization, every party, every faction that permits itself an ultimatic position in relation to trade unions, that is, in essence turns its back upon the working class merely because of displeasure with its organization, every such organization is destined to perish. And it must be said that it deserves to perish.”

The IG fits this description to a tee.

The IG accuses the ICL of having “changed their line” regarding the class nature of the CTM. Let’s see who “changed their line.” In accordance with their self-image as infallible *caudillos*, IG leaders Norden and Negrete imagine that whatever position they maintained behind the party’s back when they were members of the ICL must be “the line” of our organization. But the IG’s charges are a falsehood designed simply to attack the ICL. We did not recognize any class dis-

inction between one or another trade union, because the GEM’s political line never was to prettify the bourgeois PRD and its trade-union followers.

In its most recent Mexican supplement (22 June 2000), the IG complains that the GEM “even compares the PRI *charros* who ‘use their clubs and goons to maintain their privileges’ with the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. They hide the difference between a direct instrument of the *bourgeois state*, the CTM, and the ruling bureaucracy of a bureaucratically degenerated *workers state*, the USSR.” In *Spartacist* [Spanish-language edition] No. 22 (April 1989), when Norden was still editor of our American newspaper *Workers Vanguard* and on the editorial board of Spanish-language *Spartacist*, we wrote regarding Salinas’ attack against the oil workers unions in “Bazooka Shots Against Mexican Workers” (see also WV No. 470, 3 February 1989):

“Many of the rad-lib intellectuals ask how can one possibly defend this labor kingpin, the embodiment of the corrupt *charro* (cowboy) bureaucrats who have lorded it over the unions for decades, and still claim to be a ‘democrat’ The Trotskyists, who understand the class character of the USSR as a workers state despite its bureaucratic degeneration under Stalinist rule, and thus defend it against imperialism, likewise defend the unions against the bosses despite the sellout bureaucracy which sits atop these repositories of workers power. As Leon Trotsky wrote 50 years ago, ‘In the last analysis a workers’ state is a trade union which has conquered power’ (*In Defense of Marxism* [1939]).”

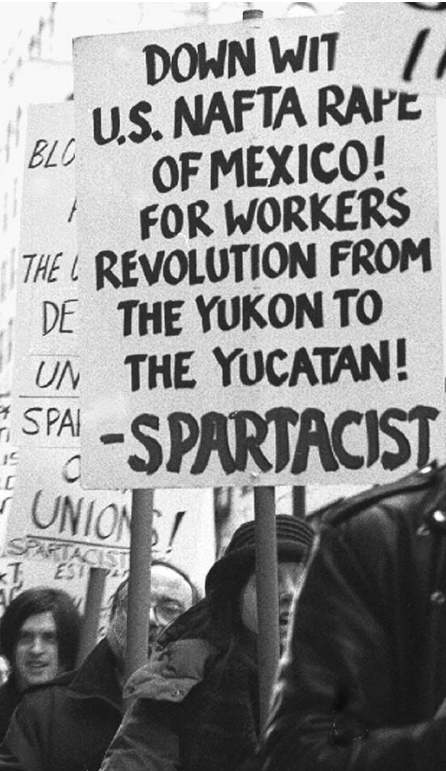
The ICL has always explained that *there is no qualitative difference* between the PRI *charros* and their “democratic” counterparts, because our political line has always been based on the struggle for the complete political and organizational independence of the proletariat from *all* wings of the bourgeoisie, not just the PRI but also the PRD. It is the IG that has changed its orientation, defecting from revolutionary Trotskyism and looking to satisfy its opportunist appetites.

Again on the “Cardenista Popular Front”

In Mexico, the IG has found a bourgeois force to capitulate to in the PRD of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, claiming there is a “popular front” around that bourgeois party. The IG presents the “popular front” as a term lacking any concrete meaning, but it is *not* a synonym for any and all forms of class collaboration. In Marxist terms, a popular front is an alliance of reformist workers parties and capitalist parties to govern a capitalist state. The participation of the workers parties is used to camouflage which class rules, and the popular front generally appears in situations in which the bourgeoisie needs to appease the combative workers and derail

their struggles. While the pro-capitalist leadership of these reformist parties (which Lenin called “bourgeois workers parties”) consciously comes to the rescue of capitalism in crisis, the working-class base of these parties is motivated by a *reformist class consciousness*. In other words, they reject the bourgeois parties as representatives of the bosses but wrongly see their reformist party as capable of achieving a socialist reorganization of society in the interests of the workers.

But in Mexico there is no mass workers party; the fundamental mechanism used by the Mexican bourgeoisie to maintain the subordination of the working class has been the ideology of bourgeois nationalism, not the “popular front.” The



WV Photo

NYC emergency protest in February, part of ICL campaign in defense of UNAM student strikers after hundreds were arrested in government crackdown.

PRD is a bourgeois party, plain and simple. The IG seeks to use a quote from Trotsky from 1938, in which he maintains that Lázaro Cárdenas’ PRM was a “popular front in the form of a party,” to argue against the Spartacists. Centrists spend years looking for some quote that might, when taken out of context, justify their opportunist politics. Thus the IG tries to take this statement by Trotsky out of context to imply that their position about a “Cardenista popular front” has a Marxist grounding provided by Trotsky. This is a lie. In an informal conversation with some of his collaborators which was later transcribed, Trotsky said:

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

This is an evocative formulation to describe the bourgeoisie leaning on the proletariat, but it is not precise, and that is precisely why it only appears in this transcription of an informal discussion between Trotsky and his political collaborators. In all the published writings by Trotsky about the Guomindang (Kuomintang—GMD), it is painstakingly clear that the GMD is the party of the nationalist bourgeoisie, and he warns against the subordination of the proletariat to it. Similarly for Mexico, Trotsky insists that the key question for revolutionaries is the strategy of permanent revolution, counterposed to bourgeois nationalism expressed in the false perspective of the “anti-imperialist united front.” As we wrote in *Espartaco* No. 10:

“What can be the *purpose* of the IG’s insistence on the supposed existence of a ‘popular front’ around the PRD? Perhaps it is instructive to consider that Stalin justified the suicidal liquidation of the Chinese Communists into the Guomindang by baptizing that bourgeois nationalist party a ‘bloc of four classes.’ Writing of this in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928), Trotsky said: “‘The celebrated idea of “workers’ and peasants’ parties” seems to have been specially created to camouflage bour-

geois parties which are compelled to seek support from the peasantry but who are also ready to absorb workers into their ranks. The Kuomintang has entered the annals of history for all time as a classic type of such a party’.”

The reason for the IG’s insistence on the supposed Cardenista “popular front” is none other than to obscure the class nature of the PRD, a bourgeois party. The IG throws the perspective of permanent revolution out the window in order to invent a “popular front” with working-class components simply to capitulate to the bourgeois PRD. Mexican history and current reality pose a big problem for the IG to which they have no answer. During a brief period under Lázaro Cárdenas’ presidency, the government moved a little to the left to derail the discontent among the workers and peasants. Since then the structure of the corporatist state has developed in a repressive and semi-bonapartist direction. But nothing fundamentally changed for seven decades. If according to the IG the predecessor of the PRI, the PRM, was a popular front, when and how did it stop being one? And now that, as of December 1, the PRI is no longer in the government but the CTM unions are still affiliated to it, is there a “popular front” around the PRI?

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

Genuine communists seek to build the strongest possible unity of the working class against the capitalist exploiters, and so we oppose craft divisions in the proletariat. We are for industrial unions, namely that all workers, skilled and unskilled, in the same industry should belong to the same union. We fight against the division of the working class in competing trade unions based on different political tendencies. The task of the communist vanguard is to clarify and sharpen the differences between the competing political tendencies in order to regroup cadres for a Leninist party. In Lenin’s time, these different political tasks were reflected in different organizational forms: the Comintern, made up of party organizations representing the unique Bolshevik political program, and the Profintern, representing the struggle for the unity of the working class in the unions.

History has demonstrated that based just on its daily struggle and experience—without the intervention of a Leninist vanguard party—the working class is unable to develop a consciousness higher than trade-union consciousness, that is, the necessity of uniting in trade unions for the economic struggle against the bosses and the government. But trade-union consciousness is bourgeois consciousness. Trade unionism per se does not challenge the capitalist mode of production but instead seeks to improve the terms of exploitation for the workers through struggles against individual bosses and the government. The fight for the genuine independence of the workers organizations from the bourgeoisie requires forging a revolutionary workers party—the indispensable tool for proletarian revolution—to rally the oppressed masses of the city and countryside behind the proletariat. To this end, a no-holds-barred fight against any manifestation of bourgeois ideology within the working class is necessary. An essential part of this is to unmask those pretenders to the banner of communism who are only perpetuating the ties of the working class to its “own” bourgeoisie.

The vanguard role of the working class is central to the Marxist perspective of world socialism. Only the working class has the social power and the clear objective interest to liberate humanity from all kinds of oppression. Having no vested interest in maintaining the bourgeois order, the proletariat’s enormous power lies in its role in the production process, its numbers and its organization. Like Lenin’s Bolsheviks, our purpose is to fuse intellectual and proletarian elements to forge the party capable of leading the proletariat to the seizure of state power. Join us! ■

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- The fullest listing is by SUBJECT. Subject headings are arranged alphabetically. Entries are listed chronologically with two exceptions: all entries comprising a series are listed together immediately following the first entry of the series.
- Entries are listed under subject heads. In some cases, subject heads are broken down into subcategories. These subcategories are listed immediately after the initial subject head and preceded by a dot (•). The numbers following each entry headline give the issue number, date and page number(s) for the article. Thus:
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- No entry is listed twice; refer to cross references for guidance in locating the subject head for particular articles. Cross references are of two types: those following the word “see” deal centrally with the subject head; those following the words “see also” are related articles. Subject heads in cross references are separated by a semicolon. Thus:
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