

The

November-December 1998

No. 6

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Internationalist



WHERE IS CHINA GOING?



Khang T'ang (Cuon Tran)/Impact Visuals

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Front page photo: Beijing workers fraternize with PLA soldiers on the morning of 4 June 1989, forcing them to withdraw. Massacre occurred that night.

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

Brazil Teachers Defend Mumia

Vanguarda Operária



Banner calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal at congress of Rio de Janeiro state teachers union, SEPE, November 15.

Brazilian teachers have joined the struggle to save the life and win the freedom of Pennsylvania death row prisoner and black radical Mumia Abu-Jamal. Our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC—Class Struggle Caucus) brought the issue to the congress of the SEPE, the union of education workers of the state of Rio de Janeiro. A motion demanding freedom for Jamal and abolition of the racist death penalty was approved unanimously at the preliminary session of the congress, which is scheduled to continue in December. CLC delegates to the congress also fought for motions demanding the expulsion of all types of police from all unions, and the CUT labor federation in particular; for defense of women's rights, including free abortion on demand; and for labor to break with the "Union of the People," a class-collaborationist popular front, and organize massive proletarian mobilizations against the savage austerity plan being imposed by the Brazilian government and the International Monetary Fund.

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- Founding Statement of the Internationalist Group
- Declaration of the League for the Fourth International
- Articles from *The Internationalist*
- Articles from *Vanguarda Operária*
- Articles from *El Internacionalista*
- Marxist readings

The Internationalist



**A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism
for the Reforging of the Fourth International**

**Publication of the Internationalist Group,
section of the League for the Fourth International**

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No. 6

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November-December 1998

Down with the Racist Death Penalty!

Workers in Brazil's Steel City Demand: "Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!"

On Saturday, November 7, workers in Volta Redonda, Brazil demonstrated to demand "Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" and "Down with the Racist Death Penalty!" Initiated by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), section of the League for the Fourth International, the emergency rally was held in front of Latin America's largest steel plant. Demonstrators gathered at a monument to three workers killed when the army intervened against the militant 1988 steel strike. Publicized through a leaflet, radio interviews and a powerful sound truck provided by the Construction Workers Union, the protest of several dozen drew steel and municipal workers and other unionists, as well as black activists and students from area schools. The internationalist protest was held on the 81st anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

A huge banner bearing Mumia's portrait and the demand for his freedom dominated the plaza. A highlight of the rally was a performance of *capoeira*, the martial art invented by Brazilian slaves. Speakers included a popular local radio host, a representative of the Green Party and a spokesman for the Palmares Club, named after the "Palmares Republic" founded by 17th-century slave revolt leader Zumbi. Noting that his group had walked three miles from the working-class Água Limpa neighborhood to the rally, a speaker from the Warriors of Água Limpa cultural association stressed Mumia's history as a spokesman for

the Black Panther Party.

Many of the speeches linked the international fight for Jamal's life and freedom to the struggle against racist oppression and police terror in Brazil, recalling massacres of black street children, landless peasants and prisoners, as well as killings of homosexuals and widespread forced sterilization of black and Indian women.

Addressing the rally was Class Struggle Caucus (CLC) spokesman Geraldo Ribeiro, who led the fight in 1996 to expel *guardas* (city police) from the municipal workers union. LQB and CLC signs demanded the expulsion of cops of all kinds from all unions and the CUT labor federation. Ribeiro noted: "This is an international event demanding freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Today is also the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the



Demonstration in Volta Redonda, Brazil, November 7 demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, held at monument (below) to three workers killed in 1988 steel strike. Sign says "Tom Ridge: Governor of Death" and "From Philadelphia to Volta Redonda, Down with Racist Terror and Lynching."

metal workers' strike at the National Steel Company, where the strikers William, Valmir and Barroso were murdered by the same capitalist system that wants to kill Mumia Abu-Jamal."

LQB speeches called on the labor movement in Brazil and worldwide to throw its enormous social power into the fight to save Mumia. They also underscored the need for a revolutionary workers party to lead the struggle to smash the starvation plan of austerity measures being imposed by Brazilian president Cardoso and the International Monetary Fund, and for proletarian opposition to the popular front which chains Brazilian labor to capitalist politicians (and governs the municipality of Volta Redonda).

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA
 Suplemento especial da Vanguarda Operária - seção da Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil
 Boletim da Liga pelo TV Internacional

Mobilizar o poder da classe operária para Libertar Mumia Abu-Jamal Agora!

Haverá um ato público às 11h, sábado, 7 de novembro, na Praça Juarez Antunes em Volta Redonda para exigir: **Liberdade Agora para Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abaixo a Pena de Morte Rracista!** Participe, junte sua voz ao protesto para impedir o assassinato pelo imperialismo norte-americano deste corajoso lutador contra a injustiça! *Agora, esta luta é mais urgente do que nunca.*

Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal, ex-militante do Partido Pantera Negra e famoso jornalista negro, tem estado na cadeia de morte por 16 anos no estado da Pensilvânia, EUA. Seu caso tem se convertido no foco da luta contra a pena de morte racista nos EUA e internacionalmente. Na semana passada, o Tribunal Supremo de Pensilvânia recusou a apelação de Mumia por um novo processo em seu caso. *Agora, o governador pode assinar a qualquer momento uma ordem de execução.*

Os tribunais e polícia querem calar para sempre este porta-voz eloquente dos oprimidos, conhecido como o "voz dos sem-voz". A classe dominante racista diz que Mumia Abu-Jamal deve morrer. *Nos dizemos que Mumia deve e viver!*

Em 1981 Mumia Abu-Jamal foi encontrado quase morto

The following is translated from the special supplement to Vanguarda Operária, (5 November 1998), newspaper of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil.

Mobilize the Power of the Working Class to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!

A demonstration will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, November 7, in Volta Redonda's Juarez Antunes Plaza to demand: Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Down with the Racist Death Penalty! Participate and join in the protest to stop U.S. imperialism from murdering this courageous fighter against injustice! Today, this struggle is more urgent than ever.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, former Black Panther and renowned black journalist, has spent 16 years on death row in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania. His case has become the focus of the fight against the racist death penalty in the United States and internationally. Last week, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court rejected Mumia's appeal for a new trial. Now, the governor may sign a death warrant at any moment.

The courts and police want to silence forever this elo-

quent spokesman for the oppressed, known as the "voice of the voiceless." The racist ruling class says that Mumia Abu-Jamal must die. We say that Mumia must live!

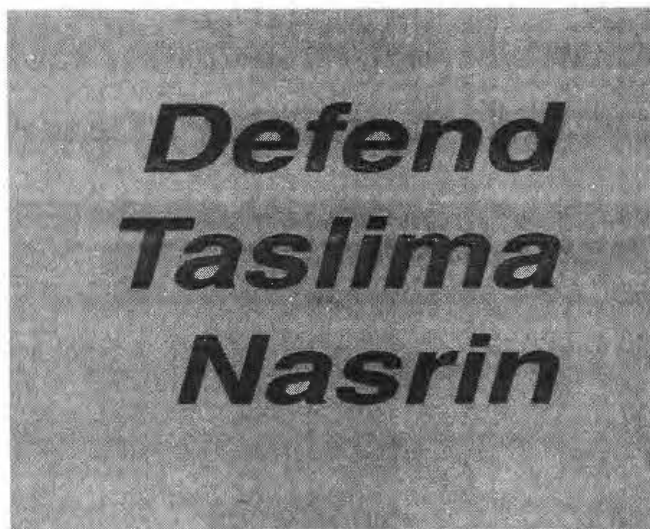
In 1981 Mumia Abu-Jamal was found near death after being shot by the police. His "crime" was that he survived and continued to speak the truth. So he was framed up on the charge of killing a police officer, and a right-wing judge sentenced Mumia to death as part of the system of "legal" lynching and police terror against oppressed minorities. Today, it is the exploited and oppressed who must stop the oppressors who want to murder Mumia. The last time a death warrant was signed against him, in 1995, a wave of protests around the world stayed the hand of the racist bourgeoisie. Unions representing millions of workers have spoken out for Mumia, including many from South Africa, dockers in the U.S., journalists in Brazil and elsewhere. In Volta Redonda, more than 200 people participated in the proletarian protest at the Monument to Zumbi [leader of Brazil's most famous slave revolt], which was called by Luta Metalúrgica, predecessor of the LQB, together with the municipal workers and other groups and sectors.

The fight for Mumia's life and freedom is a crucial part of the world-wide fight against racism and capitalist repression. In Brazil it is part of the fight against the racist extermination of street children, forced sterilization of black women, the murder of homosexuals, massacres of landless peasants and daily repression by racist capitalism's armed fist: the police. Writing about the struggle against slavery in Brazil, Mumia declared: "Zumbi is one of my heroes." In the U.S. the racist death penalty is a legacy of slavery, and the international fight for its abolition has as its focus the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Today, it has been shown once again that there is no justice in the capitalist courts, nor can there be, for fighters for black liberation. In this crucial hour, we must mobilize the power of the organized working class, of all the victims of the system of racist injustice, to demand immediate and unconditional freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Participate and bring your friends, neighbors, fellow workers and classmates: Saturday, November 7, 11 a.m. in the Juarez Antunes Plaza. Down with legal lynching! Abolish the racist death penalty! Freedom NOW for Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Volta Redonda, 5 November 1998

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil
 section of the League for the Fourth International



Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

We reprint below a protest statement by the Internationalist Group in defense of the courageous Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin. In 1994 Nasrin was forced to leave her country after Muslim fundamentalists issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) calling for her death, charging her with blasphemy for declaring that Islam was oppressive to women. A price was put on her head. The "secular" government authorities of Bangladesh pitched in by confiscating her passport, arresting and charging her under an obscure law, dating from British colonial times, against "insulting" religion. When she escaped the country in 1994, religious bigots were mobilizing massive lynch mobs with the demand that she be hanged.

Nasrin had become well known internationally because of her 1993 book *Lajja* (Shame), depicting a wave of bloody pogroms by Muslims in Bangladesh against the Hindu minority. Following the destruction of a mosque by a mob of Hindu fanatics in Ayodhya, India, as communalist attacks spread into overwhelmingly Muslim Bangladesh next door, Hindus were targeted. Nasrin declared that *all* religions oppress women and denounced the fundamentalist frenzy on all sides. For this she was declared an "infidel."

After escaping to exile and living in Europe and the United States, Nasrin returned to Bangladesh in September, hoping to avoid the spotlight and be with her mother, who is dying of cancer. However, she was recognized and her presence in the country was publicized, touching off another escalation of the threats against her life. *Today, defending this brave and eloquent voice against oppression is more urgent than ever.*

Taslima Nasrin's cause is controversial among many women's groups in Bangladesh who view her as an embarrassment to the regime of liberal woman prime minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who panders to the Islamic fanatics. The country's bourgeois rulers also see Nasrin's views—a mixture of radical secularism, feminism, nationalism and broad sym-

pathy for the goals of socialism—as a threat to their relations with the imperialist agencies and banks that fund "women's investment projects" in Bangladesh.

But the sheikhs and banks and media do not speak for, and indeed are the enemies of, oppressed women. Thus it was reported that in June 1994 some 500 women garment workers in Dhaka, the nation's capital, armed themselves with sticks and marched in defiance of the fundamentalists and in defense of Nasrin, stressing that in doing so they were defending their own basic rights.

Even some bourgeois feminists in the West have been queasy about defending Nasrin because of her forthright praise of Lenin. Although she is not a revolutionary Marxist, she recognized that the destruction of the Soviet Union (which she wrongly equated with socialism) represented a tremendous blow to women. She wrote an essay favorably quoting, one after another, many of Lenin's calls on the whole of the workers movement to take up the cause of the liberation of women, to integrate women in socially productive labor and as dedicated fighters in the revolutionary struggle for workers rule.

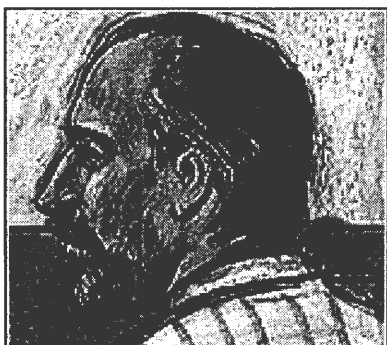
Nasrin herself is essentially a secular humanist rather than a communist, but the issues raised by her case and in her writings highlight the urgent need for a Leninist party of the proletariat that will serve as "tribune of the people" against every form of oppression. In the countries of the East and throughout the semi-colonial world, the program of such a party must base itself on Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution, a key component of which is the fight to mobilize the working class in revolutionary struggle for the emancipation of women.

The Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International protests the threats of capitalist state repression and fundamentalist vigilante terror against Taslima Nasrin. The valiant Bangladeshi novelist and poet is renowned for her impassioned defense of women's rights and her writings on subjects ranging from V.I. Lenin to the horrors of communalist fratricide. While Islamic fundamentalists have put a price on her head and seek to

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FBI Entraps Socialists

Free Kurt Stand and Theresa Squillacote!



Kurt Stand

Kurt Stand and Theresa Squillacote, two Washington-area leftists, were convicted on October 23 of conspiracy to commit espionage, attempted espionage and obtaining classified documents. The government claims the two were spies for East Germany and the Soviet Union, and that they offered to spy for South Africa after the African National Congress took over the government there in 1994. But the feds faced a little problem: all they had was a couple of names on file cards, and evidently no evidence that the couple had ever done anything breaking the espionage laws (or any others).

So using the catch-all Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA), the FBI broke into their home, planted bugs in their bedroom, rummaged through their garbage, copied the files on their computer, and secretly taped 4,000 separate phone calls from Stand and Squillacote to each other, to friends and family, to parents of their children's playmates, to Squillacote's therapist. After several years and \$3 million spent on the investigation . . . they still came up with zip. Therefore, the government simply organized a "sting" operation to entrap Squillacote, with an FBI agent posing as a South African spy.

That is why, for want of any evidence of actual spying, the whole government case is based on an alleged "conspiracy" to spy and "attempt" to spy and simply "obtaining" documents. For that matter, by 1992, when Squillacote was hired as a lawyer for the Pentagon, the countries she was alleged to spy for—East Germany and the USSR—*no longer existed!* And the only documents ever actually "transmitted" were given to an American agent at his repeated urging. This constitutes "attempted" spying according to the government because Squillacote supposedly *thought* the gumshoe was working for South Africa!

A third person arrested at the same time as Stand and Squillacote, James Clark, pleaded guilty to spying for East Germany in exchange for reduced charges, and testified for the prosecution at their trial. Yet even he stated that Stand and Squillacote had never passed any secrets to East Berlin.

The fact is that this whole elaborate FBI/CIA operation was concocted to nail two avowed socialists, who now face anywhere



Drawings by Dana Verkouteren

Theresa Squillacote

from 15 years to life in prison while their children Karl and Rosa (named after murdered German communists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg), ages 14 and 12, are left parentless.

The Internationalist Group denounces this blatant FBI entrapment as a threat to the civil liberties and democratic rights of all. The "crime" of Kurt Stand and Theresa Squillacote in the eyes of the capitalist ruling class is that they sought to struggle for a society of justice and equality. We demand that they be immediately freed.

The real charge against Stand and Squillacote is "communism." The chief prosecutor said in his opening remarks at the trial that Kurt and Terry "hated the United States. They were dedicated communists." That is why the feds went after them with a vengeance. This is the kind of McCarthyite witchhunting that was rampant in the 1950s when the execution of the heroic Rosenbergs was used to equate communism with espionage, to lock up hundreds, intimidate many more and put a straitjacket on democratic rights in the name of "national security." Today, the New-Leftist-become-New-Rightist Ronald Radosh, a wannabe Whittaker Chambers, uses the Stand/Squillacote case to demand mass confessions by leftists that if nothing else they lusted in their hearts to be spies.

Kurt Stand and Terry Squillacote were student radicals who met at the University of Wisconsin in the 1970s. There they joined the Young Workers Liberation League, at the time the youth group of the Communist Party, as did Clark. Kurt's father and mother were refugees from Nazi Germany, where they had been involved in anti-fascist struggles. Stand was the North American representative of the International Union of Food Workers and is a supporter of the Democratic Socialists of America. Squillacote had a job as a lawyer in the procurement department at the Pentagon, and supported the Committees of Correspondence, which split to the right from the long-since reformist Communist Party in the early 1990s.

The Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA) under which Stand and Squillacote were convicted is an all-purpose dragnet law, passed by the Democrats under Jimmy Carter in 1978 to legalize the massive violations of constitutional and civil liberties by U.S. intelligence and federal police agencies. It was expanded by Bill Clinton in 1995, as the Democratic administration seized on the fascist bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building as an opportunity to push through the "Omnibus Counterterrorism Act." It also issued draconian FBI "guidelines" providing for unlimited harassment and surveillance of dissident organizations, blanket authorization for wiretaps, secret trials for "suspected terrorists," etc.

An article by Paul Di Rienzo and Joan Moosy in a National Lawyers Guild newsletter reports that "Using FISA, the FBI has investigated over 1,330 progressive domestic political and religious groups because of their solidarity with the Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador [CISPES]." Under the Reagan and Bush administrations, as the U.S. financed death squads and contra terrorists in Central America, CISPES was a particular target of FBI provocation, break-ins and spying.

Stand and Squillacote were accused of being spies on the basis of a haul of documents carted off from the German Democratic Republic (DDR) foreign intelligence agency, the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (HVA—Information Division), led by Markus Wolf. As the West German imperialists were swallowing up the East German deformed workers state, the CIA grabbed what they claim are the complete files of the HVA. Crowing that this was "one of the CIA's greatest triumphs," the U.S. would release bits of information purportedly from HVA files when it suited their purposes. Thus West German economist Rainer Rupp was convicted in 1994 on charges of spying for the DDR and given 12 years in prison. Today West German authorities are taking aim at hundreds more.

Names and alleged aliases for Stand and Squillacote were reportedly found on an index in the HVA files, but no indication of what they are supposed to have done. And since the feds' massive spying on the couple came up with nothing, they sent the transcripts of their secretly recorded intimate conversations to a CIA shrink to develop a "psychological profile" on Squillacote to officially certify that she was "predisposed" to spy. In one of their forays into Kurt and Terry's home, they found a letter Squillacote had written to Ronni Kasrils, a leader of the South African Communist Party and now deputy defense minister of South Africa. Deciding that this was their opportunity, the feds crafted a phony "reply" to her letter, luring her into meeting with an FBI agent posing as a South African agent, and entrapped her into obtaining secret documents at their request.

Entrapment has become the "law enforcement" weapon of choice in the last couple of decades. No evidence of a crime? The cops just set up a "crime" and lure people into their trap. Today entrapment is a mainstay of the war on drugs (read: war on blacks).

We demand freedom for Kurt Stand and Theresa Squillacote. Supporters are asked to attend their sentencing on January 8, before Judge Claude Hilton (Room 800), U.S. District Court, 401 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, Virginia. According to the

newsletter of the Committees of Correspondence, requests for more information and contributions to the defense costs can be directed to the Fund for the Fourth Amendment, Box 5685, Washington, D.C. 20016, or calling (202) 829-6167.

As their parents face life behind bars in the capitalist jails, the plight of the Stand children, Karl and Rosa, recalls the ordeal of Robert and Michael Meeropol, the children of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg who were executed in 1953 as Soviet spies. The Rosenberg Fund for Children has contributed aid to the children of these persecuted leftists. Contributions for the children's support should be earmarked "Stand Children's Trust" and sent to the Fund for the Fourth Amendment at the above address. ■

Defend Taslima Nasrin . . .

continued from page 5

whip up lynch mobs against her, government authorities have threatened to arrest Nasrin for the "crime" of telling the truth about the role of religious fundamentalism in the brutal oppression of women. Her life is in more danger than ever since she returned to Bangladesh to be with her terminally ill mother.

Defend Taslima Nasrin! Her case is not only a question of crucial and basic democratic rights, but of the fight for women's emancipation and the interests of the entire working class in Bangladesh (where women's oppression is a key tool for chaining the largely female proletariat) and throughout the Indian subcontinent. Her denunciation of the communal bloodletting that pits Hindus against Muslims points to the burning need to overcome the religious, ethnic and national antagonisms that divide the region's potentially powerful working class. As revolutionary internationalists, *we demand that the government and the clerical reactionaries keep their hands off this courageous writer.* Far from being her protectors, the rulers of Bangladesh will be responsible if any harm comes to her.

Western imperialist spokesmen (like U.S. vice president Gore on his recent trip to Malaysia) make hypocritical references to "human rights" abuses in various Islamic countries, and some have even claimed sympathy for Nasrin's plight. Yet in the United States and Europe, the imperialists have sought to whip up bigotry and hysteria against Muslims and Arabs as part of their "anti-terrorism" witchhunts. Meanwhile, at home the U.S. ruling class is trying to use the racist death penalty to silence another courageous and outspoken writer: Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical black journalist and former Black Panther on Pennsylvania's death row.

The struggle against bourgeois repression is truly an international one, posing the need for an internationalist program and leadership to unite the workers and oppressed, from the Indian subcontinent to the Chinese masses threatened with capitalist restoration to the industrial powerhouses of Japan, Europe and the United States. The working class internationally must champion the defense of those such as Taslima Nasrin as part of the struggle for the socialist revolution, the only means of doing away with the enslavement and degradation of women and every form of oppression and exploitation.

—22 November 1998

**For All-Out Workers Mobilization to Stop PRTC Privatization—
Defeat the Colonialist, Capitalist Assault on Labor**

Puerto Rico General Strike Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Elect Strike Committees! Defend Picket Lines That Nobody Dares Cross!

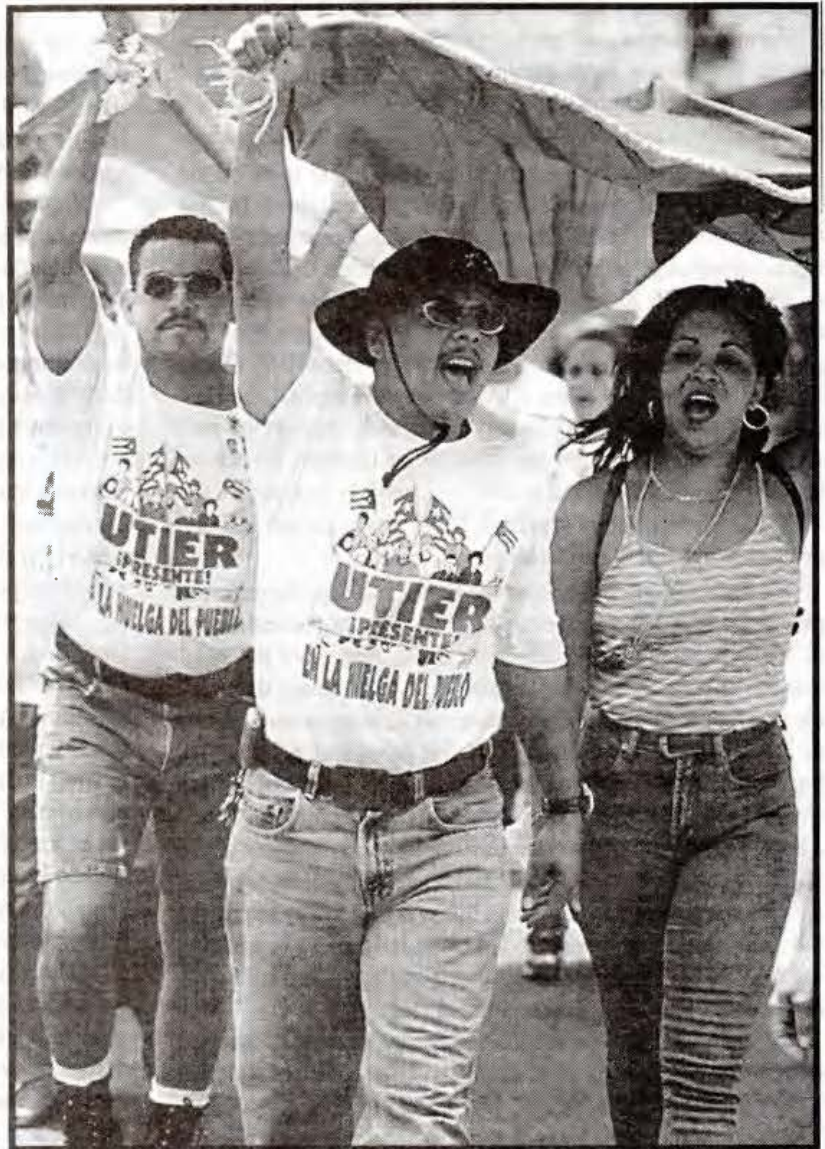
From our special correspondent in Puerto Rico

The following article was distributed as an Internationalist Group leaflet in Spanish during the July 7-8 general strike in Puerto Rico.

SAN JUAN, July 2—As the rulers of Puerto Rico celebrate 100 years of U.S. colonial domination, this Caribbean island nation is being swept by a powerful wave of workers struggle. After ramming privatization of the government-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC) through a pliant legislature, Governor Pedro Rosselló is reaping a whirlwind of mass opposition. The two telephone workers unions immediately declared a strike, now in its 15th day. Last week the electrical and water workers struck in solidarity. Now, as public support for the strikers mounts in the face of brutal police attacks on picketers, a coalition of 53 unions joined by student, leftist, women's and community groups has called a 48-hour general strike beginning July 7.

"We're calling on the people to prepare as if a hurricane were coming," said Annie Cruz, the president of the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers (HIETEL), in announcing the island-wide walkout. The day before, an assembly of several thousand cheering union delegates at a sports center in the city of Carolina, called by the Broad Committee of Trade Union Organizations (CAOS) and representing some 300,000 workers, voted unanimously for a general strike to "paralyze" Puerto Rico's economy. Already last October 1, some 100,000 marched on the capitol in San Juan under the slogan "Puerto Rico Is Not For Sale" during a one-day "national work stoppage" against the privatization of *la telefónica*.

There is no doubt that organized labor and its allies have the power to bring this Caribbean island to a grinding halt such as hasn't happened



José Jiménez/Primera Hora

Electrical workers in San Juan during general strike, July 7.

**Yankee Imperialism Out—For Puerto Rico's Right to Independence!
For a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean!**

since the strike of 1934, at the time of a bitter sugar cane workers strike. Puerto Rico today is heavily industrialized, with hundreds of thousands of union members. The telephone workers strike is already the biggest single walkout in years, with more than 150 picket lines around the island, and no one can remember when a strike has received so much enthusiastic support. A determined general strike would certainly have the strength of a gale force tropical storm, but it is more than that. This is a key battle in the class war, which Puerto Rican and U.S. workers must fight to win.

The struggle of workers in Puerto Rico is intrinsically linked to that of workers in the U.S., particularly in New York City. This was reflected in the picket today sponsored by hospital workers Local 1199 against Banco Popular in New York City, which is only a token of what is needed. Hundreds of thousands of workers of Puerto Rican origin in the financial capital of U.S. imperialism are a key section of the municipal, hospital and other unions, and have shown a tremendous will to struggle. At the same time, together with blacks and immigrants, they face an escalation of racist repression. This was graphically shown in the case of Anthony Báez, the 22-year-old Puerto Rican whose murder by NYC cop Francis Livoti has become a symbol of racist police terror.

The sale of the PRTC to an American corporation, and one that has prominently lobbied for statehood, has sparked widespread opposition from those opposed to outright annexation of the island by the U.S. The working class, both in Puerto Rico and the U.S., has a vital interest in fighting colonialism. But colonial domination of Puerto Rico cannot be defeated with the bourgeois program of nationalism. Even the most "left" variants of nationalism seek to chain the workers to a supposed "national" bourgeoisie. The Puerto Rican "entrepreneurs," as the nationalist left delicately refers to them, are branch officer managers and junior partners of Yankee imperialism who exploit the working people just as their U.S. counterparts do. The fight against privatization extends throughout Latin America and the capitalist world. And this is not just the effect of "neo-liberal" policies, as reformists claim.



Internationalist photo

Several thousand cheering union delegates at assembly in Carolina, June 29, vote for general strike against privatization of the Puerto Rico Telephone Company.

Key to defeating this capitalist-imperialist system is the struggle to forge revolutionary workers parties internationally.

Mobilize the Working Class in the Struggle for Power

In handing control of the telephone company over to the U.S.-owned GTE Corp., Governor Rosselló has already declared war on the workers. This petty tyrant and his pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) are seen on the picket lines as THE enemy. In order to fulfill his dreams of "crossing over" from a colonial satrap to a rising star in U.S. politics (he is chairman of the national governors conference), Rosselló is willing and even eager to spill workers' blood. But this ruthless privatizer is far from the only enemy of Puerto Rican workers. Behind him stands the power of Yankee imperialism, for which Puerto Rico is a giant base for military and economic operations to control Latin America. There is a direct connection here: a key reason why the PRTC is being sold to GTE is that the latter provides the phone service for the giant U.S. Navy base at Roosevelt Roads and for the U.S. army's Southern Command, which is in the process of moving from Panama to Puerto Rico.

The Puerto Rican governor is trying to impress the Clinton White House, the Pentagon and Congress that he can impose heavy-handed "law and order" in the largest remaining U.S. colony, while getting rid of government-owned industry and other Puerto Rican "peculiarities" that stand in the way of statehood (annexation). Already Rosselló has privatized the shipping lines (Navieras de Puerto Rico), as



El Vocero

Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló

well as housing projects, hospitals and jails, leading to numerous layoffs. With the PRTC on the auction block it is estimated that privatization will put 2,000 out of 6,400 union jobs on the chopping block (as well as raising telephone rates). Electrical energy, water and sewer works and a host of government services are on Rosselló's privatization hit list. Meanwhile, he hires more and more police to put down protests.

And the cops have been doing their bloody job. On the first day of the strike, June 18, a phalanx of police was dispatched to the Plaza Celulares PRTC center to bring in several busloads of scab contract workers and managers. There were riot police from the Tactical Operations Unit, better known as the Shock Force, as well as the Saturation Unit and the Mounted Police. Oziel, a phone worker at the Celulares center, told *The Internationalist* that the workers grabbed hold of the fence and refused to move. Thereupon cops began to beat them repeatedly with *macanas* (riot

sticks) that have steel balls protruding from one end, spray them in the face with pepper gas, and drag them into the street. Most of the police had removed or covered their identification badges.

several high-ranking officials) received a well-deserved drubbing. During the three-day UTIER (electrical workers) solidarity strike last week, police accused picketers of a "provocation" because their picket signs were mounted on solid 2 x 2 sticks. But readiness to defend the picket lines must be organized. The bosses appeal to the courts to get injunctions to allow management and contract scabs to enter the struck workplace. Strikers must rip up the injunctions and impose their own proletarian order, declaring that picket lines mean don't cross and enforcing this basic principle with union defense groups. When no one

dáres cross a picket line, the chances of winning strikes will be immeasurably increased.

So far active participation in the struggle against privatization has been mainly limited to public sector unions, the ones most directly affected. But an effective general strike must include private sector workers as well as non-unionized workers,



Giuliano De Portu/Primera Hora

Cops beat strikers outside headquarters of Puerto Rico Telephone Company in Metro Office Park, Guaynabo, during bitter strike against privatization.

notably from the huge petrochemical complexes that dot the island. To organize the unorganized it is necessary to put forward a class-struggle program of transitional demands to mobilize all workers in a struggle against capital and the colonial overlords. To answer the persistently double-digit unemployment, workers must fight for a sliding scale of hours, to divide the available jobs to provide work for all. As real wages have fallen steadily for the last two decades, labor must fight for the demand for a sliding scale of wages to protect against the ravages of inflation. To fight the numerous injuries and deaths due to unsafe working conditions, unions must form workers safety committees with the power to stop production when they judge necessary.

The biggest weakness of the workers' struggle against privatization is at the top, where union bureaucrats have been at odds over whether the strike should be limited or indefinite, when to call it or whether to strike at all. The leader of the largest phone workers union, the UIET, only reluctantly joined the walk-out. Now, a leader of the local affiliate of the AFL-CIO, the FT, representing under 10 percent of Puerto Rico's unionized workers, declares it is pointless to strike against privatization of the phone company. The head of another federation, the CPT, declares that each of its unions will decide how long it will join in

sticks) that have steel balls protruding from one end, spray them in the face with pepper gas, and drag them into the street. Most of the police had removed or covered their identification badges.

Many of those who received vicious beatings were women. Soriel Cruz, a leader of the UIET phone workers union and spokesman for the group "Women Against Privatization," called on workers to defend the picket lines when the buses arrived. The cops hit her in the breasts with their riot sticks, then threw her on the ground and kicked her. Photos and video shots of women being savagely beaten caused mass outrage. But the governor demanded more *macanazos* (beatings), and the cops were soon back at it. On June 22, at the Metro Office Park PRTC offices in Guaynabo, an estimated 100 police from the Shock Force arrested a woman student and a union lawyer, beat a TV cameraman, and beat one worker, Raúl Santana, so badly in the head that he had to be hospitalized for two days. A photo of Santana lying in a pool of blood while a baton-wielding cop stood over him was shown around the world. *El Nuevo Día* (23 June) headlined: "The Strike of Blood."

Yet the strikers were not always on the receiving end. The same day, after cops beat a picketer at Plaza Celulares, angry strikers turned on the attackers and a number of cops (including

the general strike! The determination of the telephone strikers (and the overwhelming popularity of the strike) has kept it solid, but it is necessary to organize that strength. Union militants must fight for elected strike committees, which can be recalled at any time, to place control of the strike in the hands of the ranks and provide a means to block a bureaucratic sellout.

Such committees must establish close ties with other sections of the oppressed—strike support committees, neighborhood and block committees in poor districts, etc.—in coordinating the distribution of food and essential supplies, drawing in working-class housewives, the unemployed and youth. If the struggle intensifies, strike committees may be able to impose workers control of production and could serve as the nucleus of workers councils, as an organizational form for a struggle for socialist revolution and for a workers state. Revolutionaries must link the present struggle to the fight against colonialism and all forms of oppression, from the struggle against U.S. military bases and for the freedom of independence fighters to the fight against racism and the oppression of women.

All this poses the need for the working class to lead a fight against the root of the problem: the capitalist system itself. Trotsky wrote of France in the mid-1930s that in order to judge the readiness for a general strike and to “strengthen the militant mood of the masses, it is necessary to place before them a program of revolutionary action.... Above all the tasks and partial demands of our epoch there stands the question of power” (“Once Again, Whither France?” March 1935). This is no less true of the Puerto Rican general strike today.

For a Trotskyist Party in Puerto Rico!

Above all, it is necessary to build a revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. As Leon Trotsky, the co-leader together with V.I. Lenin of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, wrote in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth



Giuliano De Portu/Primera Hora

Club-wielding Puerto Rico Police thug.

International, “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.” This fundamental thesis continues to be true today, and particularly so in the case of a general strike, which poses point-blank the question: which class shall rule, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat?

The struggle over *la telefónica* is a make-or-break battle for Puerto Rican labor. Yet even leftist union leaders approach the general strike as a pressure tactic rather than a struggle for power. In calling a general strike, the union leaderships have been forced into a corner by Rosselló’s anti-labor offensive rather than systematically gearing up for a showdown with the capitalist government. Despite occasional militant rhetoric, at bottom their common program, in different variations, is that of reformism, seeking to reform the present system (such as with state-owned public services) while accepting the framework of capitalism. Revolutionary communists, in contrast, seek in every struggle to prepare the working class for a fight for state power, treating reforms as a by-product of the revolutionary struggle.

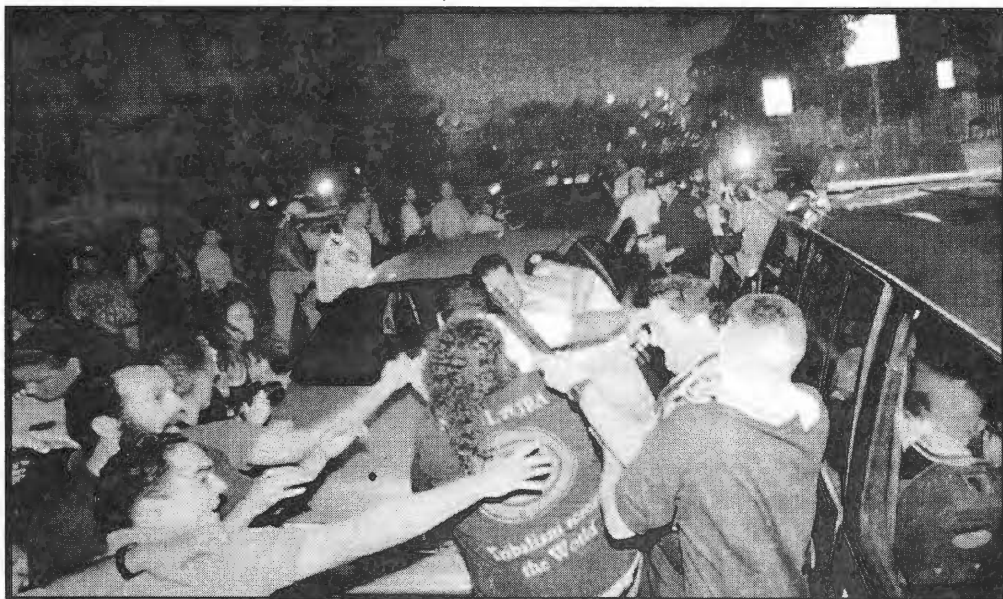
“This is a political strike because the workers didn’t go out for a quarter more in the contract, they’re protesting against the policy of privatization. That’s why the government is afraid of it,” commented Ricardo Santos, secretary of health and safety of the UTIER electrical workers union (*El Vocero*, 25 June). That is true, and that is a key reason why this strike must be waged politically. But on the basis of what politics? Anti-statehood bourgeois parties, such as the small Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and sections of the Popular Democrats (PPD, supporters of Puerto Rico’s present “commonwealth” status, a thinly disguised form of colonialism), have engaged in electoral grandstanding by pretending to be friends of the telephone workers. Yet it was under PPD governor Hernández Colón that the first attempt was made to privatize the PRTC, in 1990, and long distance service was handed over to a Spanish company.

"This goes beyond any people's strike, beyond a war against privatization...the war is against the government," vituperated Puerto Rico's police chief Pedro Toledo, who has flaunted his membership in the government party. This former FBI agent has repeatedly tried to blame the strike on outside "agitators" and "subversives," listing names of leftist and university activists, and trying to whip up a scare over "terrorism." "I think that what many of these subversive groups want is a revolution," Toledo fulminates (*San Juan Star*, 30 June). In this same language of McCarthyite anti-communist witchhunting, on the day the

general strike was called, the Puerto Rican House of Representatives passed a resolution, beginning: "The strike in the telephone company is only the excuse of a small group of agitators and political extremists who seek to impose themselves through violence, threats, sabotage." These are the fears of a nervous ruling class that sees behind this outbreak of sharp class struggle the spectre of red revolution.

The raw material for socialist revolution is there. As picketers chant, "*se siente, se siente, el obrero combatiente*" (you can tell the workers are fighting) the bosses are acutely aware of this, and the danger it poses to their rule. Only a few years after the imperialists trumpeted victory in the Cold War and proclaimed the "death of Communism," even some of the more intelligent pro-capitalist press has commented that, 150 years on, the *Communist Manifesto* is still relevant, and highly accurate in its description of present-day capitalism. What is lacking is the revolutionary proletarian vanguard to lead the combative workers in a struggle for power. The exploiters in Puerto Rico have several parties standing for different formulas of capitalist rule. The exploited masses need a revolutionary workers party to lead the class struggle against the colonial capitalist government and its Yankee imperialist masters.

A revolutionary workers party in Puerto Rico must be based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. The democratic tasks such as national liberation can only be accomplished through workers revolution, led by a communist party, which must immediately take on socialist tasks, extending the revolution to the most advanced capitalist-imperialist countries. We seek to forge a Leninist vanguard party that would act as a tribune of the people, in championing the cause of all oppressed sectors (including minorities, women, homosexuals, immigrants) against their oppressors. Yet the group which presents itself as the "Puerto Rican section of the Fourth International," the Taller de Formación Política (TFP), does not seek to build an independent Trotskyist party but rather seeks



El Vocero

Pickers go after club-wielding cops at PRTC's Plaza Celulares offices, June 22.

a "broad" socialist party. The international organization to which the TFP adheres, the United Secretariat (USeC), does not represent Trotskyism but rather the program of Pabloism, of tailing after a variety of non-revolutionary forces. In Puerto Rico, the TFP is part of the Frente Socialista.

The Frente Socialista also includes the Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores (MST) and the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Puertorriqueños-Macheteros (PRTP), who in turn are part of the Congreso Nacional Hostosiano, a coalition with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois *independentista* forces. When the FS talks of "internationalism" it refers to "particular ties" with "the Puerto Rican community living in the United States, because we are part of the same people," and of the FS' participation in the Foro de São Paulo, a popular front coalition of leftist and bourgeois nationalist parties in Latin America. This is not proletarian internationalism or the "political independence of the working class" which the Frente declares as its "fundamental political objective," but rather class-collaborationist nationalism.

During the current labor struggle against privatization, many leftist militants have been active in building pickets and as part of the CAOS umbrella group of labor and leftist organizations, but there has been a striking absence of political propaganda by self-proclaimed socialist groups. Their activity in the strike has been limited to militant trade-unionism and nationalism.

For Proletarian Internationalism, Not Nationalist Popular Frontism

In the present strike, there are ubiquitous references to "the people." In declaring the phone workers' struggle against privatization a "strike of the people," many militants want to underline the widespread popular support for the strikers against the despised Rosselló. But contained in the idea of an undivided "people" is a whole program—the program of "class-

less" (in fact, bourgeois) populism. The chant, often repeated on the picket lines, that "The people united will never be defeated," was the slogan of the Chilean Unidad Popular government under Salvador Allende. This was a classic "popular front," which politically ties the working class to a sector of the capitalist class in the name of "anti-imperialism," "anti-fascism" or other bourgeois-"democratic" labels. Such class-collaborationist coalitions are a favorite device of the reformists to block revolutionary struggle and keep the working masses confined within the limits of capitalism. By doing so, the popular front in fact aids fascist and pro-imperialist forces.

The "people united" was defeated in Chile, in the bloody coup of September 1973, precisely because of the absence of a proletarian vanguard to split the false "unity" of class collaboration and to organize the working class in the struggle for its revolutionary class interests. The butcher Pinochet himself was brought into the "Popular Unity" government in a bid to win "moderate" Christian Democratic support. The result was a bloody massacre, just as when Stalin ordered the Chinese Communists to "ally" with the Nationalist general Chiang Kai-shek in 1927, or when the Maoist Stalinists of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) bound the masses to the nationalist general Sukarno, producing the 1965 bloodbath in which more than a million PKI members, labor activists and ethnic minorities were killed. More recently, in Haiti the popular front around the Lavalas movement of Aristide paved the way for U.S. military intervention, giving neo-colonialism a new face while maintaining the wretched poverty and exploitation of the workers and peasants.

In the struggle for their emancipation, the working people must rely on their own class strength and the support of other oppressed sectors against capitalism. Any political alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie can only paralyze the strength of the exploited and oppressed. Even Rubén Berríos' minuscule PIP with its *independentista* rhetoric only wants to "independently" exploit Puerto Rican workers under U.S. tutelage (and with fees from U.S. bases, "for a time" of course). In Puerto Rico today, the program of class collaboration is expressed in a per-

vasive nationalist rhetoric characteristic of almost the entire left. Thus while the MST called in its Third Congress (June 1996) for "giving priority to the struggles and demands representing the interests of the working class and oppressed sectors of society," it placed these in the framework of "*independentista* unity." The political consequences of this nationalist program and rhetoric are extremely harmful for the workers struggle.

Much has been made of the fact that the PRTC is a profitable and modern (fully digitalized) phone company, which Rosselló is selling off for a pittance (GTE will pay at most \$300 million for a company valued at over \$2.2 billion), likely leading to sharply increased rates. Many have pointed out that after buying out ITT (which ran the phone system until 1974), the PRTC increased the number of telephones in Puerto Rico from 200,000 to 1.6 million. But referring to "Our Telefónica," as a leftist university professor did in a recent column (*Claridad*, 2 July), or saying that the Telefónica "belongs to the people of Puerto Rico," as the former leader of the UIET phone workers union did in a picket line speech, is false and diverts the struggle. The PRTC belongs to the Puerto Rican capitalist government, and its profits are taken from the sweat of its workers. The only way utilities and social services will really become "ours" is through the revolutionary expropriation of all the exploiters, when a government of the working class in Puerto Rico and internationally can organize the economy to serve the interests of the workers and oppressed.

The same unionist praised the strike as the struggle of "a whole united people," and noted that the PRTC up until now has subsidized various state services, including education "and the raises for the police itself." He went on to appeal to "our police brothers," to say that they should not become accomplices of this privatization if they want support in their struggles! This is dangerously wrong in every way. False consciousness about the role of the police is pervasive in the strike. A banner and picket chants declare "Club-wielding policeman, you too are a worker." No, a cop is a cop. The police are not workers but professional strikebreakers and racist killers, the enforcers

Mauricio Pascual/San Juan Star



Yamarié Berríos/San Juan Star

(Left) Bureaucrats and opportunist leftists push illusions in the cops. Sign reads "Club-wielding policeman, you too are a worker." (Right) The real role of the police, the armed fist of capital: "Police: Hired Criminals."

of the anti-working-class laws of the bourgeoisie. The slightest confusion about the nature of the police produces illusions that will be paid in more workers' blood.

Our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), section of the League for the Fourth International, have waged a bitter struggle, facing armed military police and endless court suits against them, to carry out the expulsion of the police from the Municipal Workers Union of the steel city of Volta Redonda. As Marxists they declare that the police are not "brothers" or "fellow workers," but the armed fist of the bourgeoisie, as shown from the "war on drugs" in Puerto Rico's housing projects to the murder of Anthony Báez and the police torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in New York City. This understanding is vital to the victory of the Puerto Rican strikers today.

Puerto Rican nationalism narrows the struggle to the confines of this Caribbean island. Yet the drive for privatization is international in scope and has escalated in recent years as a direct result of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe. Today, workers from Mexico and Brazil to France and Italy are fighting against privatization of state-owned companies and the accompanying slashing of workers gains. Meanwhile, the threat of counterrevolution and the destruction of the planned economy and collectivized property looms in Cuba and China, which would spell disaster for Cuban and Chinese workers and further embolden the capitalists internationally. It is impossible to struggle against privatization in Puerto Rico without fighting against the imperialist system which is behind it. That means in the first instance, forging a close alliance with U.S. workers who face the same bosses.

Puerto Rican nationalism also turns its back on a key section of the working class, the 300,000 immigrants from the Dominican Republic, both legal and "illegal," who live and work here. They are subject to arbitrary raids, detention and deportation by the INS immigration cops who also raid sweatshops in New York and Los Angeles. Even on the left there are instances of hostility to Dominicans. A class-conscious workers movement in Puerto Rico must champion their cause, fighting against deportations here just as it must in the U.S. There is ample support for this. At the assembly of thousands of union delegates in Carolina on June 28, a representative from the Dominican unions received tremendous and prolonged applause. A revolutionary internationalist vanguard is needed to mobilize this sentiment, raising among demands of the strike an end to all deportations, and calling for workers action to stop them.

Likewise, a revolutionary workers party would struggle for the liberation of women and highlight the role of women workers, who have played a key role in the telephone workers strike. Most of the PRTC's unionized employees are women, women have been targeted by the police thugs, and many of the union delegates and leaders are women. The working class as a whole must take up the fight against women's oppression, including raising demands for free abortion on demand and for free 24-hour day care centers, and for extending this to all.

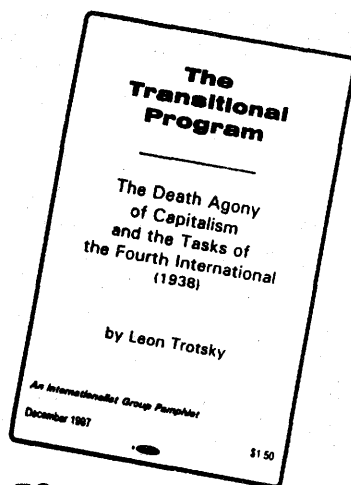
For a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean!

The telephone workers strike and the general strike against privatization are intimately related to the eternal question of Puerto Rico's "status." A key reason for Rosselló's push to sell off the Telefónica is to make Puerto Rico more eligible for statehood by further integrating its economy into that of the mainland U.S. What this means in practice is U.S. corporations buying up everything they don't already own on the island.

The position of the Clinton administration and the U.S. Democratic Party has recently shifted from support for the present "commonwealth" status to backing statehood for Puerto Rico. This is partly from a calculation that Puerto Rico would vote Democratic, and also in order to ensure the continued presence of the numerous U.S. military installations on the island (instead of being forced out as the U.S. Army's SouthCom was from Panama). This shift, reflected in the Young/Craig amendment now before the U.S. Congress calling for a new referendum slanted toward statehood, has also led to a switch of political alliances in Puerto Rico. The pro-statehood PNP, traditionally aligned with the U.S. Republicans, is now lined up with Clinton's Democrats, while the PPD (and the PIP) are looking to the most reactionary, racist forces in Congress to oppose statehood, particularly those pushing for "English only"! The Puerto Rican masses can only lose from this cynical maneuvering.

Statehood, no less than the present colonial status, would be inherently inimical to the interests of Puerto Rican working people, whose incomes are presently far below those of the poorest U.S. state. It would be accompanied by a further slashing of social programs, an offensive against the Spanish language and other forms of racist discrimination. The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International advocate independence for Puerto Rico, in order to strike a

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blow against U.S. imperialism and because only by breaking out of the national subjugation of colonial rule can the international class struggle come to the fore. We support struggles for independence from colonial rule, even when they are led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces, at the same time as we fight for proletarian leadership of the struggle against imperialism through international socialist revolution. Genuine national liberation can only be achieved by workers revolution, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. We demand: Yankee imperialism get out! U.S. military out of Puerto Rico and all of the Caribbean! Return Guantánamo to Cuba!

At the same time, however distorted by the mechanisms of colonial referendums, the fact remains that an overwhelming majority of the Puerto Rican population does not presently favor independence. As the right to self-determination is a democratic question, and the working class has no interest in forcing independence against the will of the Puerto Rican population—especially when the impetus for separation comes from right-wing reactionaries—we underline our defense of Puerto Rico's right to independence. We also stress the need for a socialist federation of the Caribbean. A large part of the opposition to immediate independence is the (accurate) perception that an independent capitalist Puerto Rico would quickly see its living standards fall to the level of desperate poverty of the Dominican Republic next door. An isolated workers state, on the other hand, would face the imperialist boycott and encirclement that has pushed Cuba to the wall economically.

From Marx to Lenin and Trotsky, genuine communists have always held that socialism cannot be built in one country. This lesson, underlined by the collapse of the USSR, is all the more true of a small Caribbean island in what U.S. rulers regard as an "American lake." But fighting for a voluntary socialist federation of workers states in the region as part of a socialist united states of Latin America, in conjunction with socialist revolution in the United States itself, could unite the ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples of the region in a common struggle against imperialism. From the time of the 1791 Haitian Revolution against colonial slavery to the Cuban Revolution, struggles for social progress have quickly spread through the Antilles.

Both in Puerto Rico and the U.S., revolutionaries have a special responsibility to defend the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialist military aggression and internal counterrevolution. Puerto Rico has been used by the Yankee imperialists as a staging ground for its attacks on and encirclement of Cuba, and as a training ground for counter-revolutionaries throughout Latin America. At the same time and as a key part of our defense of the Cuban Revolution, we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucratic leadership under Castro, which is paving the way for capitalist restoration, and to replace it with soviet democracy in the form of revolutionary workers councils. In Puerto Rico, Cuba, the United States and throughout the world, we fight to build Trotskyist parties in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

If the general strike called for July 7 and 8 is to be anything more than a two-day work stoppage and parade, it must be animated

by a program of revolutionary class struggle. As Leon Trotsky wrote in his 1935 pamphlet, "Once Again, Whither France?":

"The fundamental importance of the general strike independent of the partial successes, which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner. By shutting down the factories, transport, and generally all the means of communication, power stations, etc., the proletariat by this very act paralyzes not only production but also the government. The state power remains suspended in mid-air....

"Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: who will be the master?"

Since the general strike poses this question, it is essential that a vanguard party of the working class be forged to provide the answer, to lead a revolutionary struggle for power. Today there is no such party, yet a general strike is urgently needed in Puerto Rico in order to defeat the government's anti-worker privatization offensive. This requires of revolutionaries that they redouble their efforts to forge the revolutionary workers party that is indispensable for the victory of the working class through international socialist revolution. ■

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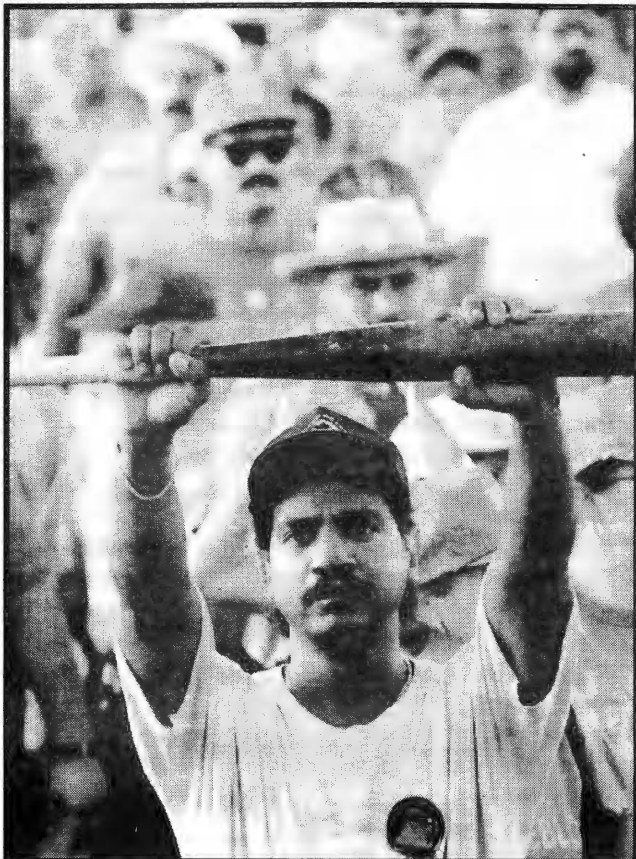
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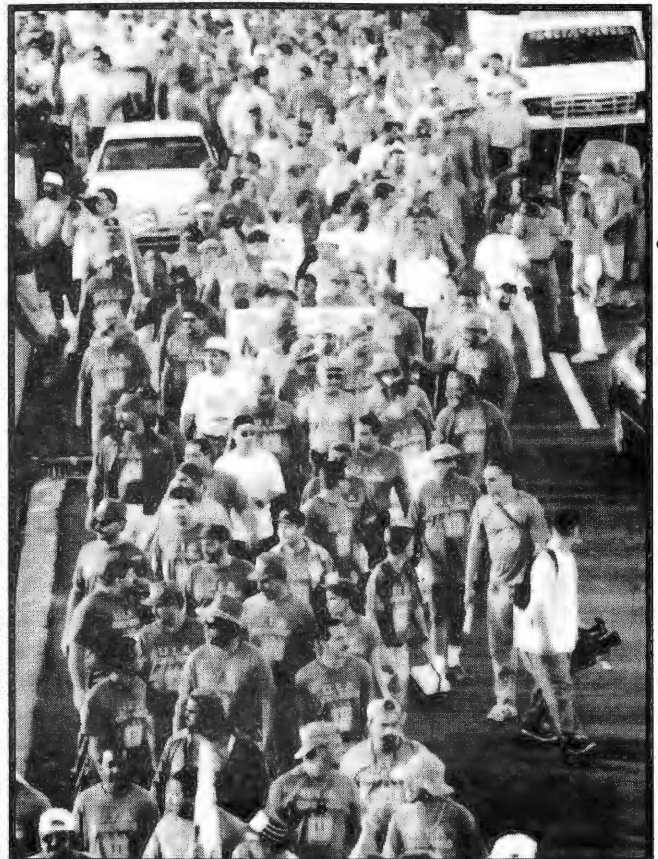
Power of labor: Miles-long traffic jam caused by strikers' blockade, cutting off access to San Juan's airport on morning of the first day of the general strike. Union leaders called off action, capitulating to cops' threats.

El Nuevo Día/Tito Guzmán



Striker defying police stationed on airport grounds.

El Nuevo Día/Laura Magruder



Contingent of strikers from Water Authority.

Balance Sheet of the General Strike: Puerto Rican Workers Mobilize, Union Tops Cave In

The following article is based on a presentation at an Internationalist Group educational on August 1.

The 48-hour island-wide general strike in Puerto Rico on July 7 and 8 was a major event in recent labor history. It was the first general strike on U.S. territory in over half a century, since the Oakland general strike of 1946 and the three citywide general strikes of the mid-1930s (Toledo, San Francisco and Minneapolis). It followed a "national work stoppage" on 1 October 1997, when 150,000 marched on the Puerto Rican capitol protesting the colonial government's plan to privatize the phone company. The general strike came in the middle of a bitter telephone workers' strike that broke out on June 18 and didn't end until almost six weeks later. During the course of the phone strike, more than 300,000 phones were out of service and whole sections of the island were out of phone communication for long periods. Service was even cut off to the huge Roosevelt Roads naval base for a day, as was phone communication to police stations in several towns and cities. There was a major participation by leftists in the strike, and the bourgeois press



Ranier R. Rentas/El Vocero

Front line of strike pickets with shields outside Department of Education, July 7.

went wild publishing lists of "subversives" and "outside agitators" complete with mug shots.

The July general strike shut down most of the island's economy and government for two days. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined the walkout (CNN reported 800,000 absent from their jobs). Banks and major shopping centers announced the day beforehand that they would not open. Union leaders had called on people to "prepare as if a hurricane were coming," and along the main streets, shop owners put up metal hurricane shutters. Nothing moved in the ports, government offices were closed, public transport stopped and traffic in the capital was like on a Sunday. The San Juan airport was cut off from 4:30 a.m. on the first day as a couple thousand strikers and hundreds of cars converged on this focal point of transportation and communication, blocking the highway as squads of mounted, motorcycle, airport and every other variety of police looked on. There were mass picket lines of hundreds and up to 2,000 picketers at various locations around the metropolitan area, as well as in the cities of Ponce, Mayagüez, Aguadilla and Bayamón. Non-unionized chemical plants in Manatí and Arecibo were picketed out. In numerous places would-be scabs were stopped from crossing the lines.

In terms of workers' mobilization, the strike began auspiciously, effectively shutting down commerce, government and much of industry. "Workers Succeed in Paralyzing the Country," headlined



Riot cops of hated Shock Force advance at Department of Education. Strikers' determination blocked attempts to run scabs.



Coverage of the first day of general strike. Right: Bosses' press hails union tops' sellout calling off airport blockade in the face of cops' threats.

the *San Juan Star* extra (7 July), reporting "Limitless Number of Demonstrators," "Confrontation at the Department of Education" and "Hours of Chaos"—a takeoff on the name of the Broad Committee of Union Organizations (CAOS) which called the strike. But very quickly the question of leadership was posed pointblank, as the union tops capitulated before threats by the police and hardnosed governor Pedro Rosselló. A colonel of the Puerto Rico police at the airport threatened that "a bloody incident" could occur, and gave the labor leaders 15 minutes to clear the roadway. Even though the union forces assembled there could have held off a cop attack and thousands more strikers could have been summoned by radio to reinforce the blockade within minutes, the union bureaucrats capitulated. The general strike posed the question of power, and fearing the spectre of all-out labor war, the labor fakers folded.

Despite the numbers and combativeness of the strikers, because of the union leaders' desperate efforts to avoid a frontal clash with the government, the walkout did not achieve its aim. The general strike was called back up the strike by phone workers who were demanding cancellation of the privatization of the government-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC, or *la telefónica*). The union leaders were forced to undertake the mobilization because of tremendous pressure from the ranks and widespread sympathy for the phone strikers among the Puerto Rican population. But seeing the deep divisions and lack of determination in the leadership, Rosselló decided to ride out the strike. The sale to GTE Corp., a major U.S. military contractor, went ahead, and after three

more weeks of desultory picketing, the phone workers' strike was called off as well. The result was to demoralize strikers who had held out for close to six weeks. Due to bureaucratic betrayal, the strike failed—that is the hard fact that must be confronted by Marxists and all defenders of the cause of labor.

The Internationalist Group was present in Puerto Rico for almost two weeks during this struggle, including at the meeting that voted for the general strike, on the picket lines, discussing with numerous militants. We put out a six-page leaflet with a program for struggle on the eve of the general strike, calling centrally for building a revolutionary workers party. We distributed hundreds of copies of this leaflet and sold 130 copies of our Spanish-language publication *El Internacionalista* stuffed with the leaflet to the strikers. In that leaflet, we warned:

"The struggle over the Telefónica is a make-or-break battle for Puerto Rican labor. Yet even leftist union leaders approach the general strike as a pressure tactic rather than a struggle for power. In calling a general strike, the union leaderships have been forced into a corner by Rosselló's anti-labor offensive rather than systematically gearing up for a showdown with the capitalist government."

This warning was amply borne out by the course of the Puerto Rican general strike. So, too, was our warning that the nationalism of the Puerto Rican left undercut this *class struggle* by promoting the politics of *class collaboration* with "patriotic" bourgeois forces:

"In declaring the phone workers' struggle against privatization a 'strike of the people,' many militants want to

underline the widespread popular support for the strikers against the despised Rosselló. But contained in the idea of an undivided 'people' is a whole program—the program of 'classless' (in fact, bourgeois) populism. . . .

"Puerto Rican nationalism narrows the struggle to the confines of this Caribbean island. Yet the drive for privatization is international in scope and has escalated in recent years as a direct result of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe. . . . It is impossible to struggle against privatization in Puerto Rico without fighting against the imperialist system which is behind it. That means, in the first instance, forging a close alliance with U.S. workers who face the same bosses."

The strike sharply posed the question of Puerto Rico's colonial status. The major chant was "*Puerto Rico no se vende*," meaning both that Puerto Rico is not for sale, and that Puerto Rico doesn't sell out. The reason Roselló is selling off the PRTC is in order to facilitate his plan to make Puerto Rico a state, to make it more like the U.S. Everyone understood that selling the phone company was a preparation for statehood, and thus not only workers, and not only supporters of Puerto Rican independence, but those opposed to outright U.S. annexation supported the strike. That was behind the ubiquitous waving of the Puerto Rican flag. But in fighting against the annexationist plans, communists do so on a program of class struggle against imperialism, not bourgeois nationalism which promotes a bogus "unity" with capitalist politicians.

We fight for *proletarian internationalism* and against *nationalism*, which is a bourgeois ideology par excellence. That is a big difference we have with virtually the entire Puerto Rican left, which is nationalist to the core. We noted in the leaflet that defense of the hundreds of thousands of Dominicans living in Puerto Rico, where they are subject to repeated police attacks and immigration raids, was a key task of revolutionaries and class-conscious workers. Yet none of the Puerto Rican leftists took up this issue. It could have been very powerful: the day before the general strike, it was reported on the radio that a Dominican student had been shot by the cops in Santo Domingo for having allegedly pounded on a car of the privatized Dominican Telephone Company. That company is owned by GTE, the same imperialist company that was buying up the Puerto Rican phone company, so here was an example of how GTE was already producing its victims. But in all of the rallies and speeches, this case was not mentioned.

Similarly, there was no mention of defense of Cuba against imperialism. Again, this is not an abstract question in Puerto Rico. Not only is the island home to numerous military bases, and the staging ground for the U.S. military harassment of Cuba, but the purchase of the Puerto Rican phone company is part of a strategy to prepare to control communications throughout the Caribbean, eventually including Cuba. One reason given for why a Spanish company, TISA, might be a better buyer is that it could get in on the Cuban "market" while a U.S. company is bound by the U.S. embargo. But despite plenty of anti-Cuban, anti-communist rhetoric from Rosselló's backers (union leaders were

accused of being in telephone contact with Fidel Castro), the question of Cuba was never mentioned by strike leaders and leftists on the picket lines. Even at a July 4 demonstration outside Fort Buchanan, a military prison in San Juan, calling for freeing Puerto Rican political prisoners and "prisoners of war," none of the leftists and nationalists said a word about defense of Cuba.

We pointed out that Puerto Rican nationalism was the basis for collaboration with the class enemy. Thus supposed socialists were joining in *independentista* unity with the bourgeois Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), headed by Rubén Berríos, who spoke at a strike rally. But in addition to the rather small PIP, sections of the Popular Democrats, one of the two major capitalist parties in Puerto Rico, demagogically came out in support of the phone workers' strike against privatization. Yet when it was in office in 1990, the PPD began the process of privatizing the PRTC, by selling off the long distance service to the Spanish telephone company TISA. (PPD administrations also used phone company premises to tap thousands of telephones of leftists and *independentistas*.) Marxist revolutionaries fight for the political independence of labor from

Women strikers taking care of business, stop scab outside of Department of Education (below).



El Vocero



José I. Fernández/El Nuevo Día

Communists Demand Independence for All Colonies

ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence

From the moment that a detachment of revolutionary soldiers and sailors dissolved the tottering bourgeois government of Russia and V.I. Lenin announced that power had passed into the hands of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was a beacon to the colonial peoples of the world, summoning them to throw off the imperialist chains by allying themselves with the world proletariat. News of the workers' victory in Russia spread to the farthest corners of India and China, encouraging the impoverished toilers to rise up against the colonial masters and the imperialist overlords. The 1919 Manifesto of the Communist International, written by Leon Trotsky, declared:

"Never before has the problem of colonial slavery been posed so sharply as it is today.

"A number of open insurrections and the revolutionary ferment in all the colonies have hence arisen....

"If capitalist Europe has violently dragged the most backward sections of the world into the whirlpool of capitalist relations, then socialist Europe will come to the aid of liberated colonies with her technology, her organization and her ideological influence in order to facilitate their transition to a planned and organized socialist economy.

"Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the

hour of your own emancipation!"

Linking the revolutionary struggle of the working class in the imperialist countries with the struggle for the liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial subjects of imperialism was a hallmark of Bolshevism. It was also a key dividing line between the revolutionary opposition to the imperialist World War and the social-democratic pacifists who sought a class-collaborationist "peace" among the competing capitalist predators, who had gone to war over control of the colonies. The famous "21 Conditions" for admission to the Communist International insisted:

"Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a most well-defined and clear-cut policy in respect of colonies and oppressed nations. Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists in its 'own' country, must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples."

Today, Puerto Rico is the largest U.S. colonial possession, and indeed the largest and most famous remaining colony on the face of the earth. In fact, it is the very symbol of Yankee imperialism. It is regularly the subject of pious deliberations in the United Nations Committee on Decolonization where the assembled bourgeois hypocrites mouth pious words about the right of self-determination, while refusing to call for implementing this right in the case of Puerto Rico. It is the duty of proletarian revolutionaries in the United States, in particular, to fight for the independence and national emancipation of this colonial possession of U.S. imperialism, as part of the fight for world socialist revolution. For more than a quarter century, the Spartacist League and International Communist League stood for independence for Puerto Rico. But no longer. In a recent issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 696, 11 September

1998) a small "correction" appeared that speaks volumes about the ICL's recent evolution toward a left version of social-democratic accommodation with imperialism.

For the benefit of our readers who may not have seen this little item, and because of its far-reaching significance, it is worth reproducing the SL/ICL's "rectification" of the Marxist position on colonies. Here is in its entirety this shameful declaration:

"CORRECTION

"The article 'General Strike Rocks Puerto Rico' (*WV* No. 694, 31 July) includes a quotation taken from *WV* No. 588 (19 November 1993) stating that we 'advocate independence' for Puerto Rico but do not favor forcing that, or any other status, on the Puerto Rican people. In fact, these statements are self-contradictory. Our position was correctly expressed in the article 'A Century of U.S. Imperialist Plunder' (*WV*

Break the Chains of Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution!



San Juan Star

100 years of Yankee colonial domination of Puerto Rico: U.S. troops enter Mayagüez with Spanish soldiers taken prisoner, 1898.

No. 686, 13 March):

'Marxists defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and support struggles for independence in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and to remove the national question from the agenda in Puerto Rico. But we are not in favor of forcing annexation, federation, or even independence on anyone, least of all by racist U.S. imperialism.'

"We do not currently *advocate* independence for Puerto Rico, not least because the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time. As the article in *WV* No. 694 noted, 'While there is deep resentment among Puerto Ricans over their colonial oppression, most are contradicted and loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship—such as the right to work on the mainland—and fear that independence would mean falling into the crushing immiseration typical of capitalist Caribbean states such as the Dominican Republic'."

For the Spartacist League in the United States, this renunciation of the call for independence for this key U.S. colony, the linchpin for U.S. military and economic domination of the Caribbean, amounts to outright capitulation before "their own" bourgeoisie.

For any revolutionary-minded militant in Puerto Rico, this line would be a statement of political bankruptcy—more than being a non-position, this is a declaration that the SL/ICL is prepared to *accept* the continuation of Puerto Rico's present *inherently oppressive* colonial status, or Puerto Rico becoming a state of the United States, which would be subject to massive linguistic, cultural and economic discrimination—amounting to an internal colony. As the pro-statehood governor Pedro Rosselló and the U.S. Congress prepare to stage one colonial referendum after another to beat down opposition to annexation of Puerto Rico, the SL/ICL is saying . . . *that it has nothing to say*. In the past, the SL called for *boycotting* such colonialist farces, pointing out that in the face of the economic blackmail by the capitalists and their parties, the military occupation of the island and aggressive anti-

independentista repression by the colonial state, such votes could not be taken as a true measure of popular support for independence. But today? What is the SL today? "Commonwealth" (i.e., colonialist) "socialists"? Statehood (i.e., annexationist) "socialists"? "Socialists" who are indifferent to colonial oppression?

Whatever they may call themselves, *they are not communists* who stand unconditionally for independence of the colonies, of *all* colonies, *on principle*. Today the ICL has abandoned this fundamental Leninist principle of revolutionary struggle against imperialism. This latest revision of Marxism is a dramatic indication of the extent of political degeneration

accompanying the repeated ideological and organizational crises the ICL has experienced in recent years.

Capitulation to Yankee Imperialism

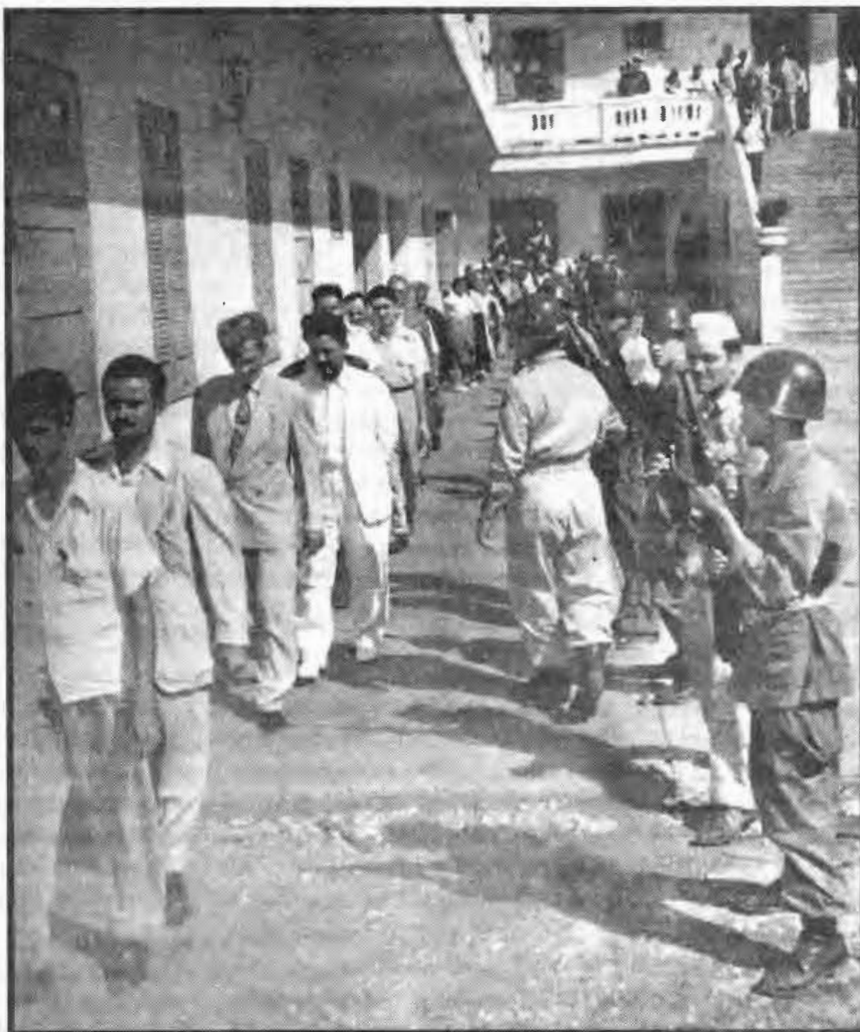
Let's consider the arguments presented by the SL's "correction." First, *WV* says that it does "not currently *advocate* independence for Puerto Rico." Why not? "Not least because the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time." So in retrospect, following this logic, when would the SL have advocated independence for this subject colonial nation? Certainly not at the time of the 1993 referendum, when the article they are "correcting" appeared and when less than 5 percent of those voting selected the "independence" option (which among other things accepted the continuation of the massive U.S. military presence on the island) while almost half favored "statehood." Certainly not at the time of the 1967 referendum, when two-thirds of the voters supported the present "commonwealth" status (which in Spanish is falsely called a "free associated state"). Certainly not in 1952, when three-quarters of those voting approved the "commonwealth" constitution. While all pro-independence forces called for a boycott of this referendum, the Socialist Party associated with the American Federation of Labor bureaucracy participated and sat in the colonial legislature. These colonialist social democrats are the intellectual precursors of the SL's new line.

The fact is that *at no time* has the "vast majority" of the Puerto Rican population "favored" independence. Does this mean that communists therefore do not call for breaking the chains of imperialist rule? Of course not. Our program is not governed by what is currently popular but by what is necessary for proletarian revolution and the liberation of the oppressed. Besides, how exactly is the will of the people supposed to be gauged? Through opinion polls, through another colonial referendum? The failed 1950 Jayuya uprising by the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party was staged as a boycott of a referendum on the law (PL 600) establishing "commonwealth" status.

This situation is not just some peculiarity of Puerto Rico, but quite frequent in the history of post-World War II colonialism. After the end of that supposed “war for democracy”—in reality a fight among the competing imperialists for world domination—the “democratic” imperialists tried to dress up their continued rule of subject peoples by repackaging their colonial empires as the British “commonwealth,” the “French union,” the Dutch “community,” and similar disguises. The Puerto Rican “commonwealth” was consciously derived from these models. The colonial authorities would then stage referendums to “approve” the colonial status. In fact, in Algeria electoral majorities voted for maintaining French rule until shortly before the war for independence was won in 1962: in 1958 more than 75 percent of the electorate voted for De Gaulle’s constitution of the French Fifth Republic, and in 1961 De Gaulle’s second referendum (calling for the continuation of colonial rule under the guise of “self-determination of the Algerian population”) again got a majority.

In form, the SL’s declaration would appear to be a policy of *tailism*: whatever the population wants is fine by them. In the same vein, it refused to call for workers action against U.S. moves toward war on Iraq earlier this year, on the grounds that such calls would find no “resonance” in the working class (see “SL Rejects Calls for Labor Strikes Against Imperialist War Moves,” *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998). In both cases, this amounts to bowing before the pressures of imperialism. “No policy” is a policy, of refusing to fight against and indeed *accepting* colonial rule of Puerto Rico. In fact, the *WV* correction tries to prettify the national oppression that this represents, saying the Puerto Rican population is “loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship.” In the past, in the article it now renounces, the Spartacist League/ICL wrote:

“Puerto Rico is a separate geographical, cultural, linguistic and economic entity from the United States. Annexation to the U.S. would pose considerable objective problems. Statehood would create powerful pressures toward a single language, with English tending to displace Spanish, ultimately bringing into question the identity of the Puerto Rican people. As well, a state of Puerto Rico would be the object of nativist racist hostility. The present



Wide World Photos

Above: Following abortive 1950 Nationalist revolt against colonial referendum in Puerto Rico, more than 1,000 people were held at San Juan police headquarters and elsewhere. Nationalist Party and Communist Party leaders were subjected to lengthy imprisonment. Right: Lolita Lebrón, being held after desperate attack on U.S. Congress demanding independence for Puerto Rico.



'commonwealth' is inherently oppressive, keeping Puerto Ricans living on the island in the position of second-class citizens subjected to sharp repression."

—"Colonial Referendum Farce: For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico!" *WV* No. 598, 19 November 1993

From these basic realities, *Workers Vanguard*, at that time, drew the necessary conclusion:

"As revolutionary internationalists, we defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and support struggles for independence. We advocate independence in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism, and because only through breaking out of colonial subjugation will it be possible to move beyond the perennial question of Puerto Rico's 'status' to focus on the international class struggle."

Since the SL now rejects the conclusion, that Marxists advocate independence for the Caribbean island colony of Yankee imperialism, one must ask: does the SL now believe that "commonwealth" or "statehood" are *not* inherently oppressive? Evidently so. What a sorry spectacle this is, of supposed revolutionaries basing their policy on the perceived "benefits of U.S. citizenship"!

So what about the argument raised by the *WV* "correction" that to "advocate independence" but to "not favor forcing that, or any other status, on the Puerto Rican people" is "self-contradictory"? What's self-contradictory? Revolutionary Marxists raise any number of positions in their program that the mass of the population does not presently support. A vanguard party fights to *change* existing consciousness, not adapt to it. Specifically on the national question, take the example of Quebec in Canada. For many years the policy of the ICL was to support Quebec's right to independence. In 1994, given the mounting anti-French chauvinism in English-speaking Canada, it changed its position to one calling for "Independence for Quebec!" (*WV* No. 629, 22 September 1995 and *Spartacist Canada* No. 105, September/October 1995). In correctly coming out for independence for Quebec, does the ICL mean that it intends to force independence on the population of Quebec? After all, slightly over 50 percent of Quebec voters rejected the mealy-mouthed "independence" option in the 1995 referendum. SLers argue that the situations are not directly analogous. Yes, there is a difference: in the case of Quebec, as part of a multinational state, proletarian revolutionaries might or might not advocate independence; in the case of Puerto Rico, a colony, communists *must* fight for independence if they are to oppose imperialist domination.

And what about the *WV* note's claim that it continues to "support struggles for independence" of Puerto Rico? This is pure window dressing. When, where, how does it support struggles for Puerto Rican independence, "in deed, not merely in words," as the Communist International demanded? And why would it support such struggles, since the SL/ICL does not itself call for Puerto Rican independence? Just because they're popular? What if they're not popular? For that matter, does the SL/ICL still call for the U.S. military out of Puerto Rico? Of course, if the SL accepts Puerto Rican statehood (or doesn't oppose it, which is the same thing), this demand would be like a utopian call for U.S. troops out of New Mexico. And

what about calling for freeing Puerto Rican *independentista* prisoners, victims of colonial repression? *WV*'s statement of empty "support" to independence struggles is nothing but eye-wash, a statement whose only purpose is to try to hide the fact that the ICL no longer calls for independence of the largest colony in the world today.

In defending their new line, SLers pretend that nothing has really changed in their policy, since they still support Puerto Rico's *right* to independence. Yet the right wing of the Republican Party in the U.S. declares it supports Puerto Rico's *right* to self-determination. Moreover, the pro-statehood bourgeois "New Progressive Party" of Governor Rosselló in Puerto Rico even denounces the present "commonwealth" as representing a colonial status of second-class citizenship. The SL's present position does not go one inch beyond the policies of imperialist liberalism or even conservative bourgeois forces. There is nothing contradictory at all about highlighting our support for Puerto Rico's right to independence, underlining that we do not seek to impose this on an unwilling population, while at the same time calling as revolutionary internationalists for Puerto Rican independence.

There is, however, something deeply contradictory between the SL/ICL's posture as communists and its capitulation to the domination of U.S. imperialism over Puerto Rico. *The "21 Conditions" for admission to the Comintern insisted that any genuinely communist party must "demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies." The Spartacist League and ICL today do not demand the expulsion of Yankee imperialism from its Puerto Rican colony.*

SL/ICL vs. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky on the Colonial Question

For socialists in an imperialist country to refuse to call for independence for a colony is a betrayal and a colonialist, chauvinist position. Lenin insisted, over and over, that the right of self-determination for colonies *can only mean independence*. Colonies are not nationalities in a multinational state. In this case, the right of self-determination is not akin to the right of divorce, which one can exercise or not, depending on the particular situation. Colonial subjugation is akin to slavery, for the relationship between the imperialist power and the colony is inherently oppressive, no matter how it is disguised. And on this question, the only response for proletarian revolutionaries is to fight for an end to colonial slavery. *Workers Vanguard*, when it was still an organ of revolutionary Marxism, insisted on this in article after article. The SL/ICL's support for independence for Puerto Rico was not dependent on the outcome of a colonial referendum, which by its very nature cannot be democratic.

In our leaflet for the recent (July 1998) Puerto Rican general strike, we declared:

"The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International advocate independence for Puerto Rico, in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and because only by breaking out of the national subjugation of colonial rule can the international class struggle come to the fore. We support struggles for independence from colonial rule, even when they are led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces,



Left: Delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International, including, behind Lenin, from left M. Gorky, Zinoviev and M.N. Roy. Congress voted "21 conditions" for joining the Comintern (inset), including demanding expulsion of imperialists from the colonies.

8 A particularly marked and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and oppressed nations is necessary on the part of the Communist Parties of those countries where bourgeoisies are in possession of colonies and oppress other nations. Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International has the obligation of exposing the dodges of its 'own' imperialists in the colonies, of supporting every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, of demanding that their imperialist compatriots should be thrown out of the colonies, of cultivating in the hearts of the workers in their own country a truly fraternal relationship to the working population in the colonies and to the oppressed nations, and of carrying out systematic propaganda among their own country's troops against any oppression of colonial peoples.

ICL today would not have been accepted in the CI. *WV* "correction" (below, left) declares the ICL does not "currently advocate independence for Puerto Rico."

WORKERS VANGUARD
No. 696 11 September 1998

CORRECTION

The article "General Strike Rocks Puerto Rico" (*WV* No. 694, 31 July) includes a quotation taken from *WV* No. 588 (19 November 1993) stating that we "advocate independence" for Puerto Rico but do not favor forcing that, or any other status, on the Puerto Rican people. In fact, these statements are self-contradictory. Our position was correctly expressed in the article "A Century of U.S. Imperialist Plunder" (*WV* No. 686, 13 March):

"Marxists defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and support struggles for independence in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and to remove the national question from the agenda in Puerto Rico.

But we are not in favor of forcing annexation, federation, or even independence on anyone, least of all by racist U.S. imperialism."

"We do not currently advocate independence for Puerto Rico, not least because the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time. As the article in *WV* No. 694 noted, "While there is deep resentment among Puerto Ricans over their colonial oppression, most are estranged and loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship—such as the right to work on the mainland—and fear that independence would mean falling into the crushing immiseration typical of capitalist Caribbean states such as the Dominican Republic."

at the same time as we fight for proletarian leadership of the struggle against imperialism through international socialist revolution. Genuine national liberation can only be achieved by workers revolution, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. We demand: Yankee imperialism get out! U.S. military out of Puerto Rico and all of the Caribbean! Return Guantánamo to Cuba! "At the same time, however distorted by the mechanisms of colonial referendums, the fact remains that an overwhelming majority of the Puerto Rican population does not presently favor independence. As the right to self-determination is a democratic question, and the working class has no interest in forcing independence against the will of the Puerto Rican population—especially when the impetus for separation comes from right-wing reactionaries—we underline our defense of Puerto Rico's right to independence."

This is, as the reader can see, precisely the line that the SL/ICL used to uphold and which it now renounces.

It is also the direct continuation of the line upheld by Trotskyists since the founding of the Fourth International. The 1938 founding conference of the FI approved a special "The-

sis on the World Role of American Imperialism," which stated unambiguously:

"The parties of the Fourth International, throughout the Western Hemisphere, stand for the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Philippine Islands, Hawaii, Samoa, and all other direct colonies, dependencies, and protectorates of American imperialism."

At the same time, the 1938 founding convention of the Socialist Workers Party, then the Trotskyist organization in the U.S., stated about the colonial and semi-colonial countries oppressed by American imperialism:

"The SWP supports every progressive struggle of these peoples. It stands for the immediate and unhampered right of self-determination for them, free from military, political, or economic intervention or pressure by the U.S. government. It stands for the immediate and unconditional independence of all the territories, colonies, and dependencies of the U.S. and for the withdrawal of troops from them."

Thus 60 years ago as well, American Trotskyists supported the right of self-determination for Puerto Rico and simultaneously called for "immediate and unconditional independence" for Puerto Rico and all U.S. colonies.

Calling for independence of the colonies was not simply a matter concerning Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. and Latin America. Can one even conceive of the French Trotskyists in the 1930s not calling for independence for Vietnam? What would the Vietnamese Trotskyists have said about such an ignominious betrayal? In his August 1938 article on "Fascism and the Colonial World," Trotsky stated categorically:

"The task of genuine revolutionaries is to get rid of the oppressive colonial regimes. Our slogan: *the right of all nations to self-determination, not in word, but in deed; the full*

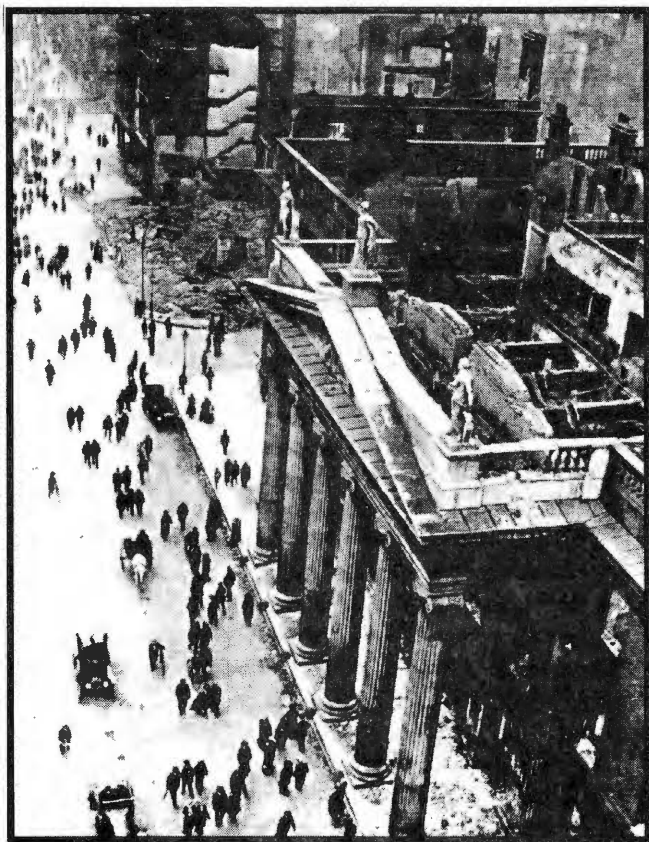
and genuine liberation of all colonies!?"

Except Puerto Rico, says the ICL today.

Trotsky drove home the cardinal importance of this issue in his polemics against the German social democrats in the 1930s: "What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism."

This is a devastating critique of the ICL's centrist, social-democratic new line.

Not only does the ICL's abandonment of the call for independence for Puerto Rico contradict six decades of Trotskyism, it flagrantly contradicts everything Lenin wrote on the question. In fact, *the SL/ICL's new line is pure Kautskyism*. Today, the SL/ICL upholds the right of self-determination in the abstract, but in practice they betray it, just as the (then centrist) social democrat Karl Kautsky did in the first imperialist world war. In his article



Hulton Getty Picture Collection

Dublin Post Office, headquarters of 1916 Irish Easter Uprising, after bombardment by British.

on "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (November 1915), Lenin writes:

"What is the social-chauvinists' programme on the national question?"

"They either deny the right to self-determination...or they recognize that right in a patently hypocritical fashion, namely without applying it to those very nations that are oppressed by their own nation.... The most plausible formulation of the social-chauvinist lie, one that is therefore most dangerous to the proletariat, is provided by Kautsky. In word, he is *in favour* of the self-determination of nations; in word he is for the Social-Democratic Party 'comprehensively [!] and unreservedly [?] respecting and demanding the independence of nations'... *In deed*, however, he has adapted the national programme to the prevailing social-chauvinism, distorted and docked it; he gives no precise definition of the duties of the socialists in the oppressor nations, and patently falsifies the democratic principle itself when he says that to demand 'state independence' for every nation would mean demanding 'too much'...."

This describes the ICL's new program precisely.

Returning to this question in his theses on "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (January-February 1916), the Bolshevik leader spoke of the "right of oppressed nations to self-determination," but concerning colonies he went further, saying:

"The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies that is put forward by all revolutionary Social-Democrats is also 'impracticable under capitalism without a series of revolutions'."

Later on in these theses, Lenin again insisted:

"Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation—and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing else than the recognition of the right to self-determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising—or revolutionary war, in the event of one—*against* the imperialist powers that oppress them."

In a footnote in the same article, Lenin criticizes the Dutch socialist Gorter for rejecting the principle of self-determination of nations, but adds that Gorter "correctly *applies* it, when he demands the *immediate* granting of 'political and *national* independence' to the Dutch Indies and exposes the Dutch opportunists who refuse to put forward this demand and to fight for it."

Over and over, Lenin pounded away against those who refuse to call for independence. In his article, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" (July 1916), he denounced those "socialists" who refuse to oppose annexations, "because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression." But what is statehood, other than annexation of Puerto Rico? Does the ICL oppose such annexation? In no longer calling for independence, the ICL thereby no longer opposes statehood. In the article just cited, Lenin writes:

"Our theses say that the demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies is as 'impracticable' (that is, it cannot be effected without a number of revolutions and is not stable with-



Algerians protesting repression by French police. Despite colonial referendums, independence struggle was won on the battlefield.

out socialism) under capitalism as the self-determination of nations, the election of civil servants by the people, the democratic republic, and so on—and, furthermore, that the demand for the liberation of the colonies is nothing more than ‘the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination’.”

To repeat: for Leninists, *the demand for the liberation of the colonies is nothing more than the recognition of the right of self-determination*. But for the ICL today, this statement of principle is null and void if the majority of the population of the colony does not presently back independence.

Not only does the SL/ICL’s new line directly contradict that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, it is contrary to the program of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Ireland. As is well known, by the 1860s, Marx came out for the independence of Ireland, not just for its right to independence, but positively for the political separation of Ireland from Britain, because any other status necessarily meant national oppression for the Irish while poisoning the English workers with chauvinism. “I once believed the separation of Ireland from England to be impossible. I now regard it as inevitable, although *federation* may follow upon separation,” Marx wrote in a November 1867 letter to Engels. A few weeks later, he wrote again:

“What the Irish need is:

“1) Self-government and independence from England.

“2) An agrarian revolution.”

In an April 1870 letter, Marx underlined that the call for independence for Ireland was of strategic importance not just for Ireland, but for proletarian revolution in England:

“To hasten the social revolution in England is the most important object of the International Working Men’s Association. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.... And it is the special task of the Central Council in London to awaken a consciousness in the English workers that *for them the national emancipation of Ireland* is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but *the first condition of their own social emancipation*.”

In all of this, Marx and Engels emphasized not just Ireland’s right to independence, but that Ireland must be free of English

colonial domination, for the sake of revolution in both Ireland and England. Likewise today, revolutionaries in the U.S. must fight for independence for Puerto Rico in order to bring about socialist revolution in the belly of the imperialist beast.

In fact, many elements of the Puerto Rican question today can be found in the Irish question a century ago. The SL today cites as an argument in favor of its new line that many Puerto Ricans oppose independence allegedly because they want “the right to work on the mainland.” Writing in March 1870, Marx noted that the English bourgeoisie “exploited the Irish poverty to keep down the working class in England by *forced immigration* of poor Irishmen.” Moreover, in the period leading up to World War I and even during the imperialist slaughter, by far the largest body of opinion in Ireland was not that of those fighting for independence, but rather of supporters of

“home rule” (a status roughly equivalent to Puerto Rico’s “commonwealth” today). Trotsky wrote of the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin:

“A nationwide movement, such as the nationalist dreamers had conceived of, completely failed to occur. The Irish countryside did not rise. The Irish bourgeoisie, together with the upper, more influential stratum of the Irish intelligentsia, held aloof. Those who fought and died were urban workers, along with some revolutionary enthusiasts from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.”

This did not mean, however, that revolutionaries should not call for Irish independence. As Trotsky declared in the 1919 Manifesto of the Communist International:

“A number of open insurrections and the revolutionary ferment in all the colonies have hence arisen. In Europe itself, Ireland keeps signaling through sanguinary street battles that she remains and still feels herself to be an enslaved country.”

More generally, the present lack of support for independence among the majority of the Puerto Rican population reflects the extensive integration of the island’s economy with that of the mainland U.S. But, again, this fact and this argument are nothing really new. Lenin wrote (in “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up”):

“The chief ‘ground’ of those opposed to self-determination is its ‘impracticability’. The same idea, with a nuance, is expressed in the reference to ‘economic and political concentration.’

“Obviously, concentration *also* comes about with the annexation of colonies. There was formerly an economic distinction between the colonies and the European peoples—at least, the majority of the latter—the colonies having been drawn into *commodity* exchange but not into capitalist *production*. Imperialism changed this. Imperialism is, among other things, the export of *capital*. Capitalist production is being transplanted to the colonies at an ever increasing rate. They cannot be extricated from dependence on European finance capital. From the military standpoint, as well as from the standpoint of expansion, the separation of the colonies is practi-

cable, as a general rule, only under socialism; under capitalism it is practicable only by way of exception or at the cost of a series of revolts and revolutions both in the colonies and the metropolitan countries.”

As Lenin pointed out more than 80 years ago, the conclusion to be drawn from this is not to drop the fight for independence of the colonies, but rather to join together the struggle for emancipation of the subject peoples from imperialism with the fight for proletarian revolution, both in the colony and in the imperialist metropolis.

This is, in turn, a key element of the Trotskyist perspective of *permanent revolution*, the program which was vindicated by the victorious October Revolution in Russia. Trotsky argued that in the imperialist epoch, even bourgeois-democratic demands could not be achieved by the bourgeoisie, utterly beholden to the imperialist overlords and fearful of the vast masses of the exploited, but could only be accomplished by the seizure of power by the proletariat, led by an authentic communist party and bringing the impoverished peasant masses behind it, which would then have to undertake socialist tasks and extend the revolution to the imperialist heartland. One of the key demands of permanent revolution is precisely for “*national independence*, i.e., the overthrow of the imperialist yoke” (from the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International). Yet today the ICL no longer calls for national independence for Puerto Rico, and by treating the struggle of a colonial people for national liberation as a purely democratic question, it abandons the Bolshevik understanding that the struggle against imperialist domination is a key motor force of international proletarian revolution. The ICL’s claim to stand for permanent revolution in Puerto Rico is a revisionist *fraud*.

Reforge the Fourth International on the Program of Authentic Trotskyism!

There is a prehistory to the ICL’s recent turn. The question of Puerto Rican independence was a subject of some discussion in the ICL leadership in 1993-94. At the time, a proposal was raised to change the headline of the *WV* article on the 1993 referendum to read “For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico.” Jan Norden, then editor of *Workers Vanguard*, agreed with this proposal, so long as the article continued to advocate independence for the island colony. After some exchanges, this was agreed to. The question came up again in the preparation of the document for the Spartacist League’s national conference in 1994, where an attempt was made to sneak in the anti-Marxist contraband which the ICL has just adopted as party policy. Norden objected that “as presently written it [the draft document] states that we defend the right of self-determination of Puerto Rico, that we support struggles for independence and we are for the right of independence, but it does not say that we *advocate* independence, which is fundamental so long as Puerto Rico is a colony.” Once again, the call for Puerto Rican independence was included in the final version of the SL conference document, something else the SL must now renounce.

But today, following the expulsions of the long-time ICL cadres who formed the Internationalist Group, the reconfigured ICL leadership, in rapid political degeneration, introduces

Kautskyan/centrist revisions on one question after another. Since what we are seeing today is a playing out of differences that had already come up several years ago, we would like to ask if the ICL today has also abandoned the slogan of a socialist federation of the Caribbean, which was also objected to in 1993, on the grounds that Puerto Rico (and the Virgin Islands) might not become independent and that a federation would likely be “Spanish-dominated.” This ignores the fact that in every period of social upheaval, from the time of the French Revolution in the 18th century to the Cuban Revolution in the 20th century, revolutionary struggles have swept through the Antilles and sparked insurgencies and solidarity by Spanish, English and French-speaking islands alike. And does the ICL now officially reject the call for a “Socialist United States of Latin America and the Caribbean,” as the SL spokesman did at an August 13 forum on Puerto Rico? Then perhaps it will comment on why Trotsky in his 1934 theses on imperialist war and in the 1940 Manifesto of the Fourth International on World War II called, in fighting against imperialism and the native comprador bourgeoisies, for “the *Soviet United States of South and Central America*.”

The ICL has been thrown into internal crisis since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. Drawing defeatist conclusions from this historic defeat for the world proletariat, it has steadily deepened a centrist course, combining repeated expulsions of cadres in the U.S., Mexico and France with one revision after another of longstanding Trotskyist positions. It went from a tendency toward abstentionism to outright desertion from the class struggle in Brazil in 1996, subsequently trying to cover its tracks with a frenzied attempt to sabotage the defense of the Brazilian Trotskyists in the face of bourgeois repression. Then came a clumsy attempt to rewrite the theory of permanent revolution by claiming that feudalism and semi-feudalism persisted in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, followed by the denial of the ICL’s decade-long denunciation of the Cardenista popular front in Mexico. Subsequently the ICL leadership abandoned the struggle for an *Iskra* perspective of building an exile revolutionary nucleus of North African Trotskyists.

Then it generalized its defeatist perspective into a claim that there had been a qualitative regression in the consciousness of the world working class, and hence, according to the ICL today, the crisis of humanity is no longer summed up in the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Having rejected this central thesis of the Transitional Program, which sums up the reason for the existence of the Fourth International, it is only logical that the ICL should continue to deepen its revisionist course, of succumbing to the pressures of the bourgeoisie. In fact, the ICL increasingly adapts to this supposed decisive historical regression, which has become the centerpiece of its worldview. We have pointed out how the ICL has increasingly taken on positions characteristic of centrist social democrats in the pre-World War I period, from Daniel De Leon’s abstract propagandism to Serrati’s refusal to build revolutionary leaderships in the colonial countries to Kautsky’s posture of “passive radicalism.” Now, in abandoning the call for independence for Puerto Rico, the Spartacist League has demonstrably and shamefully capitulated before its own bourgeoisie. ■

General Strike Betrayed . . .

continued from page 20

San Juan International Airport on the morning of the 7th."

After this enthusiastic account (which omits the fact that the airport blockade was called off by the CAOS leaders), like a bolt out of the blue Bernabé suddenly changes tone:

"And yet, the morning after the general strike, the leadership of the UIET and HIETEL [the two phone workers unions] announced their willingness to negotiate a rapid return to work. All of a sudden the movement seemed to be adrift. The main leaders offered no perspectives. Where was the movement going? Had the general strike been a last desperate action? What were the leaders of UIET and HIETEL seeking to negotiate? Nobody knew."

In fact, during the three weeks of the phone strike leading up to the general strike, the various supporters of the Socialist Front active in the unions such as Bernabé did not warn of the danger that the phone workers union leaders, José Juan Hernández (UIET) and Annie Cruz (HIETEL), who were on strike against their will, were prepared to sell out at the first opportunity. In contrast, the Internationalist Group leaflet had stated:

"The biggest weakness of the workers' struggle against privatization is at the top, where union bureaucrats have been at odds over whether the strike should be limited or indefinite, when to call it or whether to strike at all."

The IG also called for the formation of "elected strike committees, which can be recalled at any time, to place control of the strike in the hands of the ranks and provide a means to block a bureaucratic sellout."

Bernabé and the rest of the Socialist Front helped prepare the way for the sudden collapse of the strike movement right after its greatest display of labor's power. They remain silent about the crucial question of the proletarian leadership, while simultaneously promoting the class-collaborationist program of nationalism tying the workers to bourgeois parties and politicians like Rubén Berríos' PIP and the PPD's Cordero. In its 1982 book about the 1933-34 sugar cane workers' strike, *¡Huelga en la caña!*, the Taller de Formación Política wrote that the defeat of that strike was because "there didn't exist a revolutionary working-class leadership capable of giving direction to the strike struggle." The same was true of the phone workers strike and general strike of 1998, and the TFP and other components of the Socialist Front bear a good bit of the responsibility for this *absence of revolutionary proletarian leadership*.

ICL Revises Line on General Strike

Supporters of the International Communist League were present in Puerto Rico for several days, and an account of the general strike appeared in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 694, 31 July), the newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S. While headlining the indisputable fact that "General Strike Rocks Puerto Rico," its reportage tries to belittle the workers' mobilization, writing: "The public transportation unions went out, so the buses didn't run. Other than all of this, you wouldn't have known there was a general strike going on in San Juan because mass pickets were demobilized and some essential services were kept running."

What was the evidence for this astounding claim? That "smaller stores and cafes were open" and "for the most part, the lights stayed on and the water kept running"! So now the ICL holds that there can't be a real general strike if electricity and water supplies are not cut off and corner shops aren't shut down!

As for the claim that mass pickets were everywhere "demobilized," this is simply a lie, and a self-serving lie at that. There were *scores* of mass pickets of *hundreds* of strikers each on both days of the general strike. The Internationalist Group was present on the first day at such demonstrations at the airport (which grew to a couple thousand at its height), at the Department of Education (where 800 strikers surrounded the building, blocking scabs and repeatedly clashing with the police), at the PRTC's Plaza Celulares offices (where 2,000 strikers and their supporters marched, including numerous hospital workers), outside the Electrical Energy Authority's offices in downtown Santurce (where 300 picketed all day), and at the PRTC headquarters where thousands picketed during the day, long before the evening rally. On the second day, the IG was at pickets at the San Juan electrical plant and the port, where UTIER electrical workers and ILA longshoremen joined forces to stop an attempt to unload ships; at a mass picket of over 500 strikers in Ponce, where workers surrounded the police station and refused to let cops or police cars in or out for several hours; and in the "Golden Mile" in San Juan, where hundreds besieged bank offices.

In these numerous mass pickets, the supporters of the ICL were *nowhere to be seen*. This was remarked upon by various Puerto Rican leftists, who found this absence curious, as ICLers had been present in the preceding days. And another curious fact: when the Spartacist League held a forum in New York City on August 13 which was billed as an "Eyewitness Report from Puerto Rico General Strike," neither the *Workers Vanguard* reporter Miguel Acevedo nor any ICL eyewitness of the general strike was present—the ICLer who gave the report admitted he left the island *before* the general strike. This raises the interesting question of where the ICLers were during this mobilization, since they were manifestly *not* on the mass picket lines that they deny existed. As for the airport, where as we noted above the mass picket was shut down by the leadership, this showed not that "you wouldn't have known there was a general strike going on in San Juan"—which only someone who was both blind and deaf could claim—but rather that *the bureaucratic betrayal of this mobilization of the tremendous power of labor underlined the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat*.

This is important to stress, as the ICL's tendentious and outright lying account of the general strike is in the service of its new line that the central thesis of the Transitional Program—namely that "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership"—is supposedly *outdated*. According to the ICL's new program, this key conception of the founding document of the Fourth International, which summed up the FI's very reason for existence, "predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness" which they claim is "the reality of this post-Soviet period" (see "In Defense of the Transitional Program" in *The Internationalist* No. 5, May-June 1998, for our dissection of this fundamental revision of Trotskyism by

the ICL). So since proletarian consciousness has deeply regressed, *dixit* the ICL, the problem is no longer focused on the leadership but on the working class itself. And hence the powerful mass workers mobilizations against the capitalist colonial government—mobilizations which were betrayed by the leadership—are simply disappeared, *poof*, with *WV*'s magic wand.

The *Workers Vanguard* article ends with a paragraph about the Internationalist Group, saying, "Eventually the IG appeared with an eight-page 'leaflet' on the strike." Of course, the SL didn't have anything to say about the general strike until *three weeks later*. (They did the same thing with the UPS strike last year.) Behind the timing is the fact that they didn't seek to intervene with a revolutionary program for this struggle. This is a concrete expression of the *abstentionist* program that the ICL has adopted while expelling the cadres who later founded the Internationalist Group in the U.S., the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Groupe Internationaliste in France, and who together with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil recently formed the League for the Fourth International. Behind the ICL's program is a different, anti-Leninist conception of the party. Instead of the revolutionary party intervening in the class struggle to win the most advanced elements of the working class, revolutionary-minded youth, declassed intellectuals and oppressed minorities to its communist program, as Lenin's Bolsheviks did, for the ICL today, "bringing revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat" is reduced to publishing after-the-fact commentaries.

The *WV* article says that the Internationalist Group leaflet consisted of "rah-rah militancy over strike tactics, calls for strike committees, etc." So calling for a revolutionary workers party, the headline and central focus of our leaflet, is nothing but "strike tactics"? What they are objecting to is that the IG raised *transitional demands for working-class struggle*, which is the ABC of Trotskyism but something the ICL now denounces as "economist." ICLers claim that our leaflet failed to attack the nationalism of the union leaders, which is ludicrous, as anyone can see by reading the IG leaflet which has an entire section, "For Proletarian Internationalism, Not Nationalist Popular Frontism" denouncing the nationalism pushed by the Puerto Rican left and labor leadership. Moreover, we did so in a piece of propaganda distributed in hundreds of copies to the strikers. The fact is that the ICL also distributed a leaflet in Puerto Rico, on the history of colonialism, which said nothing about the strike and contained *not one word* denouncing the union leaderships or the petty-bourgeois nationalists, declaring that the latter were no longer a factor!

ICLers also claim that the IG leaflet falsified the nature of the CAOS, by not mentioning that CAOS supposedly included the bourgeois Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), as well as PPD legislators. This is a pure invention. CAOS was, as we described it, an "umbrella group of labor and leftist organizations," and the ICL to the contrary, the PIP was not part of it (nor were PIP or PPD politicians). Just to make sure, we called the PIP as well as unions and leftist members of CAOS, and they all confirmed that the PIP is not a member of CAOS. Moreover, it was *the IG* which warned in our leaflet about the danger represented by the left

and labor leaders' collaboration with the PIP and sections of the PPD. The ICL's leaflet, in contrast, didn't make a peep about the PIP. But these days what do facts matter to the ICL?

We noticed that their leaflet did not call for independence for Puerto Rico (only for the *right* to independence) or for a socialist federation of the Caribbean. ICLers said those two demands would appear in the article they were doing for the next issue of *WV*. In fact, those demands *did* appear in the *WV* article on the Puerto Rico general strike, in the form of a quote from a 1993 *Workers Vanguard* article. However, a couple of issues later, *WV* ran a "correction" in which it renounced the call for Puerto Rican independence which has been the line of the Spartacist League since its inception as well as Trotsky's Fourth International. Now these *colonialist socialists* have ceased to call for the expulsion of Yankee imperialism from its main Caribbean colony (see "ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence" in this issue).

The *WV* No. 694 article on the Puerto Rican general strike also says that the IG leaflet was "peppered with out-of-context quotes from Trotsky's writings on France, where he argued for a general strike in a pre-revolutionary situation." What exactly is "out of context" about the quotations we gave from Trotsky? They all stressed that, according to the Bolshevik leader, the general strike—independent of the reasons for which it is called and despite the treacherous leadership—inevitably poses the question of state power. This same point was made by Friedrich Engels back in 1893, and by every Marxist since then, including the Spartacist tendency for more than a quarter century. In 1974, *Workers Vanguard* stressed this, using the same quotes from Trotsky, as it called for a "defensive general strike" in Britain in the midst of a bitter coal miners' strike.

The Puerto Rican general strike posed a serious test for the entire left and labor movement. It exposed the nationalists, reformists and union bureaucrats who launch a fundamental battle under the pressure of the anger of the working masses but without a program to lead this sharp class struggle to victory. As Trotsky wrote of the social-democratic British trade-union leadership in 1926 and their French counterparts in the mid-1930s:

"The parliamentarians and the trade unionists perceive at a given moment the need to provide an outlet for the accumulated ire of the masses, or they are simply compelled to jump in step with a movement that has flared over their heads. In such cases they come scurrying through the backstairs to the government to obtain permission to head the general strike, this with the obligation to conclude it as soon as possible, without any damage being done to the state crockery."

—"The ILP and the Fourth International" (September 1935)

In the face of such bureaucratic backstabbing, the task of Marxists is to warn the workers beforehand, to put forward a program of revolutionary action—including raising partial demands and measures such as workers defense guards to defend the strike—focusing on the need to fight for state power. That is what the Internationalist Group did, following Trotsky, as we intervened in the Puerto Rican general strike. And in the aftermath it is necessary to draw the lessons of the betrayal, in order to prepare for the coming battles by forging the revolutionary leadership that was so grievously lacking in this one. ■

Facing Capitalist Exploitation in the "Special Economic Zones"

China: Women Workers Key Revolutionary Force



Julio Etchart/Impact Visuals

Migrant workers assemble circuit boards in Dongguan, Guangdong province, China.

Over a century and a half ago, in his booklet *The Holy Family*, Karl Marx quoted the French socialist Charles Fourier's statement, "The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation." China is a striking example of this revolutionary axiom. Despite its bureaucratic deformation, the Chinese Revolution of 1949 brought great gains to women, symbolized by the abolition of the practice of binding women's feet and the sale of women, as well as the virtual disappearance of female infanticide. Massive campaigns for literacy accompanied efforts to bring women into many spheres of social and economic life from which they had previously been excluded. This meant weakening the grip of the authoritarian, patriarchal family, an institution steeped in centuries of traditional obscurantism, superstition and denigration of women.

But if the condition of women is a measuring stick for social progress, it is likewise a barometer of social regression, as China today dramatically demonstrates. The Stalinist rulers of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state are strangling socialized production while inviting the implanta-

tion of imperialist capital and incorporating the capitalist enclave of Hong Kong. With mass layoffs in state industry and the introduction of sweatshop labor in capitalist enterprises, along with the reappearance of widespread prostitution, the selling of women and female infanticide, women are already the first victims of the encroachment of capitalism. Yet precisely because they bear the brunt of the counterrevolutionary assault, women can become steeled revolutionary fighters in the struggle to oust the sellout Stalinists who are wrecking the collectivized economy. As the fight for *proletarian political revolution* to oust the bureaucracy becomes increasingly intertwined with revolutionary struggle to expropriate the capitalists, Chinese women workers are a key link.

Nowhere is this link more starkly shown than in the "Special Economic Zones" (SEZs) where millions of young Chinese women toil, often in 19th-century conditions, for the most modern "multinational" corporations. From their own experience, they can show to the rest of the Chinese proletariat the disastrous consequences of the reintroduction of capitalist exploitation. Because

of their many-sided oppression and rigid repression by both corporate bosses and Stalinist bureaucrats, forging a core of Bolshevik women worker cadres will be an arduous undertaking. But in this struggle, Chinese Trotskyists have a rich history to look back to and build on. The Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 was launched by a strike wave of the more than 100,000 women textile workers in Shanghai.

That revolution was defeated through the betrayal by Stalin and his acolytes, who sacrificed the independent movement of the proletariat on the altar of an ill-fated "alliance" with the bourgeois Nationalists. As a result, during and following the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927, thousands of communist women workers were executed by the butcher Chiang Kai-shek, the warlords and their imperialist backers. Today, as the Beijing Stalinist regime opens the door to capitalist counter-revolution, the task of bringing revolutionary class consciousness to the huge, largely female work force of the SEZs and forging an authentically communist party requires the leadership of a Trotskyist world party that has drawn the lessons of a century of revolution and counterrevolution in China.

Boot Camp Capitalism

More than seventy years ago, a 1925 strike manifesto from workers at a cotton mill in Shanghai complained that the Japanese bosses "beat people without any reason whatsoever," that they "cruelly impose fines and fire people on a whim. . . . They make advances toward the women workers. . . . In the past there used to be one paid day off every half a month, whereas now the Japanese violate this regulation and allow the day off but without pay. . . . When the price of rice and fuel was cheap, we could get by on low wages. Now, even though everything has become very expensive, the wages have still not gone up. . . . We bring lunch to the factory every day, but the Japanese make us work on empty bellies and keep the machines running right up to [the lunch break at] half past eleven, so that despite the fact that we need time to prepare our food, there is no time even to boil water. On many occasions some of us have become sick from eating cold food" (quoted in Ono Kazuko, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950* [1989]).

A song told the life of a woman working in one of the numerous silk spinning factories (almost all of which were Chinese owned):

"I've just noticed the eastern sky glowing red,
I pull on my clothes and jump out of bed.
I gaze intently at the face of my child:
Your mother goes off, and you look so pale. . . .
Today will I once again be too late?
Will the mill have already barred its gate?
But the doors of this prison are still open to me. . . .
The hot steam rises and scalds my skin;
Were it not for the money, who would come in?
I reel off the silk until twelve o'clock,
Then fill my belly with the cold food I brought. . . .
The afternoon passes, the day slowly dies.
By the time work is done, six has already passed,
Outside the factory the streets are pitch black.

Please, don't ask your mother to hold you, my son,
My body aches and I can't bear the pain."

Seven decades later, similar laments are made by Chinese women workers today in the Special Economic Zones—except that now any worker who becomes pregnant is immediately fired. The Stalinist bureaucrats have opened up southern China to the most piratical and ruthless capitalist entrepreneurs. Most of the "foreign" capitalists directly investing in the SEZs are in fact members of the Chinese bourgeoisie who after the 1949 revolution took their capital "off-shore." (Some 80 percent of all investment in China's southern Guangdong province is from Taiwan and Hong Kong.) These companies, in turn, often serve as subcontractors for huge Western or Japanese companies producing electronics components, toys, garments, auto parts and shoes.

In fact, close to half the world's shoes are now produced in China. Many of the shoe factories are located in Guangdong's Pearl River Delta, and 90 percent of their workers are women from 17 to 23 years old. Flouting Chinese labor laws, these plants typically force their workers to labor for 12-16 hours a day, with overtime pay as low as 5 cents an hour and monthly wages of \$36 to \$72 (*Multinational Monitor*, June 1997). When they are "too old" (at the age of 25!), losing manual dexterity while becoming less intimidated by draconian discipline, they are simply fired.

Safety conditions are not only highly hazardous but sometimes deadly. Many barracks-like dormitories are located directly above workshops and assembly lines, and workers are sometimes locked into the plant or company housing—adding to casualties in the factory fires that have repeatedly broken out in SEZ plants, such as the two widely reported fires that killed 145 workers in 1994. Workers are routinely exposed to huge concentrations of toxic substances, including benzene, a component of glue used in many shoe plants and toy factories such as those producing "Happy Meal" toys for McDonald's.

It has become common for even bourgeois analysts to describe conditions in many factories in China's SEZs as "Dickensian." A European labor official active in the "anti-sweatshop" campaign spells this out: "A recent official survey paints a grim picture. 62% worked 7 days a week; 55% received below the minimum wage; more than a quarter were not paid on time. Some were forced to work 36 hours without rest. Many do not even get one day off in a month. Body searches are the norm. Women endure physical abuse and sexual harassment. They are often banned from going to the toilet, drinking water or taking medical leave. Some security guards carry electric batons for punishing those not working fast enough."

This stark recitation of the facts can only begin to give an idea of this capitalist hell for Chinese women workers. In an article titled "Boot Camp at the Shoe Factory: Regimented Workers in China's Free Labour Market" (*Washington Post*, 3 November 1996), researcher Anita Chan described a number of Taiwanese-owned factories in south China where "the owners fly in retired Taiwanese army officers" to impose "martinet discipline" in "these labour intensive factories" where "managers feel a need to control a discontented work force." At one such plant female job applicants "are ordered to stand at attention as if

they are applying to join the army and then to do as many push-ups as they can within a minute.” The article went on:

“The wages the factories are offering have not been keeping up with inflation. . . . The Taiwanese businessmen are beginning to talk about moving their manufacturing equipment onward to Vietnam rather than raise wages.

“In the meantime, they have instituted harshly regimented labour conditions. Corporal punishment is part-and-parcel of the management style of some of them. . . .

“The worst factories in south China do not even allow workers to leave the factory compound after work. In extreme cases the isolation and iron discipline are prison-like. The official press has reported cases of unpaid workers enslaved in heavily guarded compounds who have staged escapes. In the worst example that has come to light in this region, a Taiwan-managed joint-venture factory employees more than a hundred guards for 2,700 workers, one of whom recently died in an escape attempt.”

While the management was Taiwanese, these Chinese capitalists are often subcontractors for U.S. firms. The article describes the Yu Yuan plant in Dongguan, reputedly the largest shoe factory in the world, which manufactures footwear for Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok, LA Gear and New Balance. At wages of a little over 2 yuan an hour (then about 25 U.S. cents), the 40,000 workers—70 percent of them women—are required to work an average of 80 hours of compulsory overtime a month, far exceeding the legal maximum of 36 hours. The same article reports that in north China, where Korean investment is concentrated, beatings and military control are common, and “in one case a woman worker was locked inside a dog cage with a large dog and placed on public display in the factory compound.”

Even that vociferous cheerleader for imperialist economic penetration of China, the *Wall Street Journal* (9 July 1997), paints a grim picture of conditions in the giant enclave of capitalist exploitation of the Special Economic Zones. Describing the life of Hong Xiaohui, a 19-year-old woman worker at Kamikawa Seisakusho Co., a subsidiary of Sony Corp., the article reports:

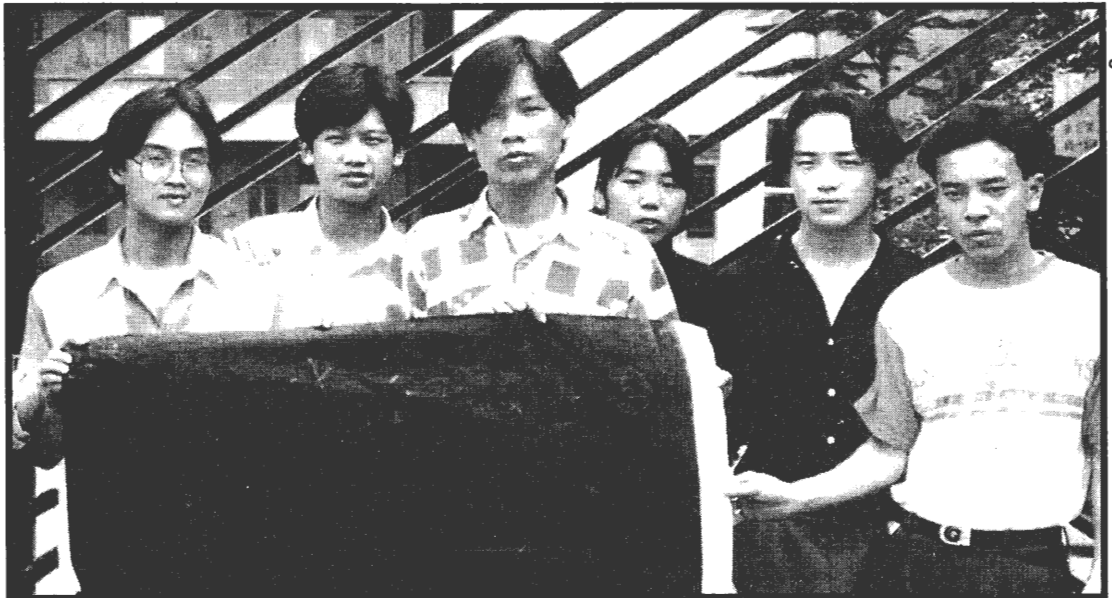
“All around her, low-slung factories line the streets, filling the air with noxious fumes and the grinding and clanking of machines. Several times a day, their gates open to disgorge

an exhausted mass of workers. Some laborers tell tales of factories where dangerous machines accidentally dismember workers, where bosses withhold salaries and identification papers, even where employees are beaten.”

Describing working conditions in the modern Kamikawa plant, the article states:

“Management has banned talking in the workshop among the 200 workers. . . . Ms. Hong has been at it since 7:30 a.m. with only a half-hour break for lunch. By early evening, her eyes have trouble focusing on the tiny circuits. But the managers announce that half the workers, including Ms. Hong, must return after dinner to finish their day’s quota of 7,000 units. ‘Another late night,’ Ms. Hong groans. . . . She didn’t punch out until after 9 p.m. the previous day. . . .

“Yet even on bad days, Ms. Hong says, conditions at Kamikawa are better than they ever were at her first job, at Mattel Inc.’s Barbie-doll factory in Changan. . . . [There] they often ended up working 12-hour shifts with a few minutes’ break for lunch, one day off each month if they were



Ming Pao

Migrant workers stage protest on May Day 1997 outside gates of plastics factory in Dongguan, Guangdong. They were fired for striking because the Hong Kong boss had failed to pay wages for over three months.

lucky and no overtime pay. Living conditions were also poor, Ms. Hong and the other women say; they lived 12 to a room, had to go days without hot—or sometimes, even cold—water, and the canteen often served meat with bristle on it.”

Such conditions are not exceptional. An academic study by Hsing You-tien, *Making Capitalism in China: The Taiwan Connection* (Oxford University Press, 1998), reports:

“Almost all the Taiwanese managers I interviewed stressed the importance of ‘military-like management.’ . . . Workers had to line up when walking from the factories to the dining halls; no chatting was allowed in the dining hall. Each time workers left the factory building they were subjected to a body check to see if they had stolen anything from the factory. . . . Harsh scolding and shouting at workers were frequently seen and heard. The workers I talked to confirmed that beating of disobedient workers was not unusual.”

This militaristic discipline was combined with paternalistic control of the young women workers.

"Workers, both single and married, were segregated by sex in the dormitory and visitors of the opposite sex were prohibited. The rule was more rigidly imposed in the women's dormitory. . . . However, these 'fathers' and 'elder brothers' were rather reluctant to resume their role when women workers became pregnant. Pregnant workers were dismissed immediately, disregarding the family solidarity and the labor law."

Yet, the study reported, women workers were not nearly so docile as the bosses hoped:

"Although most Taiwanese managers agreed that women workers are 'easier to manage,' there were still quite a few slowdowns, protests, and strikes in Taiwanese factories caused by the beatings of Chinese workers by Taiwanese managers or unfair dismissals of workers."

In fact, the draconian, militaristic management shows that the bosses live in dread that an explosion of worker unrest could occur at any time. But that requires leadership.

For Proletarian Political Revolution To Defeat Capitalist Counterrevolution!

The *Wall Street Journal* article quoted above notes that "China's migrant laborers represent a volatile force. Existing on the edges of society, they are largely unbound from, and unprotected by, the traditional checks of the socialist system put into place by the Communist Party half a century ago." The social gains for women in the Chinese Revolution were particularly dramatic in a poor country where peasant women had long been viewed as little more than beasts of burden. A 1950 marriage law giving rights to wives, along with literacy campaigns and land reform, produced a social revolution in the countryside. This was combined with mobilization of village women and men against wife-beating, as dramatically related in "Gold Flower's Story" in Jack Belden's 1949 classic, *China Shakes the World*.

"The revolt of woman has shaken China to its very depths. . . .

In the women of China, the Communists possessed, almost ready made, one of the greatest masses of disinherited human beings the world has ever seen. And because they found the key to the heart of these women, they also found one of the keys to victory over Chiang Kai-shek."

Yet the social gains fell far short of full equality for women, which can be achieved only through replacing the family—the central institution of women's oppression—with voluntary social institutions such as free high-quality day care, socialized cleaning, laundry and dining services, and the full integration of women into social production on an equal basis. In the first years of Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky marked the path towards women's emancipation. But to establish fully such communal institutions requires a high level of material abundance which could only be attained by extending the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries. In rejecting this perspective of world socialist revolution as a "Trotskyite heresy," the nationalist bureaucracy that arose under Stalin's leadership betrayed the Russian Revolution and opened the way toward its ultimate destruction.

The Stalinist betrayal was acutely felt in the sphere of women's gains, as the Stalinists sought to bolster the family as a factor of social conservatism. Suddenly, access to abortion be-

came more difficult to obtain, the right to free divorce was cut back. From Stalin to Mao, nationalist bureaucrats upheld the family as a "fighting unit for socialism," calling upon women to be "heroines of the nation" by having as many children as possible. In rural China, although communal kitchens and child care were introduced at the height of the failed "Great Leap Forward," this voluntaristic leap into the abyss lacked the necessary economic basis to mechanize agriculture. As the agricultural communes failed and following the intrabureaucratic turmoil of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," the resurgent conservative bureaucrats around Deng Xiaoping sought to restore calm in the countryside by introducing the "Family Responsibility System" which left each peasant household on its own.

By keeping grain prices high, the bureaucracy (successfully) sought to increase food supplies and create a rich peasant class, equivalent to the *kulaks* in Russia. As a by-product, Deng's economic "reforms" produced massive rural unemployment. And as the bureaucrats "opened up" China, this vast pool of labor power became available to produce surplus value for the capitalists. Tens of millions of jobless young peasant women have flocked to the thousands of factories in the SEZs where they are subjected to the brutal exploitation described above. Meanwhile, in the urban areas women workers are the first fired as state-owned industries are laying off millions of "surplus" workers.

Today, it is women who suffer the most from the Chinese bureaucracy's so-called "market reforms," which have brought growing inequality and the deadly dangerous erosion of all the gains of the 1949 revolution. The reality of work in the SEZs is a far cry from official boasts like the following dispatch by the official Chinese News Service (27 October):

"Laws and regulations in 1995 reduced the 48-hour week to a 40-hour week, so that all workers get two days off each week.

They also enjoy national holidays with full pay. Women have a minimum 90-day maternity leave with pay.... China guarantees by law full pay for labour and equal pay for equal work."

Various Western "human rights" groups combining bourgeois liberal propagandists for "corporate responsibility" and pro-imperialist labor bureaucrats seize upon the glaring contradictions between such statements and the horrendous conditions in China's SEZs. Their answer is a poisonous blend of protectionism and anti-Communism, for example opposing the import of toys from China allegedly made by "slave labor."

The Stalinist bureaucracy gives these "human rights" hucksters and left-over Cold Warriors plenty of material to work with. A report titled, "Caught Between Tradition and the State: Violations of the Human Rights of Chinese Women" (August 1995), prepared by the Human Rights in China group and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, a notorious stand-in for the CIA, details how "hundreds of thousands of women have been abducted or tricked into virtual slavery as 'wives' or prostitutes"; how millions of female babies are "'missing,' due to infanticide, sex-selective abortion, neglect, or abandonment as well as non-registration"; how women are forced to have sterilizations and IUD insertions; how women workers "are the first to be laid off and make up the majority of the unemployed," while "millions of migrant and rural women workers suffer terrible working conditions," etc.

But what is dramatically absent from this 102-page report is any explanation of *why* this is happening. The authors concede that it is “undeniable” that women’s status in China “changed” since 1949—though they studiously avoid the word revolution—while writing of trafficking in women and children that “the trade restarted in the late 1970s.” Why then? What these apologists for “democratic” capitalism are silent about is the stark fact that *these scourges besetting women are the direct result of Beijing’s introduction of pro-capitalist economic measures*. This is obviously the case with the mass layoffs from state industry and sweatshop conditions in privately owned factories, but it is also behind the buying and selling of peasant “wives” to Chinese kulaks.

The genuine liberation of Chinese women requires a fight to defend and extend the gains of the Chinese Revolution through *proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucrats*, who are endangering the very existence of the deformed workers state, and to *expropriate the capitalists*, big and small. Although starting today from a different position, as in the 1920s the all-sided emancipation of working women in China requires fighting unity with their class brothers and with fellow workers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan to the U.S., in a common struggle against capitalist wage slavery and imperialist encroachment. And thus “dissident labor organizers” such as Han Dongfan, a former leader of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation, who is today financed by the American “AFL-CIA”—even receiving a “George Meany Human Rights Award”—are necessarily *enemies* of the horrendously exploited workers in the SEZs and friends of their exploiters.

Trotskyism vs. Stalinism in China

Since taking power in 1949, the Stalinists have sought to rigidly seal off Chinese workers from “outside influences.” They imprisoned all known Chinese Trotskyists for decades. Today it is possible to contact workers in the SEZs, albeit with great difficulty. However, some tendencies which were based in the capitalist-colonial enclave of Hong Kong and which have falsely claimed to be Trotskyist (October Review, Pioneers) are unable to provide revolutionary leadership, as they falsely claim that China has become (or has been for decades) “state capitalist.” Consequently, they cannot call on workers and women to defend the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution because they believe there are no such gains. Thus, like the pro-imperialist “labor dissidents,” their message will at best be for trade-union struggle on the basis of capitalism. With such a line, they can play no positive role in the coming showdown over capitalist restoration in China.

Would-be revolutionary communists in China must learn from the tradition of militant working-class revolutionary struggle prior to the Stalinist usurpation of the Communist Party in the late 1920s. A leading role in the organization of the Shanghai women workers in 1925-27 was played by Chen Duxiu, a founder of the Chinese CP who went over to Trotskyism following the debacle of the Shanghai Massacre in 1927 and was subsequently expelled from the CCP and then imprisoned by Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang. At the time, hundreds of thousands of women worked in the cotton-spinning mills and silk-reeling factories in the metropolis at the mouth of the Yangtze River. As is the case

today, most were young peasant migrants. From its inception, the Chinese Communist Party had made a particular effort to reach women, setting up the Shanghai Pingmin Girl’s School under Wang Huiwu and establishing a Central Women’s Bureau of the CCP in 1922 led by Xiang Jingyu. The Communist women students actively agitated among the factory workers whenever struggles broke out.

The 1925 strikes began in February when a Japanese supervisor beat a 12-year-old girl caught sleeping on the job. When male workers in her department defended her they were fired, and in response a strike spread like lightning to include some 40,000 workers in 22 mills. When a 19-year-old worker was shot to death by guards at another plant in mid-May, workers and students under Communist leadership called a mass demonstration on May 30 vowing to avenge his death. As the crowd of thousands filled the streets of the International Settlement, an imperialist enclave in the heart of Shanghai’s business district, the Settlement police opened fire without warning, wounding dozens of workers and students and killing eleven. The U.S. and Britain reacted by dispatching warships to Shanghai and landing marines, and there were more shootings of workers and students in Wuhan and Guangdong (Canton).

The May 30th incident set off a revolutionary upsurge throughout southern China. The Shanghai General Union was founded the day after the massacre, the Shanghai Women’s Federation six days later; workers militias were soon formed. The May 30th Movement was directed in the first instance against the imperialists and warlords, demanding the elimination of the Unequal Treaties that allowed the colonial powers to have their own police force in Shanghai’s International Settlement. At the same time, the 1925 incident sparked an upsurge in militant labor struggles, including against Chinese bosses. Between 1925 and 1927 there were 171 strikes in the Shanghai cotton mills. As Chen Duxiu, then head of the CCP, later noted in his “Letter to All the Comrades of the Chinese Communist Party” (December 1929), “As soon as the proletariat raised its head in the May 30th Movement, the bourgeoisie was immediately aroused.”

Yet the Communists were subordinated to the “national” bourgeoisie by their alliance with and entry into the Nationalist Guomindang, now led by the general Chiang Kai-shek who had been named by Stalin as an honorary member of the Communist International. At a plenum of the CCP’s Central Committee in October 1925, Chen submitted a resolution warning that the anti-Communist offensive by the Guomindang represented:

“the bourgeoisie’s attempt to strengthen its own power for the purpose of checking the proletariat and going over to the counterrevolution. We should prepare ourselves immediately to withdraw from the Guomindang and become independent. We should maintain our political identity and lead the masses; we should not be restrained by the policy of the Guomindang.”

This was opposed by Stalin’s representatives, and Chen, “lacking in resoluteness,” as he later lamented, failed to insist on his position.

The working-class upsurge culminated in the March 1927 insurrection by 800,000 workers that seized Shanghai from the warlords as the Nationalist army under Chiang Kai-shek approached. Alarmed, the imperialists and Chinese rulers

united around Chiang who launched a bloodbath, executing the Communist-led insurgents by the thousands. Communist women were hunted down and slaughtered for the simple fact of having bobbed their hair. Trotsky in Moscow insisted again, as he had for more than a year inside the Comintern leadership, that the Chinese Communists must break with the Guomindang. Stalin refused. His class-collaborationist policy of "alliance" with the Guomindang led to disaster for the workers and the defeat of the second Chinese Revolution.

Today, a fight for the rights of women workers in China requires a fight against the Stalinist class collaborators and against the capitalists who seek to enslave the Chinese workers and peasants. The imperialists talk "human rights" when this serves them as an anti-Communist weapon, but what they seek is to ensure their own untrammelled "right" to exploit the working class and expand their neo-colonial empires. Across Asia the "free market" has meant virtual slave labor for tens of millions of workers under right-wing dictatorships sponsored by the U.S. government. The People's Republic of China is still the bureaucratically deformed workers state established by the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Yet the bankrupt Stalinist bureaucracy is providing an "open door" to capitalist restoration, which would be a disaster for the working people, women above all, as shown by the experience of capitalist counter-revolution in the former Soviet bloc.

The SEZs have already given millions of Chinese workers a nightmarish experience of what capitalist exploitation means. This is a significant difference with the former Soviet Union, where to an increasing degree during the Gorbachev years workers were led to believe that capitalism would mean a rain of easy money and had no direct experience to undercut this fatal illusion. In seeking to win workers in the SEZs to authentic communism, it is necessary to address specifically the woman question. In the 1920s, Communists in the Shanghai factories raised demands such as equal pay for equal work

and for the right to nurse children during working hours. Today as well, Trotskyists would raise a program of demands against the oppression of working women, including equal pay for equal work; for workers action to stop layoffs, including strike action against the firing of pregnant women; for the provision of free contraceptives, free abortion on demand and free high quality health care; for adequate housing, with special rights for single mothers, and free, 24-hour child care.

The woman question is of key importance here. Speaking in April 1924 to the students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East set up by the Comintern in Moscow, Leon Trotsky noted that "women will play a more important role in the liberation movement of the east than in Europe and here in Russia . . . for the simple reason that Eastern women are even more oppressed and entangled in age-long prejudices than men." Formerly enslaved Asian women "will thirst for new ideas and a new consciousness capable of allotting them their proper place in society. Believe me, there will be no better comrade in the East and no better champion of the ideas of revolution and communism than the awakened working woman." This was fully demonstrated in China in the 1920s, and today again, under the leadership of a Trotskyist party Chinese women workers will be the most determined revolutionary fighters.

The imperialists are right to worry that the young and largely female labor force of the SEZs is a "volatile" and potentially explosive factor. Yet to mobilize this power effectively for the interests of the working people—a key component of which is the struggle for women's liberation—requires the construction of a revolutionary party based on the genuine communism of Lenin and Trotsky, fighting to oust the bureaucrats through workers political revolution and spread socialist revolution internationally to Korea, Japan and the rest of Asia, and to Europe and the U.S. This is the only alternative to the counterrevolution which would extend capitalist dictatorship from the SEZ factory floors to the whole of China. ■

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WHERE IS CHINA GOING?



Shareholders watching ticker at Shanghai stock exchange.

Jerôme de Perlinghi/Libération

The 20th century has been dominated by the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the revolutionary struggles that it inspired around the globe, and the unrelenting drive of the imperialists ever after to destroy, root and branch, the first workers state in history and everything that derived from it. As the post-1917 revolutionary wave in Europe ended in a series of defeats and the young Soviet republic stood isolated, a conservative nationalist bureaucracy arose, led by Joseph Stalin, that seized political power in the USSR. The usurpers destroyed workers democracy, gutted the Bolshevik Party of its revolutionary program, killed its leaders, and sought a live-and-let-live accommodation with imperialism. But from Hitler's 1941 invasion through Cold Wars I and II, the imperialists would not and could not "peacefully coexist" with the Soviet Union.

Although the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky had been replaced by the reformist nationalism of Stalin

and his heirs, the revolution had been betrayed but not yet overthrown. The had been a political counterrevolution, yet the socialized economy persisted despite the Stalinists' counterrevolutionary policies. The very existence of a workers state, even if bureaucratically degenerated, constituted a mortal threat to capitalist rule. So when the combination of imperialist pressure and Stalinist betrayal led to a wave of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe in 1989-92, the bourgeois rulers and their media loudly proclaimed the "death of communism." Their appetites whetted, during the '90s the imperialists have escalated pressures on the remaining deformed workers states.

Today a key class battle is looming over the mounting threat of counterrevolution in China. Ever since the Chinese Revolution of 1949, Washington has thirsted to "take back" the country that the U.S. and its imperialist allies and rivals avidly sought to

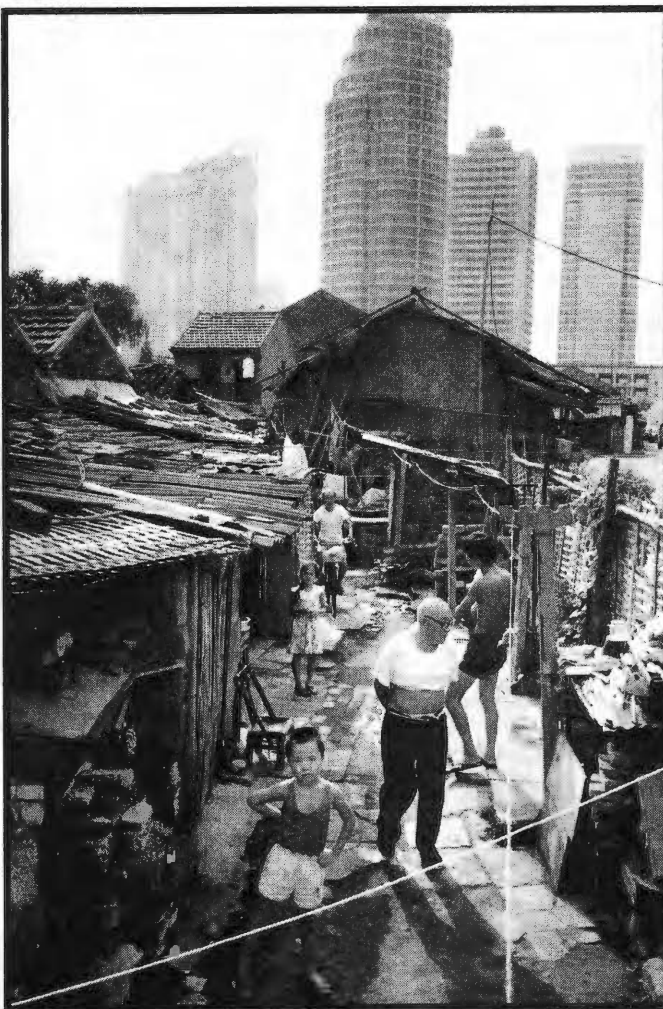
Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counterrevolution

carve up in the first half of the century. Capitalist conglomerates have long been ravenous to sink their teeth into this huge market and cheap labor pool of 1.2 billion people. They have already made heavy inroads. A large percentage of all toys, shoes and electronics components sold by the world's capitalists are produced in China's "Special Economic Zones" where some 170,000 foreign enterprises have been set up. Over 200 of the Fortune 500 top corporations in the world are present in China, ranging from McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken (their biggest and most profitable outlets are in Beijing) to AT&T and Ford Motors. Most of the Chinese detergent market is now controlled by "multinational" firms, and Proctor & Gamble sells more soap in China than it does in the U.S. But this is not enough for the bourgeoisie—they want it all, and they want it now.

How they intend to get it varies. Following the 1989 massacre in Beijing, the U.S. Congress ordered economic sanctions. A few years later there was an outbreak of Cold War frenzy tinged with "yellow peril" chauvinism over the emergence of a Chinese "superpower." This was exemplified by the book by Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (Random House, 1997), which begins: "The People's Republic of China, the world's most populous country, and the United States, its most powerful, have become global rivals. . . . If China remains aggressive and the United States naïve, the looming conflict between the two countries could even lead to military hostilities." But the main thrust of imperialist policy has been to demand further "integration" of China into the world capitalist economy, for example, pushing for China to join the World Trade Organization and make its currency convertible. The aim: to undermine the economy of the deformed workers state.

Capitalist economic inroads into China have been mounting ominously. Of the \$250 billion invested in China since economic "reforms" began 20 years ago, \$225 billion has poured in just since 1992. The handover of the former British crown colony of Hong Kong to the People's Republic in July 1997 has incorporated a capitalist enclave whose tentacles have already reached far into China's interior in the search for cheap

Marc Riboud



Poverty in shadow of Shanghai high-rises reflects growing inequality of income.

labor to exploit. In 1980 there were reportedly 1 million industrial workers in Hong Kong; today there are 680,000, while Hong Kong capitalists employ more than 4 million workers in southern China. The annexation of Hong Kong (now a "Special Autonomous Region") will not realize the class-collaborationist fantasy of "one country, two systems," as China's former "Paramount Leader" Deng Xiaoping declared. Instead it will give enormous impetus to forces that would restore capitalist rule throughout the country.

At the same time, in his second term U.S. president Clinton has stepped up political pressure on China under the guise of "constructive engagement." When the new Chinese leader, Jiang Zemin, visited the U.S. in October 1997, he symbolically rang the bell on the New York Stock Exchange. During Clinton's return visit to China in June 1998, the U.S. leader used the opportunity to call for negotiations with the Dalai

Lama, the CIA-sponsored counterrevolutionary Tibetan "spiritual" leader. Testifying before the U.S. Congress a few days later, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright argued that extending China's "most favored nation" trade status was necessary in order to "open up China's market" and avoid giving "a huge edge to our major competitors in Europe and Asia." She was repeating the argument, made almost exactly a century ago by Secretary of State John Hay as he proclaimed the U.S.' "Open Door" policy, insisting on "equal rights" for all the imperialists to get a piece of the Chinese market.

As the imperialists turn the screws economically and politically, they have been greatly aided by the Stalinist bureaucracy that has run the People's Republic of China since its birth. In the Soviet Union and East Europe, the collapse of the Stalinist regimes came after a decade and more of stagnation, in which the combination of heavy military expenditures to counter the NATO war drive and heavy payments for debt service to the imperialist banks produced an economic crisis that was then intensified by the Gorbachev market "reforms." In China, market mechanisms have been in place for two decades, undermining the planned economy. Trotsky remarked in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) that "the intervention of cheap goods" was one of capitalism's

most potent weapons against an economically more backward workers state. Today, these cheap goods are produced by the capitalists *inside China*, thus magnifying their impact.

The Chinese Revolution was made not by the working class under the leadership of a genuinely Marxist party, but instead by the nationalist Stalinists under Mao Zedong at the head of the peasant-based People's Liberation Army (PLA). Thus the workers state which resulted from smashing the bourgeois state and capitalist class rule was bureaucratically deformed from birth. It was the same kind of state that came out of the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union. As Trotsky did with the Soviet Union under Stalin, Trotskyists have always stood for *unconditional military defense* of China against any capitalist state and against counterrevolution from without or within. Trotsky insisted, "The class character of the state is determined by its relation to the forms of property in the means of production." China remains a deformed workers state today: socialized property, although seriously undermined, has not been overthrown; while capitalism has made ominous inroads, the bourgeoisie has not returned to power; the state apparatus of the deformed workers state has not been dismantled; the working class has yet to intervene as a conscious class. But by opening wide the door to capitalist penetration, the bureaucracy is bringing the country to the brink of an abyss.

It is still possible to prevent the catastrophe brought about by Stalinist betrayal and imperialist onslaught. The restoration of capitalism in this vast and turbulent country must first break the resistance of the workers, who would be the prime victims of a counterrevolution. Indeed, it is the spectre of an awakened Chinese working class that terrifies both the bureaucracy and the

bourgeoisie. There were the beginnings of a working-class insurrection in May-June 1989, as the working people of Beijing flooded into the streets to fraternize with PLA troops and block their advance on Tienanmen Square. In recent years, strikes against the consequences of the regime's pro-capitalist policies have proliferated. What's needed above all is to *forge a Trotskyist party* that can lead the working class, supported by the poor peasants together with all those who seek a socialist future, to oust the bureaucracy and take the reins of power into its own hands, through *proletarian political revolution* to stop the looming *capitalist counterrevolution*.

A defeat for the workers in the coming showdown would mean untold misery for the Chinese masses, who would be thrown into mass unemployment such as followed the destruction of the Soviet Union and subjected to capitalist superexploitation in the brutal sweatshop industry already present in China's "Special Economic Zones" (see article, page 31 of this issue). But a revolutionary victory by the Chinese workers over the bureaucratic sellouts and the encroaching bourgeoisie would reverberate around the planet.

Stalinist Class-Collaborators Pave the Way for Counterrevolution

The present policies of the Beijing bureaucracy are the continuation of decades of class collaboration. In 1927, the Kremlin ordered the Chinese Communist Party to greet Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the head of the Nationalist (Guomindang) army, as he entered Shanghai. Chiang thereupon carried out a bloody massacre of tens of thousands of Communists, showing the consequences of Stalinist subordi-

nation of the proletariat to the "national" bourgeoisie. It was on the basis of the experience of China that Trotsky generalized the theory of *permanent revolution*, the program of the October Revolution of 1917, from the specific conditions of Russia to colonial and semi-colonial countries in general:

"Stalin and Bukharin preached that thanks to the yoke of imperialism the bourgeoisie could carry out the national revolution in China. The attempt was made. With what results? The proletariat was brought under the headman's axe."

In the imperialist epoch it is only under the rule of the working class, supported by the peasantry, that even the democratic revolutionary tasks can be fulfilled. Trotsky summed up the lessons of Russia and China:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution. . . . The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena."

—Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930)

Suzanne DeChillo/New York Times



Jiang Zemin at New York Stock Exchange in 1997.

Even after the Shanghai massacre, repeatedly during the 1930s and '40s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong offered to form a coalition government with Chiang. But Chiang always refused, even in the face of Japanese invasion and even as his regime was collapsing. When Mao's peasant army sent Chiang and his cohorts fleeing to Taiwan in 1949, the Stalinists still sought a "bloc of four classes" with a non-existent "patriotic bourgeoisie." They made Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Guomindang, the symbolic vice president of the People's Republic. But again the imperialists and the Chinese bourgeoisie refused. The new regime was a bureaucratically deformed workers state from its birth. As the Korean War (1950-53) escalated, with the U.S. Army fighting Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers on the battlefield and U.S. generals threatening to A-bomb China itself, Mao was forced to expropriate capitalist industry and finance if only as a defensive measure.

As the first Cold War unfolded, Washington was consumed by a debate over "who lost China." Under heavy pressure from the U.S., which was constantly threatening to "unleash Chiang Kai-shek," the Beijing Stalinists adopted a rhetorically more militant posture than their counterparts in Moscow. But Stalinism is inherently national in character, and since the more economically advanced and militarily powerful Soviet Union remained the imperialists' main enemy, the U.S. eventually established an anti-Soviet alliance with the Maoist regime. Nixon and Kissinger clinked glasses with Mao and Zhou Enlai as U.S. bombs fell on Soviet-allied North Vietnam. This alliance did not save the U.S. from ignominious defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese peasants and workers, but it did lead to continuing counterrevolutionary collaboration between Washington and Beijing. The U.S. and China joined hands in supporting the Islamic *mujahedin* (holy warriors) against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, for example.

Domestically, in the late 1950s Mao had proclaimed the "Great Leap Forward," voluntaristically proposing to build a socialism based on peasant communes and village industry, symbolized by primitive backyard steel furnaces. After this bureaucratic fiasco collapsed amid a huge famine, there ensued a bitter fight within the bureaucracy dubbed the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" between the Maoist faction and more staid bureaucrats. After Mao's death, the out-of-power bureaucrats returned. Deng Xiaoping, who had been denounced as "China's Khrushchev" and a "capitalist-roader" only to be brought back by Mao and then fired again, firmly took over in 1978.

Deng implemented a series of economic reforms, beginning with the dissolution of the rural communes. Soon agriculture was decollectivized, replaced by the "Household Responsibility System" in which production was in the hands of the individual peasant family. At the same time, the first "Special Economic Zones" were set up in Shenzhen next to Hong Kong, Zhuhai next to the Portuguese colony of Macao, and Shantou (Swatow) opposite Taiwan, in which joint ventures and later fully foreign-owned capitalist firms were set up. As rural in-

comes began to rise with the maintenance of high grain prices and the consolidation of a commodity-producing peasantry, the first "Township and Village Enterprises" (TVEs) were formed. At first mainly replacing services that had been supplied by the commune (mechanized plowing, equipment repair), they soon became involved in a range of light industry.

In 1984, a second wave of economic reforms called for restructuring State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) by giving managers operational autonomy from government ministries and allowing them to sell at negotiated prices any output over quotas established by the plan. The leitmotiv was summed up in Deng's aphorism from the early '60s, "White cat, black cat, if it catches mice it is a good cat." Very soon, the bulk of industrial production was for the market and the planned economy was systematically undercut. This also led to shortages and runaway inflation, slashing workers' real wages, while managers' incomes increased enormously and corruption spread. Some of the most prominent private enterprises were run by the children of top bureaucrats, notably the offspring of Deng and CCP general secretary Zhao Ziyang, the leading market "reformer."

Since 1992, the Chinese economic "system" has been officially described as "market socialism." It is necessary to state clearly: *market socialism is a contradiction in terms*. A classless, socialist society cannot be based on the operation of the law of value, on production of commodities for a market which allocates resources not on the basis of social need but of profitability. As Karl Marx emphasized in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), "Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products. . . ." Genuine socialism requires a collectivized economy planned by the freely associated producers who can make conscious decisions about the distribution of resources according to the priorities of society. Resorting to market mechanisms in a socialized economy, particularly in the basic sectors of production, necessarily brings with it the danger of fostering capitalist forces.

In seeking to justify the Chinese "market reforms" as compatible with socialism, various Stalinists and "socialist" academics compare them to the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced under Lenin in the early 1920s. Such a comparison is completely bogus, first of all because Lenin never projected this as a system of production, but only as a temporary *retreat* on the road to a planned economy, a step necessary to maintain trade with a smallholding peasantry until socialist industry could establish itself and provide the necessary goods for exchange. Moreover, it was part of a program fighting for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. And in judging the usefulness of such concessions Lenin provided the simple formula: "Who is beating whom?" In China today, the market replaces formerly (bureaucratically) planned production; it is presented as a system ("market socialism"); the Stalinist regime has never stood for world socialist revolution, but at most for the chimera of building "socialism in one country"; and the pro-capitalist forces are clearly beating the remnants of socialized industry.

As Trotsky insisted in the 1920s, following Marx and

Lenin, it is only possible to build socialism on an international scale at the highest level of development of the productive forces: Thus Stalin's nationalist program, far from building socialism in any country actually prepares the way for capitalist counterrevolution. Kulaks (rich peasants) and capitalist middlemen enthusiastically followed Bukharin's advice to "Enrich yourselves." In response, the 1927 Platform of the Opposition stated:

"The country has grown richer, the total national income has increased, the topmost kulak layer in the countryside has increased its reserves with enormous rapidity and the accumulated wealth of the private capitalist, the merchant, and the speculator has grown by leaps and bounds. It is clear that the share of the working class in the total income of the country has fallen, while the share of other classes has grown. . . .

"*The camp of the bourgeoisie* and those layers of the petty bourgeoisie who follow in its wake are placing all their hopes upon the private initiative and the personal interest of the commodity producer. . . . The struggle against bureaucratism means to him the break-up and dispersal of industry, the weakening of the principle of planning. . . . The name of this course is *capitalism on the installment plan.*"

Different variants of "market socialism" have been tried in all the degenerated/deformed workers states, with varying degrees of "success." When the Stalinists come up against the bottlenecks, the shoddy quality of goods and other distortions generated by their bureaucratic regime, they naturally look to

the discipline of the market. Why? Because the alternative of an economy planned by democratically elected soviets (workers councils) would spell the end of their privileged position.

The Showdown Approaches

Already by the late 1980s, the economic forces unleashed by the market reforms were causing massive discontent in China. This was a major factor behind the mobilizations of May-June 1989, particularly the echo that the student demonstrators received among the working people of Beijing and elsewhere in the country. While the students in Tiananmen Square were the focus of media and public attention, there was an important class difference in the reasons for the protest. The students were demonstrating for "democracy." Many had illusions in Western capitalism, as symbolized by the "goddess of democracy" statue. For the most part they supported the pro-market reformers such as Zhao Ziyang, who came to the square to speak with them. In contrast, the workers who were relegated to the edge of the square and deliberately excluded from the students' demonstration had a very different agenda: their anger was directed at the precipitous decline in their living standards caused by the economic reforms of Deng and Zhao.

One of the first workers' manifestos, "Ten Questions for the Chinese Communist Party" (20 April 1989), asked pointedly:

"1) How much did Deng's son bet on a horse race in Hong Kong, and where did he get the money to place the bet?

2) Mr. and Mrs. Zhao Ziyang play golf every week. Who pays the green fees, and other expenses? . . .

4) The Central Committee has proposed a reform for the control of prices, yet inflation continues, with the people's living standard declining. Can they explain this?"

Another document from the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAFF) pointed out:

"The reform has been going on for more than ten years without orientation or aim. Which bureaucrat can state unequivocally which direction our one billion people are going? They can announce that it doesn't matter whether the cat is white or black, so long as it catches mice. But, when the white cats and black cats both want to catch the same mouse, they will fight. Confusion and contradictions will reign, and divisions will deepen. The inevitable consequence will be the fattening of the bureaucratic cats and the emaciation of the people cats."

—from Lu Ping, ed., *A Moment of Truth: Workers' Participation in China's 1989 Democracy Movement and the Emergence of Independent Unions* (Hong Kong Trade Union Education Centre, 1990)

From late April to the beginning of June 1989, hundreds of thousands of Beijing working people repeatedly came out to demonstrate solidarity with the students in Tiananmen Square. When the first PLA units were sent in to disperse the students, masses of workers filled the streets, blocking their advance and fraternizing with the troops. Those units had to be withdrawn and replaced with fresh units drawn from Inner Mongolia who had not yet



Boris Kovalenko/New Times

Deng Xiaoping, chief architect of pro-capitalist policies.

been "infected" with the bacillus of revolt. In the party and government apparatus, a number of leading figures and many middle-level cadres advocated dialogue rather than repression. For Deng and the central core of the Stalinist regime, this made it all the more necessary to crack down hard, lest the whole bureaucratic layer come apart. They saw before their eyes the spectre of a political revolution by the working class that could sweep away the whole fragile ruling stratum.

As the troops moved in on the night of June 4, the students (among whom were many sons and daughters of top officials) were allowed to leave. It was the workers congregated in the approaches to the square who bore the brunt of the killings, just as it was arrested workers and PLA troops who were singled out for execution in the coming weeks. This was not accidental or random. The narrow bureaucratic caste, resting on the economic foundations of a workers state and governing in its name, had begun to unravel in the face of developing working-class insurgency. In the aftermath, Zhao Ziyang and his supporters were purged from the top echelons of the party and state leadership, while Deng and his prime minister Li Peng sought to patch together the fractured bureaucracy.

Seeking to head off another explosion of working-class anger, they resolved to intensify the market "reforms," attempting to raise living standards while putting a stop to the inflation. Deng used a tour in 1992 to Shanghai and the Special Economic Zones in the south, particularly Shenzhen, to call for opening the doors to foreign investment. Capitalist investors responded immediately, and what was before a localized experiment mushroomed into a whole sector of the economy. In the next five years exports tripled, as 40 percent of all goods exported from China were produced by foreign-owned firms or joint ventures. The percentage of industrial production by the public sector (state and collective enterprises) fell to 66 percent, of which the state-owned enterprises represented 39 percent (down from 76 percent in 1980 and 48 percent in 1992).

Following Deng's death in February 1997, it was anticipated by Western "experts" that the upcoming congress of the CCP would decide to plunge into privatization of state-owned companies. On the eve of the congress, the *New York Times* (12 September 1997) headlined a front-page story, "In Major Shift, China Will Sell State Industries." The article reported:

"China's leaders have agreed to sell off the bulk of the nation's big state-owned industries. . . . A central theme of the 15th Party Congress, government officials and economists say, will be endorsing a ground-breaking shift from socialist-style state ownership to a system of shareholding. More than 10,000 of China's large and medium-sized state enterprises are likely to be sold. . . .

"The long-term effect of changing such a critical system of ownership, perhaps lying beyond the political calculus of leaders now consumed by short-term crises, seems destined to move China's economy toward an even more capitalist and free market system, one where the Communist Party may have difficulty preserving the role it has."

The *Wall Street Journal* (16 September 1997) headlined, "Investors See a 'Gold Rush' in China's Reform Plans," reporting: "The verdict from investors is in: China has taken a major step

toward becoming the world's largest free market economy." The congress, it declared, had "put the official stamp on a measured sell-off of thousands of state-controlled companies."

A couple of days later, the *Times* (18 September 1997) voiced some doubts, asking "Is China's Move to Capitalism Real?" The article quoted a University of Michigan academic, Robert Dernberger, saying, "Everybody's calling it 'privatization,' which may not be the case. All we really know is that Jiang made it politically correct to sell shares." But Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, an advisor to Russian president Boris Yeltsin and the architect of privatization in Poland, declared categorically: "They've reached the conclusion that state ownership won't work; China is now committed to free markets." Time Inc.'s *Asiaweek* (26 September 1997) was even more emphatic, producing a special issue with a front cover proclaiming "Capitalist China."

That was the verdict of capitalist investors, economists, pundits and "diplomatic observers," but what had actually been decided? Had the Communist Party voted to liquidate the economic foundations of the workers state, threatening its own existence? In his report to the congress, which was adopted as a resolution, Jiang Zemin declared, "Being a socialist country, China must keep public ownership as the foundation of its socialist economic system," while at the same time allowing "diverse forms of ownership with public ownership in the dominant position." Major industries, banks, electrical power, transportation and communications would remain directly in state hands, but in order to "increase efficiency" they would order "downsizing staff"—i.e., layoffs. Jiang threatened: "Workers should change their ideas about employment and improve their own quality to meet the new requirements of reform and development." In other words, it's the official end of the "iron rice bowl," the guarantee of job stability that was one of the key gains of a socialized economy.

A year later, what has happened? The capitalist financial press is full of talk of the privatization that never happened. The *Economist* (24 August) writes in a special article on "China's Economy: Red Alert":

"The thrust of reforms is still aimed at improving the socialist 'efficiency' of the state system, not at embracing full capitalism. Privatisation of heavy industry, telecoms, energy and the banks is out of the question, even if smaller enterprises are being let go. . . . That is not to say that China's enterprises are shunning 'reform.' Heeding the central government's call for efficiency, workers are being laid off in droves, while many millions more have been sent home with little or no pay."

An article on China in the *Wall Street Journal* (24 November) reported:

"A close look at its economy suggests that it won't succumb anytime soon. In large part, that is thanks to old-fashioned, centrally directed government control over the economy, especially spending. . . ."

Quoting a provincial economic planning official, who said of Chinese policies "It's like America's Roosevelt era," the *Journal* responded:

"It's also quite a bit like the Soviet Union's Stalinist era,

when communist states relied on highly centralized control over most aspects of the economy. China's economic planners have revived price controls, tightened currency restrictions, slowed privatization of state-owned industries and turned banks back into money machines serving the state."

Left Buys Capitalist Line

At the height of the media furor about a "Capitalist China" last year, a number of left groups published articles sounding the same theme. Some, such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S., followers of Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party, have always claimed that China, like the other deformed workers states, is "state capitalist." An ISO article on "Deng's Legacy" (*International Socialist Review*, September 1987) declares, "China has moved from bureaucratic state capitalism to a mixture of state and private capitalism." By this "logic" not much happened when the USSR was destroyed in 1991-92. Try telling that to unemployed ex-Soviet workers today! Meanwhile, these social democrats accuse U.S. imperialism of being soft on Chinese Stalinism, vituperating about the Clinton administration's lifting of sanctions on Beijing: "The U.S. Coddles Butchers and Tyrants."

Their proof that China is supposedly already capitalist is that officials use their power for private ends, that whole government departments and the People's Liberation Army "have been instructed to balance their budgets by going into business for themselves." The Ministry of Public Security owns luxury hotels in joint ventures with foreign capitalists, the army owns the deluxe five-star Palace Hotel, and the All-China Federation of Women "hires Russian prostitutes to boost business at its luxury hotel." This shows that the bureaucrats are venal, that they're out to enrich themselves through rampant corrup-

tion—exactly what Trotsky wrote 60 years about the bureaucratically degenerated workers state in the Soviet Union. But it doesn't make it capitalist. Moreover, at the beginning of August the government announced that the PLA had been ordered to close down its money-making businesses. At the end of November the same order went out to the Communist Party and government departments. So much for that "proof."

In Hong Kong, the two local groups associated with the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec), formerly led by the late Ernest Mandel, also hold that China is capitalist. On the occasion of the handover of the British colony, the USec's *International Viewpoint* (15 July 1997) published one article from the *October Review* (published by the Revolutionary Communist Party) and another by the editor of *Pioneer Bimonthly* under the headline, "China and Hong Kong: One Country—One System, Capitalist Restoration in China." This is no abstract, "purely analytical" question. Such social-democratic "state capitalist" theories always serve to justify alliances with openly pro-capitalist forces. The *October Review* denounces "the imposition of domination and repression from the Beijing authorities who now control Hong Kong," couching their appeal to anti-communism in verbiage about "the right of the people of Hong Kong to decide on the social system they prefer."

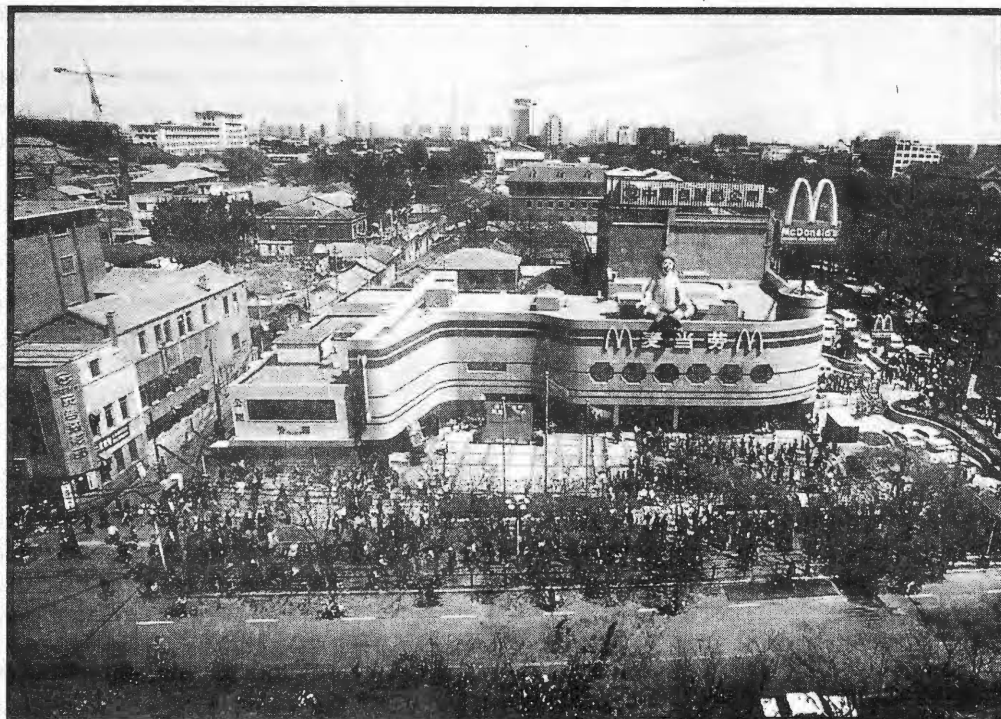
The "far left" in Hong Kong is subsumed in the general "Democracy Movement" with a host of anti-communist "democrats." On the eve of the British handover, the *October Review* group, which calls for "democratic socialism" (read: social democracy), issued a bourgeois-democratic appeal:

"We propose that the focal theme for the fights for political and economic rights can revolve around the demand for a democratic election of a Hong Kong People's Congress which makes major decisions relating to self-rule of Hong Kong by the people."

—"Democratic Self-Rule for Hong Kong!" (10 June 1997)

The "people" of Hong Kong is a category including everyone from the most brutally exploited workers to their billionaire exploiters! Meanwhile the *Pioneer* group reportedly engaged in joint demonstrations with the Guomindang, the blood-soaked anti-Communist heirs of Chiang Kai-shek!! Trotskyists, in contrast, were unconditionally for the return of Hong Kong to China, while calling for proletarian political revolution establishing *workers soviets* throughout China to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy and smash the encroaching (or in the case of Hong Kong, long established) capitalists.

José Carlos de Almeida



World's largest McDonald's restaurant, in Beijing.

Another group in Hong Kong sometimes loosely described as "Trotskyist" is the April Fifth Action Group, an outgrowth of the now-defunct Revolutionary Marxist League. On the occasion of a visit by then Chinese premier Li Peng to World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in Hong Kong last year, the group held a demonstration that "condemned the World Bank's support of Beijing's privatisation plans, which it said could lead to further hardships for the Chinese people" (*Hong Kong Standard*, 24 September 1997). While the precise outlines of April Fifth Action's political positions are not clear, even in such militant-sounding declarations as their 28 June 1997 tract, "British Colonialists Go to Hell!" they essentially equate the Beijing regime and British imperialism. Moreover, their crowning slogans are: "Long live the solidarity of the Chinese people! Resume sovereignty, all power to the people! Election by universal suffrage for executive and legislative organs!" This is a nationalist, bourgeois program like that of capitalist politicians such as the Hong Kong Democratic Party, which in turn is linked to pro-capitalist "dissidents" in mainland China. Applied to China as a whole it amounts to a call for bourgeois-"democratic" counterrevolution.

Various groups which pretend to be Trotskyist and which in the past have characterized China as a deformed workers state have recently changed their line. This is the case with the International Workers League (LIT in Portuguese and Spanish), the main current of followers of the late Nahuel Moreno. The LIT, dominated by the Brazilian PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party) after a split last year with the Argentine MAS (Movement for Socialism), claims that China has become capitalist as a result of Deng's market economic reforms. In a presentation to the Morenoites' July 1997 world congress, LIT

spokesman Martín Hernández admits "large state enterprises continue in the hands of the state" in China, because "out of fear of the popular reaction, the government has been very cautious in its treatment of the state enterprises," and "until now it has not had a policy of privatizing these companies." No matter, says the LIT theoretician, China is a largely peasant country and most of the land is private property. With this argument (which is not even accurate—land is nationalized, but distributed to peasant households in long-term leases), the Soviet Union during the NEP would have been capitalist.

The Morenoites were always virulently anti-Soviet, and greeted Yeltsin's imperialist-backed coup in August 1991 as a new "Russian Revolution"! Having supported actual counterrevolution in the USSR, they now rush to write off all the deformed workers states, not only China but also, notably Cuba. And here you can see what their new line means in practice.

Hernández notes that the question of Cuba came up in recent discussions of the Brazilian CUT labor federation, arguing that not to say there that Cuba is capitalist would be a "capitulation." What the Morenoites are up to was shown in 1994 when they hailed demonstrations by counterrevolutionary *gusanos* in Miami! Meanwhile, the Argentine MAS has gone over to frenzied anti-communism, its guru Andrés Romero declaring that China was never a deformed workers state, that Trotsky was wrong on the Soviet Union and Trotskyists had prettified the "totalitarian dictatorial regime."

Meanwhile, Moreno's arch-rival Jorge Altamira and his Argentine Partido Obrero (PO—Workers Party)—which likes to present itself as the most intrepid defender of Trotskyist orthodoxy in Latin America—now take a line on China and Cuba that is virtually indistinguishable from that of the LIT. A PO resolution

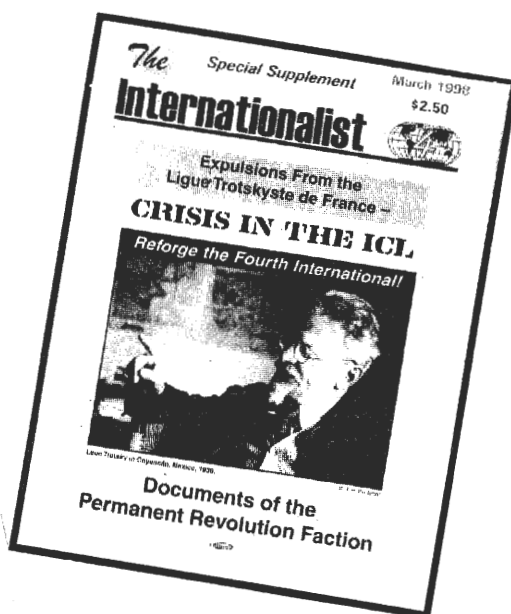
says that the reincorporation of Hong Kong marks a process of "transformation of the bureaucracy into a social class" ruling a "bureaucratic state [which] becomes a guarantor of the reproduction of the capitalist regime." In case this is insufficiently clear, they denounce "those 'Marxists' who still consider China to be a 'workers state'" (*En Defensa del Marxismo*, September 1996). Their 1996 congress expressed a position shared in its essentials by a range of supposedly Trotskyist tendencies around the world, arguing: "The restoration of capitalism is a counterrevolutionary process launched by the bureaucracy—under the impact of the political revolution undertaken by the working class—with the aim of eliminating social conquests, liquidating the perspective of political revolution and converting their privileges into

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property. This process has a world-wide scope and includes not only the Soviet and East European bureaucracy but also the bureaucracies of China, Cuba, Vietnam and Korea.”

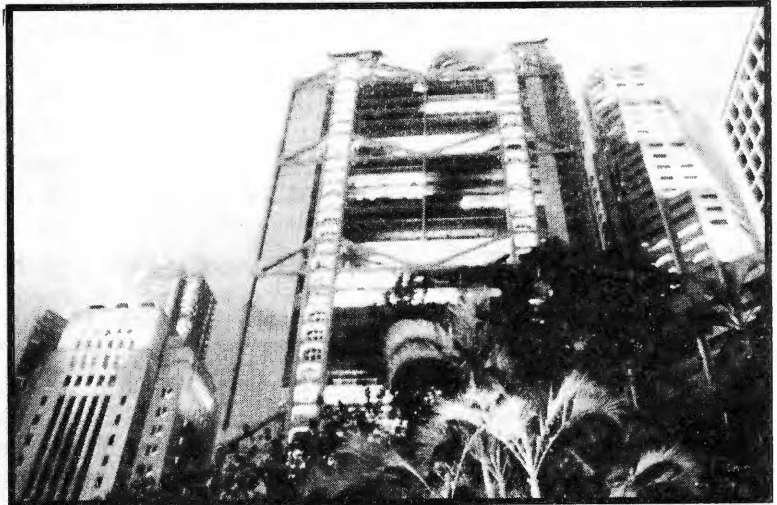
—“Resolution on the International Situation,” *En Defensa del Marxismo* (December 1996)

This “transforms” the Stalinist bureaucracy from a brittle and contradictory caste (which collapsed or shattered in one country after another in the face of the capitalist onslaught) into the leader of counter-revolution. Once again the purpose is to justify the refusal in practice to defend the deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution. And in the meantime, Altamira is appealing to the LIT and a gaggle of other opportunists to “immediately refund” the Fourth International on the basis of common (anti-Marxist) positions, such as declaring China, Cuba, et al. not workers states.

The various “state capitalist” theories and their close relatives (e.g., the claim by the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman that the USSR was “bureaucratic collectivist”) are false to the core theoretically and represent a capitulation to the imperialists. The restoration of capitalist rule in the former USSR and East Europe was a world-historic event, the product of an international imperialist offensive, and the bourgeoisie’s success there led it to go on the warpath against the working class around the globe in the name of “privatization,” “globalization” and the like. Genuine communists and proletarian fighters had to go all out to fight against counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc during 1989-92, and must do so today in the case of China, as well as Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea.

One step removed from the open “state capitalist” groups is the Workers Power (WP) tendency in Britain and its international followers in the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). Workers Power split from Cliff’s organization in 1975 and has always tried to position itself slightly to the left of its political progenitor. Thus at the outset of Cold War II in 1980, WP declared that it had embraced the Trotskyist view of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state, but simultaneously condemned Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. They tailed Polish Solidarność in the ’80s, and in August 1991 showed up on Yeltsin’s barricade of counterrevolution in Moscow. To hide the fact that they had sided with the counterrevolutionaries, WP/LRCI pretended until last year that there had been no capitalist restoration in the ex-Soviet Union and East Europe, referring to the former Soviet bloc countries as “moribund workers states.”

Over China, the LRCI’s journal *Trotskyist International* (July-December 1997) published a lengthy article headlined, “China: Stalinists Draw Near Their Capitalist Goal.” The article argued: “The Stalinist caste is determined to carry this process through to completion and to transform itself into a substantial part of the new capitalist class.” Again, this view negates Trotsky’s analysis of the dual character of the bureaucracy as a petty-bourgeois layer seeking to balance between



Chinese capital went off-shore. Hong Kong offices of Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp., world’s most profitable bank.

imperialism and the proletariat. While pursuing counterrevolutionary policies in a vain attempt to achieve a *modus vivendi* with imperialism, the parasitic bureaucratic caste was dependent on the collectivized economy of a workers state as the source of its privileges. In his article “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” (November 1937), Trotsky pointed out:

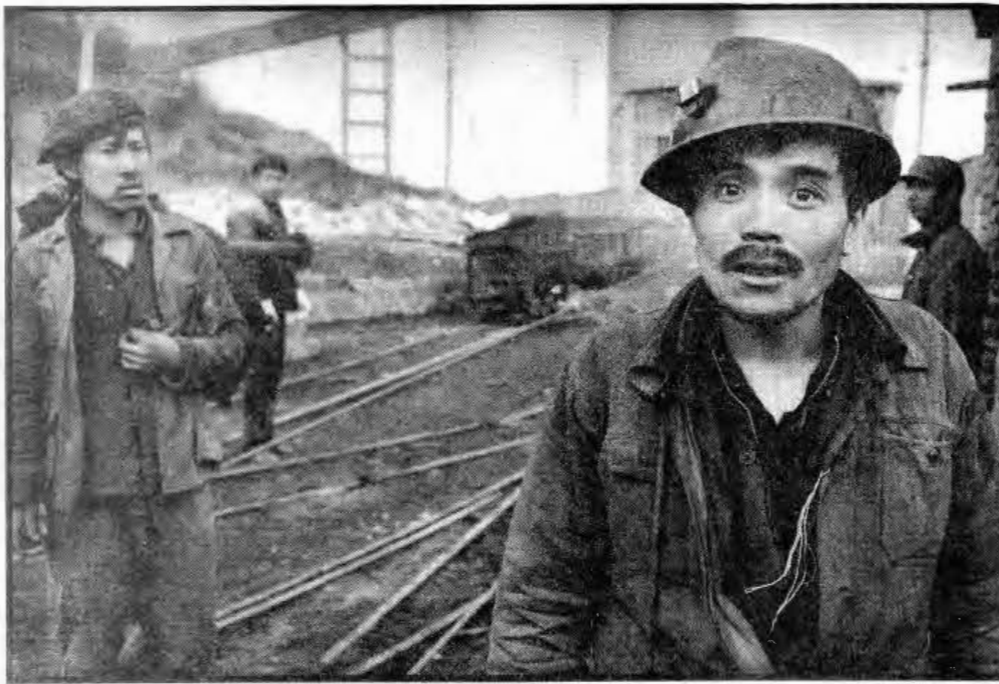
“The function of Stalin, like that of Green [head of the American AFL union federation], has a dual character. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalized property from imperialist attacks and from the too impatient and avaricious layers of the bureaucracy itself. However, he carries through this defense with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society. It is exactly because of this that the Stalinist clique must be overthrown.”

Declaring that it “reject[s] the notion that Stalinism has a dual nature,” Workers Power long ago declared that “Stalinism . . . is invariably a counterrevolutionary force.” How then could Mao’s Stalinist-led peasant guerrilla army have carried out a social revolution? “Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions are counter-revolutionary,” proclaimed the WP. After the remarkable sleight-of-hand of inventing the counterrevolutionary revolution, these double-talking “theoreticians” have no trouble declaring that the Stalinist bureaucracy *as a whole* seeks to carry out capitalist restoration. How? Why, by a simple administrative measure. In a pamphlet issued by its French group after the CCP’s 15th Congress last fall called for the formation of shareholding companies, the LRCI declared:

“If this phase is carried out without difficulty in the hundred or so industries identified so far, China will pass from the stage of a degenerated workers state to that of a state capitalist state.”

—Pouvoir Ouvrier, *La restauration du capitalisme à l’est*

With its perspective of capitalist restoration by bureaucratic fiat, Workers Power’s analysis mirrors that of Altamira and the Morenoites, differing only in the “detail” that it has not yet formally declared China capitalist. But it has already



Marc Riboud

China's powerful proletariat: coal miners in Taiyuan (1995).

prepared an escape clause to handle that. "Because of the maintenance of bureaucratic power in this phase, the point of transition could be obscured by the formality of state property," it noted. Thus the counterrevolution might pass unnoticed, at least by these grand "Marxists" who have changed their position on the nature of Stalinism and the deformed workers states at least four times in the course of WP's existence as a political tendency. And if WP finds it so hard to discern, how will the proletariat be able to combat it? The answer is that among its multifaceted elucubrations, WP/LRCI presents no active program for political revolution.

The political current which for over three decades represented the continuity of authentic Trotskyism, and which mobilized its forces to fight against counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc, particularly in East Germany and the USSR, was the International Communist League (previously the international Spartacist tendency). However, today the ICL has episodically adopted a line toward China that coincides almost 100 percent with that of Workers Power. *Workers Vanguard* (No. 675, 3 October 1997) published a front page article, "China on the Brink," declaring: "Chinese CP Plans Liquidation of State Economy." The article declares that at its 15th Congress, the Chinese Communist Party "announced plans to sell off the bulk of state-owned industry." We have shown above that this represented the wishful thinking of the bourgeoisie and its commentators. *WV* was repeating here the views of counterrevolutionary chief privatizer Jeffrey Sachs, and of the Clinton White House—that is, it was reflecting false consciousness spread by the bourgeoisie.

What is particularly striking is that the article reproduces almost word for word the perspective put forward by Workers Power. Thus *WV* writes, highlighted in bold italics, "If implemented, this proposal would mean the liquidation of what remains of the planned, collectivized economy and the restora-

tion of capitalism in China." So here we see it again, *this time from the mouths of the ICL*—the anti-Marxist perspective of a *cold counter-revolution by decree*: the CP congress votes a resolution, and if carried out, that's it, capitalism has been restored. The *WV* article is quite explicit about this, writing: "The CCP bureaucracy hopes to transform itself into a new exploiting class through a 'cold' transition to fully fledged capitalism." Does the ICL then say this may be illusory, that it is not bloody likely, or simply that it is not a foregone conclusion? On the contrary, *WV* then *confirms* this perspective, writing: "They have certainly

gone a long way down this road, much further than the Soviet Stalinist regime had before its downfall."

A little further on, the article opines that *after* the restoration of capitalism the consolidation of a new counterrevolutionary state apparatus would be a bloody process, and "there has yet to be a final reckoning with the working masses." This vague and defeatist statement alters nothing. Workers Power and even "state capitalist" tendencies can and do say the same thing—that there could be big struggles and violent upheaval *later*. That's not all. In an article on "China: 'Free Market' Misery Targets Women" in the final issue of *Women and Revolution* (No. 45, Winter-Spring 1996) before that publication was discontinued, the ICL wrote that "the moribund Chinese workers state stands on the brink of vast social explosions." Here they use the very same term that Workers Power coined for East Europe after the Stalinist regimes had been destroyed—a dying workers state. This uncanny repetition can hardly be accidental—*WV* No. 675 quotes from the LRCI article on China.

And the parallels do not stop there. For years the Spartacist tendency fought the pretensions of Trotskyist orthodoxy by the political bandits of David North's Workers League. Over and over, the ICL stressed that the WL's claim that Stalinism was "counterrevolutionary through and through" contradicted Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy. When North declared the Soviet degenerated workers state dead and gone the moment Yeltsin and Gorbachev signed a piece of paper, he wrote that it was because "the bureaucrats . . . became increasingly convinced of the possibility of carrying through the restoration of capitalism" ("The End of the USSR," *Bulletin*, 10 January 1992). On China, a major statement by North's editorial board on "Deng Xiaoping and the Fate of the Chinese Revolution" declared: "Under Deng the bureau-

continued on page 51

As Washington and Hollywood Blare "Free Tibet"

ICL's Short-Lived "Soviet Tibet"

For the past couple of years, the Western media have been flooded with calls to "Free Tibet" from the People's Republic of China: a spate of movies (Disney's *Kudrun*, directed by Martin Scorsese, and *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Brad Pitt); rock music extravaganzas by the Beastie Boys and other groups; the Dalai Lama, once and would-be ruler of a Tibetan theocracy, smiling beatifically in Apple computer billboard ads. It's all closely coordinated through the White House, where Bill Clinton has met several times with the Tibetan "god king." Meanwhile the Friends of Bill in the entertainment industry package the message in "humanitarian" wrappings. The cause they are pushing is counterrevolution, and the scripts come from the psychological warfare experts of U.S. imperialism. The CIA, in particular, has been in the "Free Tibet" business ever since a social revolution toppled capitalist/landlord/warlord rule in China in 1949.

When Clinton visited China in June, Tibet was one of the issues on which he lectured Chinese leader Jiang Zemin. When Clinton casually "dropped in" on the Dalai Lama chatting with Hillary in early November, we doubt that the Tibetan "spiritual leader" was giving the U.S. president spiritual advice in the Monica Lewinsky affair. The Buddhist high priest praised the imperialist chief's "efforts to achieve peace" in the Middle East and Yugoslavia—i.e., Clinton's threats to bomb Serbia and Iraq to hell. And then talk turned, in this "reunion of old friends," to how to orchestrate counterrevolution in Tibet. Instead of calling openly for independence, as Washington and its Tibetan puppet did for many years, the Dalai Lama is now calling for "real autonomy" from Beijing. This shift reflects the imperialists' evaluation that Chinese Stalinists are paving the way for capitalist restoration throughout China with their program of economic "reforms." But they don't trust this bureaucratic layer, which still sits atop (and derives its privileges from) the collectivized economic base of a deformed workers state.

The Tibet that the imperialist propaganda machine portrays as a mystical and beneficent Shangri-La was in reality a brutal feudal theocratic regime, in which the vast bulk of the population, more than a million, were obliged to toil on the lands of a couple hundred noble families (the *gerba*) and monastic estates. One contemporary description read:

"Peasants in Tibet, particularly those on the estates belonging to the aristocracy and the monasteries, are in a sense serfs. A tenant peasant is bound to furnish the greater part of his agricultural produce for the use of his landlord, keeping only enough for the bare support of himself and his family. He is also bound to furnish *ulag* (forced labor) and supplies



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Imperialist commander Clinton and Tibetan counterrevolutionary chief Dalai Lama at White House, November 1998.

to his landlord and all government officials traveling through his village. A tenant cannot quit his land without the permission of his [*gerba*] lord."

—quoted in A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet* (1987)

In addition to the pervasive agricultural serfdom, household servants were slaves. Women were horribly oppressed. There are documented cases from as late as the 1940s of children sacrificed in religious rituals. Minority peoples were brutally repressed, particularly when they revolted against the exactions of the Tibetan rulers. Grunfeld reports that favored punishments included:

"cutting off of hands at the wrists; using red-hot irons to gouge out eyes; hanging by the thumbs; and crippling the offender, sewing him into a bag, and throwing the bag in the river. . . . The most graphic evidence available concerned a public torture and mutilation right in the middle of [Tibet's capital city] Lhasa in 1950. Those who question this event have only to look in *Life* magazine, which published colour photographs of the whole grisly affair."

Meanwhile, the lay nobility and the aristocratic higher levels of the Buddhist lamas (monks) lived opulent lives. And atop it all was the Dalai Lama, the high priest and temporal ruler, whose absolutist regime rivaled anything in the European Middle Ages.

Hollywood dreammakers were not the first to idealize this backward society, kept largely isolated for centuries in its Himalayan mountain fastness. The Nazis were also fascinated by a Tibet in which order reigned, and everyone "knew their place." In fact, the movie *Seven Years in Tibet* is based on the memoirs of an Austrian Nazi, Heinrich Harrer, who was sent there as a scout by the Third Reich and then in the early 1950s served as an intermediary between U.S. emissaries and the Dalai Lama, all in

the service of anti-Communism. During the 1930s, as China was rent by civil war and the Japanese invasion, Tibet became a de facto British protectorate. When the Chinese Communist Party's People's Liberation Army (PLA) defeated the brutal Nationalist military of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and drove the last warlords from lowland China, as a rearguard action the American imperialists sought to take up where the British left off in Tibet.

Initially, the new Stalinist regime led by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) sought a deal with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan aristocracy. Thus for a decade they did *not* implement even timid agrarian reforms in this remote region, much less liberate the serfs and slaves. But as land reform measures were instituted in the borderlands to the east, the nobility launched a counterrevolutionary revolt that eventually exploded in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa in 1959. This feudalist uprising was rapidly embraced, financed and organized by the Central Intelligence Agency, which dispatched radio transmitters and arms, as well as CIA agents who spirited the Tibetan ruler out of the country when the PLA succeeded in putting the revolt down. Only then were the serfs liberated, the land collectivized and the power of the lamassaries (monasteries) and aristocracy broken. Contrary to Cold War propaganda, it is indisputable that this social revolution led to vast improvement in the life of the toilers.

Yet the Stalinist bureaucrats—who sought to conciliate the Dalai Lama just as they earlier sought to “unite” with the anti-

Communist butcher Chiang Kai-shek—were deeply nationalist. Beijing proceeded to impose chauvinist policies favoring the ethnic Han Chinese who constitute perhaps 90 percent of China's population. In the 1980s, this was expressed in a policy fostering mass immigration of Han Chinese to Tibet, to the point that today they constitute half the population of Lhasa. As the bureaucratic voluntarism of Mao was replaced by the “market reforms” of Deng Xiaoping, Beijing's policies in Tibet were liberalized. This led to a wave of anti-Chinese, Tibetan nationalist protests in Lhasa in 1988. Since then, the cause of “freedom for Tibet” has gained currency among the liberal intelligentsia in the West as Washington peddled anti-Communism in the name of “human rights.” This is grotesque coming from the “democratic” imperialists who A-bombed Hiroshima and napalmed Vietnam.

Revisionist Shangri-La

Trotskyism stands for unconditional military defense of the deformed workers states against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, as we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinists whose class-collaborationist policies and bureaucratic rule endanger the gains of the revolution. In the face of the imperialist propaganda offensive, one would therefore expect revolutionary Trotskyists to ruthlessly expose and oppose the “free Tibet” charade. This was for many years the policy of the Spartacist tendency and International Communist League (ICL). However, just as the Hollywood/White House-inspired propaganda was reaching a crescendo, last year the ICL came out with a call for an independent “soviet Tibet”:

“A Trotskyist party in China would seek to mobilize the proletariat to defend the rights of national minorities against Han chauvinism. While opposing imperialist-sponsored ‘independence’ movements, we defend the right of independence for a Tibetan *soviet* republic.”

—Spartacist No. 53, Summer 1997

This was no accidental formulation: it appeared in a major ICL statement on China, and was then repeated in an article in *Workers Vanguard*.

Such a “independent soviet Tibet” was nothing but a figment of the ICL's imagination. It is just as much a myth as the imperialist chimera of a Tibetan Shangri-La. The tremendous backwardness of Tibet even today, particularly the absence of a Tibetan proletariat, means that *any* Tibet separated from a Chinese workers state would necessarily be the result of social *counterrevolution*; it would necessarily fall under the sway of imperialism, and its would-be rulers would dearly love to



Three prisoners of the minority Lissou people in southeastern Tibet, captured during uprising against Tibet's theocratic rulers in the 1940s, soon to be executed by the lamas (from André Gibaud, *Missions perdues au Tibet*).

restore feudalistic conditions. Their ability to realize such a reactionary utopia is another matter, but one need only look at the regression into medieval-like social backwardness following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan to see the danger.

In the past, the ICL was in the forefront of combatting the imperialist Cold Warriors. As the bulk of the Western left bought into Washington's anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade under Jimmy Carter, the Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" It exposed how the prattle about "national independence" for Afghanistan, a fractured country that was not a nation, was merely a cover for the CIA's Islamic *mujahedin* (holy warriors) who sought to enslave women and kill communists, teachers, and anyone else who ran afoul of fundamentalist Islamic law. In 1990, when anti-Soviet leftists raised calls for independence of the Baltic republics as the latter spear-headed the counterrevolutionary breakup of the multinational Soviet Union, the ICL exposed the pseudo-Trotskyist currents (United Secretariat, Workers Power, Morenoites) who falsified Trotsky's late 1930s call for an independent soviet Ukraine. As counterrevolution swept the Soviet bloc in 1989-92, these imposters acted as skills for imperialism.

At that time, the ICL undertook a reexamination of Trotsky's position for an independent Soviet Ukraine and after extensive internal discussion concluded that his call was incorrect. An ICL resolution spoke of the "manifest unreality of an independent Soviet Ukraine," noting that it "stands out against the main thrust of his strategic orientation toward proletarian political revolution in the USSR." This resolution was formally approved by the ICL's International Executive Committee and two articles on the question ("On Trotsky's Advocacy of an Independent Soviet Ukraine" and "Why They Misuse Trotsky") were published in *Spartacist* No. 49-50 (Winter 1993-94). Referring to the Soviet Union in the throes of counterrevolution in 1989-91, the IEC resolution stated sharply: "To call for an independent Soviet Lithuania, Moldavia or Georgia under these circumstances would have been irrelevant to the actual political struggle in these regions, and could only have served to legitimize the demand for independence, which was seen as synonymous with anti-Communism and social counterrevolution."

Yet in mid-1997, we find the ICL raising in the context of a mounting counterrevolutionary threat in China the call for an "independent soviet Tibet" that was even more unreal than an independent soviet Lithuania, Latvia, etc. At least those Soviet republics had a proletariat (although often a majority of the workers were of Russian origin), unlike the overwhelmingly peasant and unindustrialized Tibet. What was going on here? We have pointed out that after the ICL's expulsion in mid-

1996 of leading comrades in the U.S. and Mexico and its simultaneous desertion from a key class battle in Brazil, followed by more expulsions of cadres this year from the ICL's French section, the International Communist League has been spiralling into centrism. After three decades of upholding the revolutionary banner of Trotskyism, the ICL has since 1996 revised fundamental positions on a host of key questions including permanent revolution, the popular front, the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the need for workers mobilization against imperialist war, the colonial question, and the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International.

At a two-day educational held by the Internationalist Group in New York on August 1-2, one of the sessions was devoted to the struggle against the threat of counterrevolution in China. It was noted there that the ICL's anti-Trotskyist view that the Stalinist bureaucracy as a whole was *leading* the counterrevolution was accompanied by an even more scandalous position, the call for an "independent soviet Tibet," and this in the heat of the imperialist outcry to "free Tibet."

Not long after our educational, the ICL shamefacedly renounced its call for a mythical "soviet Tibet" separate from China, suddenly rediscovering that "Free Tibet" is a "Rallying Cry for Counterrevolution in China" (*WV* No. 695, 28 August). Well into page 3 of a three-page article, *WV* states that its earlier call is "mistaken." The article continues, "There is currently no basis for any sort of independent Tibet, where there exists neither a domestic capitalist class—not even a comprador capitalist layer—nor a working class of any significance." True enough. But what if there had been a domestic bourgeoisie and proletariat? The ICL's call for Tibet trans-



posed to the Ukraine or the Baltic republics of the USSR would have been less fantastical, but possibly even more dangerous.

In any case, this begs the question as to *why* such a whopper of a "mistake" was made. The article does not note how this line was in flagrant contradiction with the ICL's extensively discussed position *against* Trotsky's call for an independent soviet Ukraine. Nor does it mention the fact that the ICL's call for an independent soviet Tibet *contradicts everything that the ICL had written* on Tibet previously. Thus at the time of the 1989 Beijing uprising which marked the beginnings of a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, *Workers Vanguard* said nothing about independence, instead talking of "granting autonomy and respecting the autonomy of Tibet, Inner Mongolia and the Turkic peoples in Sinkiang province" ("Lessons of the Beijing Spring," *WV* No. 483, 4 August 1989).

Most striking is that in raising this demand, the ICL directly mimicked the pseudo-Trotskyist centrists of Workers Power. While WP eventually drew the conclusions of its line by calling on imperialist Britain under Maggie Thatcher to aid the fascist-infested Sajudis independence movement in Lithuania, it also pretended to call "for an independent workers' council state of Lithuania." The ICL rejected this then as nothing but a "fig leaf" for support to pro-capitalist elements. Only a few years later, the ICL was using the same fig leaf.

In discussions with supporters of the Internationalist Group, ICLers have argued that this line was just a "mistake," with no greater ramifications. This excuse is getting rather lame. In 1996, the ICL accused the IG of rejecting permanent revolution because we exposed their claim (which they borrowed from the Stalinist devotees of "two-stage" revolution) that there was "feudal peonage" in Mexico and throughout Latin America. After a year of keeping this up, they suddenly dropped it when the Permanent Revolution Faction in their French section challenged them on it. The ICL excused this by saying it was only an "analytical mistake" without programmatic consequences . . . and expelled the PRF.

But as the ICL leadership gyrates wildly, having lost its Trotskyist programmatic moorings, this latest zigzag is far worse. *The Spartacist League's "independent soviet Tibet" call was a capitulation to the anti-Communist "Free Tibet" campaign pushed by U.S. imperialism.* The ICL raised this demand at the height of the Washington-inspired, Hollywood-packaged hoopla over Tibet. (For that matter it was dropped as the Dalai Lama grew more emphatic in claiming that he was not for independence, only "real autonomy.") Moreover, the SL/ICL's Tibet call came as it was declaring that it did *not* call for independence for Puerto Rico, the main U.S. colony. An "independent soviet Tibet" but no independence for Puerto Rico? What do these two positions have in common? They are both capitulations to the SL's "own" bourgeoisie.

The ICL leadership may try to wrap itself in Trotsky's mantle, amnestying itself by claiming that they only repeated the mistake he made over the Ukraine. But they did so *after earlier correcting that very mistake.* Those who "correct correct verdicts" are in the grip of another program, succumbing to the pressure of hostile class forces. As the ICL declared in

1993 in opposing the call for an independent soviet Ukraine (or Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, etc.), "In a workers state the question of self-determination is subordinate to the defense of collective property," and we fight for "genuine national equality, including the right to self-determination within the framework of proletarian class rule." Today, as the ICL leadership flails about, proceeding from one revision of Marxism to another, the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International continue to uphold the Trotskyist program.

We print below the section dealing with Tibet from the presentation at the August 1998 IG educational on China.

Finally, there is a new element in the ICL's propaganda on China that I want to point out, because it is very ominous. It is the slogan which first appeared, as far as I can tell, in the Summer 1997 *Spartacist* article on China, and which is repeated, word for word, in the article in *WV* on the return of Hong Kong to China in July 1997. And that is the statement that the ICL defends "the right of independence for a Tibetan *soviet* republic." Oh yes, it has a fig leaf reference to "opposing imperialist-sponsored 'independence' movements," but what is this mythical Tibetan soviet republic, where does it come from, on what social forces would it be based? The fact is that the entire Tibetan independence movement is counterrevolutionary, pro-bourgeois or even pro-feudalist in its social program. To the extent there is a proletariat in this backward mountainous region, it is overwhelmingly made up of Han Chinese immigrants. This independent Tibetan soviet republic is a figment of *WV's* imagination, and it is invented in order to cover a capitulation before the present hue and cry among the Western petty-bourgeois intelligentsia over poor little Tibet, the Richard Geres, etc.

In the last year there has been a slew of movies about Tibet, idealizing it as Shangri-La, including one based on the memoirs of an Austrian Nazi who went there. They don't talk about the feudal relations, the chopping off of servants' hands, the oppression of minority peoples in Tibet by the god-king Dalai Lama. Ask yourselves, why is there this reference to an independent Tibetan soviet republic? What about an independent Xinjiang soviet republic? There at least they have an indigenous proletariat of sorts that works in the oil fields. *This is capitulation to imperialist pressure.* Furthermore, it goes hand in hand with the ICL's increasing alignment with the policies of Workers Power.

Around 1989-90, Workers Power made a big issue out of support to Baltic nationalism, supporting the right of independence for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. WP went so far as to call on Maggie Thatcher's Britain to arm these pro-bourgeois and indeed fascist-infested nationalist movements. But to justify this, they went back to Trotsky's articles in 1938-39, when he called for an independent Soviet Ukraine. At the time we in the ICL came out with an article discussing Trotsky's call and explaining why we thought it was wrong (although not a betrayal like WP's support for bourgeois counterrevolution), and why we don't call for an independent soviet Ukraine or Baltic republics at a time when this is the hobby horse of the bourgeoisie.

But here are *Spartacist* and *WV* raising this over Tibet. We did not raise this at the time of the Beijing uprising of

1989-90, when *WV* wrote that the Chinese bureaucracy is deeply infused with Han chauvinism in its treatment of Tibet, but that the various lamas, the Tibetan religious leaders, "see themselves as the living incarnation of counterrevolution," and that the Dalai lama led a CIA-aided feudalist uprising in 1959. The article on "Lessons of the Beijing Spring" in *WV* in August 1989 called for *autonomy* for Tibet. And this was after some discussion on the issue. As recently as 1995, in response to a reader's letter, *WV* wrote:

"A China of workers and peasants councils would recognize the right of independence for Soviet republics in Tibet and other minority regions, while advocating a socialist federation with China. On the other hand, we understand that the imperialist-inspired call for an independent Tibet—which prior to the Chinese Revolution was a hideously backward, monk-ridden region incapable of leading an independent existence—has since the 1950s been a fig leaf for counterrevolution."

Well, now with its new line that sees that bureaucracy as leading the counterrevolution, as practically a capitalist class, if it isn't so already, the ICL has adopted the fig leaf of the counterrevolution. This is a new line, a very different line, a line directly counterposed to the policy we followed in China in 1989, and in the Soviet Union. We stand on and continue the revolutionary policies of the ICL then, which it has now renounced. ■

Where Is China Going? . . .

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cracy has largely completed its transformation into a property-owning bourgeois ruling class" (*International Workers Bulletin*, 17 March 1997). Reporting on the CCP's 15th Congress, the Australian Northites wrote: "Despite being termed 'market socialism,' the program amounts to a wholesale capitalist transformation." This is exactly the line of the ICL's article on the CCP Congress. So who changed, the Northites, or the ICL?

The eagerness of a host of pseudo-Trotskyists to pound the nails in the coffin of the Chinese deformed workers state before the patient is dead is no abstract matter: it has enormous concrete consequences. Our strategy for political revolution is based on mobilizing the working class for communism. At the same time, we seek where possible to split sections of the bureaucracy. This occurred in Hungary in 1956, for example, where the head of the army (Pál Maléter) and the head of the Budapest police (Sándor Kopácsi) went over to the insurgents. If, as the ICL claims, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy as such is unequivocally bound to ramming through capitalist restoration, then it has in effect become bourgeois. It would be theoretically false and practically foolhardy to look for splits in the PLA officer corps, for example, which is a key component of the bureaucracy. Yet such splits did occur in 1989 as troops were brought into Beijing, initially paralyzing Deng's attempt to disperse the student and worker mobilizations. Is the ICL saying that the nature of the Chinese bureaucracy has changed since 1989?

This would directly affect the intervention of Trotskyist

revolutionaries in a developing crisis of the Stalinist regime in which both proletarian political revolution and capitalist counterrevolution are possible outcomes. In East Germany (the DDR) in 1989, the ICL went to numerous Soviet army bases, distributing thousands of pieces of Trotskyist literature, even holding forums on Trotskyism attended by up to 400 Soviet soldiers and officers. It sparked the formation of soldiers councils in a number of East German army (NVA) units, winning NVA soldiers and officers to its ranks. What the ICL did in the DDR and what Beijing workers did in 1989 in fraternizing with soldiers and officers of the PLA would be dangerously adventurist and wrong if the Chinese officer corps as a whole has gone over to the capitalist counterrevolution.

The *WV* 675 article is all the more striking because only a few months earlier, the ICL published a major piece, also with the title "China on the Brink" (*Spartacist* No. 53, Summer 1997), which was quite orthodox except in one major respect, its call to "defend the right of independence for a Tibetan soviet republic" (see "ICL's Short-Lived Soviet Tibet," page 47 of this issue). The *Spartacist* article did not argue that the bureaucracy as a whole is seeking to restore capitalism in China, but wrote instead about how the bureaucratic apparatus is being torn at by economic warlords, how the PLA was beginning to fracture when the workers went into action in 1989. Neither did that article put forward a perspective of counterrevolution by decree, nor say that the bureaucracy is leading the counterrevolution in China. Yet that is exactly what the *WV* 675 article claims, that is exactly what Workers Power says, and that is what the ICL has insisted on in polemics against the Internationalist Group over East Germany and East Europe.

Taken together with their recent flip-flop over Tibet, one might be tempted to ask: is there a "two-line struggle" (to use a Maoist phrase) going on inside the ICL over China? Rather, this is another zig-zag of a degenerating centrist tendency. And one thing is clear: both in "defending the right to independence" of an entirely mythical "soviet Tibet" and in claiming that the CCP formally voted to carry out the restoration of capitalism, the ICL press was directly reflecting the pressure and views of "its own" imperialist bourgeoisie, indeed of some of the most right-wing sectors of that bourgeoisie.

Growth of Capitalism in China

If China is not already capitalist, as the various "state capitalist" currents claim; if the bureaucracy as a whole is not leading the counterrevolution, as both the right-centrist Workers Power/LRCI and left-centrist Spartacist/ICL claim—then what is going on in China?

The leading force for bourgeois counterrevolution in China today is the bourgeoisie and powerful capitalist-restorationist forces inside and around the bureaucracy who are allied with it. Likewise, it was the German bourgeoisie of the Fourth Reich and its social-democratic running dogs who led the drive for capitalist reunification that obliterated the DDR in 1990; it was Lech Walesa and his Polish nationalist Solidarność, embraced by the Pope of counterrevolution and

financed by the CIA (and the Vatican bank), which carried out the restoration of capitalism in Poland; it was Washington's man Yeltsin, in constant contact with U.S. president Bush, at the head of elements that had split from the Stalinist bureaucracy, who seized power in August 1991 and proceeded to destroy the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy, as Trotsky had written, prepared the way for counterrevolution with its policies of international class collaboration; it opened the door to the restoration of capitalism by its domestic economic policies fostering the growth of bourgeois forces; and it sold out the degenerated/deformed workers states, handing over power to the new bourgeois masters.

But while the bureaucracy with its counterrevolutionary policies is a contradictory, parasitic layer living off the workers state, the force that has the cohesion of clear class interests necessary to actually lead a counterrevolution is the bourgeoisie. In China the bureaucracy's policies are producing an incessant and massive growth of bourgeois forces. This is quite pronounced in rural areas, where two-thirds of the Chinese population (800 million out of 1.2 billion) still lives. More than a decade and a half after the final decollectivization of agriculture, rich peasants (Chinese kulaks), traders and petty capitalists are multiplying and sinking roots. The reappearance of such vile practices of Chinese capitalism as the selling of women as wives is a direct reflection of the growth of this bourgeois layer in the countryside. As Lenin wrote in *Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, "Small-scale production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale."

But that is only the lowest level of the growing capitalist forces in China. Simultaneously, powerful Chinese capitalist interests are being reintroduced in the country. The vast majority of the bankers, industrialists, traders and other capitalists fled the mainland as Chiang Kai-shek's routed army decamped to Taiwan. But while they lost their holdings in the process, they just moved off-shore. As a result of the Maoist regime's decision to maintain Hong Kong as an entrepôt to facilitate trade with the imperialist countries, many Shanghai firms established themselves there. What often started as family firms have become extensive conglomerates. These are by and large the forces setting up production in China's Special Economic Zones: 80 percent of all investment in the SEZs comes from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Make no mistake, these capitalists intend to *rule China* in their class interests, no less than the German bourgeoisie swallowed the DDR in order to create a Greater Germany that dominates Europe. Moreover, they are closely connected with the most pro-capitalist sectors of the bureaucracy—and their relatives, the so-called "red princes" (*taizidang*). Hong Kong real estate tycoon Li Ka-shing, one of the ten richest people in the world, holds a strategic stake in the Hong Kong-listed company Shougang Concord Grand, whose executive director is Deng Xiaping's son Zhifang. And the bureaucracy itself has ties to Hong Kong capital. Last July, the Hong Kong government headed by Beijing-appointed shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa bought up 10 percent of the Hong Kong & Shang-

hai Banking Corporation (HSBC), which was the colony's largest financial enterprise and issuer of most of its currency (the Hong Kong dollar). The Sino-British HSBC is now headquartered in London, but most of its profits still come from Asia. In China it has a monopoly position as the only foreign firm allowed to underwrite trades on the Shanghai Stock Exchange. In 1996, the HSBC was the most profitable bank in the world, with profits of US\$7 billion.

The penetration of the People's Republic by Chinese capital has gone so far that whole regions have been economically colonized. Fujian province opposite Taiwan, and particularly the SEZ of Xiamen, became a prime production site for shoes, plastics, rubber and other petrochemical products by companies from the Guomindang-run island. In 1995, Hong Kong firms had undertaken 120,000 industrial projects in China. Guangdong province, particularly the Pearl River delta, has in effect become part of Greater Hong Kong. There are more than 20,000 Hong Kong companies producing in the province, and another 10,000 joint ventures. "The Hong Kong dollar has become the regional currency of southern China," reports one study (Willem van Kemenade, *China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc.: The Dynamics of a New Empire* [Alfred A. Knopf, 1997]). A dramatic symptom of growing capitalist pressures was the 1992 two-day riot in Shenzhen by would-be shareholders, more than 800,000 of whom had lined up to get subscription forms for a lottery to be able to invest in the local stock exchange, which was initially not authorized by Beijing.

As Deng and his heirs have opened large swaths of China to capitalist exploitation, the imperialist encroachments of the early part of this century have been resuscitated. As the SEZs have multiplied, they have focused on the same areas as the so-called treaty ports. In 1984, some 14 coastal cities were opened to foreign investment including Tianjin (Tientsin), Dalian (Dairen), Qingdao (Tsingtao), Guangzhou (Canton) and above all Shanghai. Also accompanying the booming capitalist investment has been massive corruption of the Chinese bureaucracy. Right-wing economist Milton Friedman declared during a 1993 visit to China that corruption is one of the "manifestations of the market in a decaying planned economy." This is not a "cultural problem" but part of a conscious policy: corruption is an essential component of the counterrevolutionaries' undermining of the Chinese economy.

The Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy has gone further than the government of any other deformed workers state in fostering market reforms that fuel capitalist forces. As a result of this, those growing capitalist forces in China are now consolidating their power and influence to an extent never before seen inside a deformed workers state. But while the bureaucrats have provided the openings and opportunity for this process, the capitalists do not trust them. The bourgeoisie understands all too well that the governing layer in China is still dependent upon the economic structure of a workers state. The Economist Intelligence Unit, about as authoritative a spokesman for the interests of international capital as one could find, commented on the fate of the economic reforms announced by Jiang Zemin at the September 1997 CCP 15th Party Congress:

"The bold and fast reforms that have been outlined are already meeting resistance. Industrial workers who have lost their jobs or have not been paid are taking to the streets with apparent impunity. Sometimes the anxious authorities have given in to their demands. . . .

"[Another] source of opposition will come from within the bureaucracy itself. Sprawling and vast, the party-state bureaucracy is going to be less than willing to be cut to half its size. Passive resistance, especially at the local level, can be expected, but this resistance is likely to prove effective."

—Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: China, Mongolia*, 2nd quarter 1998

This is a frank reminder of a point that Trotsky made decades ago. After cataloguing the crimes of the bureaucracy, how it had deformed the dictatorship of the proletariat and become an organ for the pressure of the bourgeoisie, he stressed:

"The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle. The struggle is not concluded. In spite of all the efforts on the part of the Moscow clique to demonstrate its conservative reliability (the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalin in Spain!), world imperialism does not trust Stalin, does not spare him the most humiliating flicks and is ready at the first favorable opportunity to overthrow him. Hitler—and therein lies his strength—simply more consistently and frankly expresses the attitude of the world bourgeoisie to the Soviet bureaucracy. For the bourgeoisie—fascist as well as democratic—isolated counterrevolutionary exploits of Stalin do not suffice; it needs a complete counterrevolution in the relations of property and the opening of the Russian market. So long as this is not the case, the bourgeoisie considers the Soviet state hostile to it. And it is right."

—"Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?"

Why the bourgeoisie cannot trust the Chinese bureaucracy today was underlined by the deputy director of the Commission for Restructuring the Economic System of the Province of Guangdong. Explaining to a Dutch economic journalist why bankruptcy of large state corporations is politically impossible, he remarked that the workers would vehemently object. Their mottos are, he said: "Follow the Communist Party! No Bankruptcy! Iron Rice Bowl! Socialism is Superior!"

Build a Trotskyist Party to Lead Workers Political Revolution in China

As the fate of the Chinese deformed workers state hangs in the balance, the fundamental enemy is the bourgeoisie—but the principal obstacle to defeating it is the bureaucracy. In fighting against the threat of counterrevolution, the Chinese working class must carry out a political revolution to oust the Stalinist caste which is sabotaging the gains of the Revolution. The raw material for such an earthshaking upheaval, mass working-class discontent, is undeniably present, and China has a stormy revolutionary history to inspire it. The Western press abounds with clichés about "China's normally obedient population," yet over the last century and a half the population has been anything but pliant. From the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-64 to the 1898

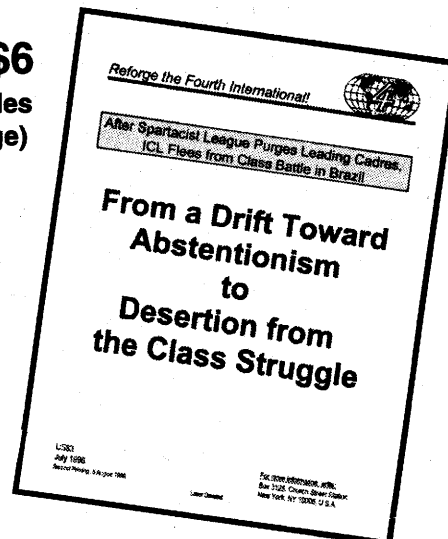
Boxer Uprising to the Nationalist Revolution of 1910 to the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 to the Third Chinese Revolution which overthrew capitalist rule in 1949 after a quarter century of civil war, the Chinese working masses have proven their revolutionary mettle.

Although it is a minority in this still largely peasant country, the Chinese proletariat of well over 100 million workers can lead the vast majority of the oppressed population. The Beijing bureaucracy is well aware of this, and deathly afraid of the working class in whose name it claims to rule. Following the bloody massacre of June 1989, Deng Xiaoping told top party leaders in closed session that it was when they saw that the workers had begun to join the student protesters that the top brass decided on repression. Today, CCP leader Jiang Zemin tells workers they must "change their ideas about employment"—i.e., meekly accept 30 million layoffs in the name of market reforms. The Stalinist regime is manifestly at a dead-end as it sells out revolutionary gains. What is crucial is genuinely communist, internationalist leadership—a Chinese Trotskyist party—to organize and bring to the working class the consciousness of its revolutionary interests.

The Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy has always been dis-

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Dare to Die motorcycle squads of workers in Beijing during May-June 1989.

tant from and hostile to the working class. Already in the 1930s, Trotsky warned Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists that while they must stand clearly on the side of the CP-led Liberation Army against the Guomindang, the Japanese and the warlords, the workers must be vigilant, for at the moment that Stalinist-led peasant troops enter the cities: "It is not difficult to foresee that they will counterpose the peasant army in a hostile manner to the 'counterrevolutionary Trotskyists'" ("Peasant War in China," September 1932). That is in fact what happened, as the Trotskyists were arrested en masse, some of them not long after leaving Chiang's dungeons.

Mao's forces didn't just go after the Trotskyists, they sought to straitjacket the working class. Immediately after the PLA seized the capital, the CCP leader in charge of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), Li Lisan, was toppled. Following the "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" campaign of 1956-57, the new head of the ACFTU was jailed. During the so-called Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, it was when Shanghai workers began mobilizing that Mao decided to clamp down on the Red Guards and the Workers General Headquarters. The supposed "leftists" of Mao's faction of the bureaucracy were deeply hostile to the workers: for the last decade of his rule (1966-76), the unions were shut down entirely. Deng Xiaoping, for his part, faced with a strike wave in 1981, amended China's constitution to outlaw strikes.

In the Soviet bloc deformed workers states during 1989-92, liberal petty-bourgeois forces raised a clamor for "liberalization" of a bureaucratically hamstrung, stagnant economy. In China, mass support for the 1989 Beijing mobilizations was fueled by frustration over the results of a decade of the kind of market economy East European "dissidents" were calling for. By the late 1980s, there was a rising wave of working-class discontent over runaway inflation and increasingly wide disparities in income. These were the principal themes behind a

rising number of illegal strike actions. The technocratic "reformers" accused the workers of being infected with a "Maoist-era mentality of 'eating from the same big pot,' unque 'egalitarianism'" and the like (Anita Chan, "Revolution or Corporatism? Workers and Trade Unionism in Post-Mao China," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January 1993).

It is not surprising, then, that when Beijing workers marched to Tiananmen Square in 1989, they called to put a clamp on inflation and high living by the bureaucratic elite, opposed the "reform" bureaucrats in particular, and often carried portraits of Mao Zedong. This was a very different agenda than the students' demand for classless "democracy" and their de facto political alliance with the "liberal" wing of the bureaucracy, notably CCP general secretary Zhao Ziyang. Accounts of the Tiananmen Square mobilizations make clear that there were great tensions and hostility between the different class components present there. The students refused to allow the workers to join their sit-in, to speak at their rallies, or even to be present in the square. Relegated to the western edge of the vast plaza, a growing group of workers erected a make-shift tent, set up a loud-speaker system and started issuing leaflets.

For the most part they were ignored by the media, but not by the bureaucracy. This was particularly the case from May 17 on, when a million Beijing residents marched in support of the protesters:

"Workers entered the central precincts of the capital in an armada of trucks and buses, waving red flags and banging drums, gongs, and cymbals. It was the government's worst nightmare come to life. . . .

"They read like a roll call of the elite of Chinese industry: the Beijing Rubber Manufacturing Plant, the Beijing Coking Factory, the Beijing Boiler Factory, the Petroleum Chemical Products Corporation, the Civil Aviation Administration of China, even the giant Capital Iron and Steel Works."

—George Black and Robin Munro, *Black Hands of Beijing* (Wiley & Sons, 1993)

At the workers' headquarters on the edge of the square, declarations were now being issued in the name of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAFF). Soon autonomous union groupings were being formed in outlying cities, particularly Shanghai.

The BWAFF, popularly referred to as *gongzilian* (short for Workers Federation), grew from a small group of about a score of worker activists to some thousands over the course of the month and a half of mobilization in Tiananmen Square. It received support from a wide variety of workplaces. However, it was not able to make deep inroads into the huge heavy industrial plants. This may be in part because the official

ACFTU, rather than opposing mobilizations such as the million-strong march on May 17, instead called to take part in them. But when the BWAFF called on May 19 for a general strike on the 20th, suddenly the workers were the focus of political activity in the capital. Martial law was declared shortly after midnight, and the next day hundreds of thousands poured into the streets and successfully blockaded army units. Workers harangued soldiers and officers, while offering them food. Deng eventually had to withdraw these Beijing-based PLA units, which from the outset were sympathetic to the protesters.

The *gongzilian* started to sign up members, registering 20,000 in the space of two weeks. Crowds of workers gathered around its headquarters on the edge of the square where loudspeakers broadcast constant announcements and statements. The BWAFF called on all work units to organize brigades to maintain order. Workers at the Capital Iron and Steel Works (which at the time had 200,000 employees) were organizing their own labor federation, as were construction workers. A number of workers' flying squads were organized, including the Capital Workers Picket Corps, the Flying Tigers Motorcycle Brigade, the Beijing Citizens Dare-to-Die Corps and others, which would mobilize on short notice if there was news of troop movements or calls from area factories for reinforcements. When some students were arrested and again when BWAFF activists were picked up a couple of days later, caravans of workers went out to the police station to gain their freedom (Andrew Walder and Gong Xiaoxia, "Workers in the Tiananmen Protests: The Politics of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January 1993).

The different statements issued under the name of the BWAFF had varying content, reflecting the ad hoc nature of the group and the lack of a core of political cadres in the leadership. Some later accounts (such as *Black Hands of Beijing*) try to paint the growing workers presence as a counterpart to Polish Solidarność, portraying BWAFF spokesman Han Dongfang, a railway worker, as a Chinese Lech Walesa. After spending a harrowing two years in prison, Han later went to the U.S. and is now on the payroll of the "AFL-CIA" as a "free trade union" spokesman in Hong Kong, broadcasting on the U.S. government's Radio Liberty. Han is today a direct agent of the imperialists. But the only reference to the Polish nationalist yellow "union" during the Tiananmen mobilization came from students.

Indeed, some of the workers' statements show sympathy for what they understood as communism. For example:

"Compatriots, we will unite to build a system which is guided by an honest and incorruptible Chinese Communist Party, one which has the Chinese proletariat as its mainstay. . . ."

Or again:

"Our blood and sweat stain the foundation stones and pillars which created the People's Republic. This country was created by us, the workers; the people who contributed their mental and physical efforts through struggle and labour. We have every reason to be masters of this country."

—"A Letter to Overseas Compatriots" (26 May 1989), trans-

lated in Lu Ping, *A Moment of Truth: Workers' Participation in China's 1989 Democracy Movement and the Emergence of Democratic Unions*

But while the workers were not motivated by anti-communism, they had no clear conception of their goals, and saw themselves as part of the "patriotic Democracy Movement." Although they resented exclusion by the elitist students, they did not have revolutionary proletarian consciousness and thus did not see themselves as a *class vanguard*. And their outlook was decidedly nationalist.

In short, the consciousness of the working class at this key moment reflected the effects of decades of Stalinist perversion of Marxism into nationalist class-collaboration. The Chinese workers showed their willingness to fight against all wings of the bureaucracy; they were wary of the petty-bourgeois elitists and the market "reformers." But they lacked a Marxist program on which to fight. Despite the posters of Mao, Maoism had nothing to offer the workers: that faction of the bureaucracy was just as anti-labor as Deng it was in power. Trotskyism was unknown, as the history of the Chinese Left Opposition has been systematically suppressed. The absence of a communist leadership meant that the protests were politically blocked, lacking a revolutionary perspective just as the bureaucracy was preparing to crack down with murderous force.

Today as the government has begun to carry out their anti-working class plans—not all-out privatization but mass layoffs of an estimated 12 million workers last year and another 13 million this year—there have been widespread workers protests. Some 33,000 labor disputes were officially reported in 1995, 48,000 in 1996. Last year as the CCP's 15th Congress was approaching, these were escalating sharply, reaching the level of local revolts in a number of regions, particularly Sichuan, the inland center of heavy defense industries.

Fall 1996 – Textile workers in Taiyuan, Shanxi province who had not been paid in ten months occupy city hall and with the aid of hundreds of bystanders stop traffic.

January 1997 – Mass sit-in by workers who had not received wages in Acheng, near Harbin city, Heilongjiang province (Manchuria).

March 1997 – Workers from a state-owned textile factory in Nanchong, Sichuan province who had not been paid wages in six months take the factory chief hostage; 20,000 join in marches.

July 1997 – Hundreds of workers who had lost their jobs when silk and textile plants went bankrupt in Mianyang, Sichuan province stage protest; the next day tens of thousands of citizens take up the protest, setting up roadblocks and smashing bus windows.

August 1997 – Six hundred pedicab drivers mass outside government offices in Djuiangyan, Sichuan province, after being laid off by state enterprises.

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (16 October 1997) summed up the fears shared by both the bureaucracy and the capitalists:

"There's a volatile group that still remembers the party's promises of 'working-class rule.' Small-scale demonstrations

are common outside city halls across China. . . .

"The worst-case scenario is awful. About a million factory workers are in the military reserve, often with armouries on factory grounds. During the Tiananmen uprising, a Western diplomat notes, 'workers threw gasoline-soaked blankets over the air ducts of tanks and incinerated them, because that's what they'd been trained to do. You don't want these people turning against you'."

Half a century ago, in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding program of the Fourth International, Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky laid out key points of the program of proletarian political revolution:

"A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against *social inequality* and *political oppression*. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labor!

"The struggle for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold in the struggle for the regeneration and development of *Soviet democracy*. . . .

"A revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organized consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products. . . .

"The reactionary *international policy* of the bureaucracy should be replaced by the policy of proletarian internationalism."

This means today a struggle to join hands with the socialist workers of Vietnam and North Korea, as well as half-way around the world in Cuba, to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies that like Deng's heirs in China are preparing the way for counterrevolution; and a struggle to spark socialist revolution from South Korea, Japan and throughout Asia to the imperialist citadels of Europe and the U.S.

The proletariat must act as the champion of all the toilers. Where the Trotskyists called in 1938 for the reorganization of the collective farms according to the will and interests of the

collective farmers and workers there, in China today it is necessary to lay the basis for genuinely voluntary collective farming on the basis of extensive mechanization and advanced technology—very different than the primitive "communes" of the Maoist era. Despite the all-sided glorification of the present "Household Responsibility System," *hundreds of millions* of Chinese poor and middle peasants still live in grinding poverty. And in the more economically advanced regions, small farmers are threatened by plans to expropriate them to introduce large-scale capitalist farming.

A Leninist party must act as the "tribune of the people," defending all the oppressed: women, national minorities, homosexuals. It must rigorously oppose every expression of Han chauvinism, provide genuine autonomy and recognize the right of self-determination in a soviet federation for minority peoples

and nationalities. As bourgeois forces spread their tentacles, the tasks of political revolution to oust the bureaucracy are increasingly intertwined with the fight for socialist expropriation of the capitalist poachers. Trotskyists seek to mobilize the working people to smash capitalism in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and to seize the sweatshops and factories in the Special Economic Zones. Close down the stock markets and drive out the speculators!

Stalinism is dead politically, its bankruptcy definitively proven by the collapse of the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states. Today even the remaining Stalinists don't believe in their program of "socialism in one country," except for handfuls of political zombies—

walking dead men—in the West. Those with state power are desperately trying to ensure their own survival through maneuvering and ever-greater concessions to capitalism. The League for the Fourth International calls to build an authentic Trotskyist party in China, which alone can provide the program and organization to lead the working-class in a proletarian political revolution, defeating the counterrevolution by sweeping out the corrupt, parasitic bureaucracy and opening the road to socialist revolution in the capitalist countries. Such a party can only be built in the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

Armed with this program and party, the workers of China will truly shake the world. ■



Leon Trotsky

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VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

October 1998 – Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil
Section of the League for the Fourth International

Declaration of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil on the Elections

You Can't Combat Capital with the Popular Front

Against the Cardoso/IMF Onslaught: Fight for Workers Revolution!

The following statement is translated from Vanguarda Operária supplement No. 3 (October 1998).

With national elections coming on October 4, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International, calls on class-conscious workers, on all those who seek to combat capitalist exploitation and oppression, to fight for the political independence of the proletariat, breaking all the chains which subordinate working people to capital and building a revolutionary workers party. We stress that to defeat the anti-working-class onslaught which the domestic and international bourgeoisie are preparing to launch after the elections, it is necessary to wage proletarian opposition to the popular front. Neither the class collaboration of the "União do Povo" (Union of the People) with long-time regional bosses and big landowners like [traditional bourgeois populists] Leonel Brizola and Miguel Arraes, nor parliamentary cretinism—revolutionary class struggle is the only response which can defeat the starvation policy of [Brazil's president] Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the International Monetary Fund.

As we wrote some months ago: "This is the third year of Cardoso's presidential term, which ends in 1999. He is following the IMF's prescriptions to the letter, having carried out all his assignments and subordinated himself to the 'Washington consensus'. To gain approval from the Wall Street bankers and imperialists, the social-democratic professor Cardoso ferociously attacked the Brazilian workers' main historical gains: from youth to retirees, everyone is being squeezed. Even more serious is the drastic growth of unemployment" ("Cardoso Prepares for Reelection," *Vanguarda Operária* No. 3, April-June 1998).

The imperialists thought that with the destruction of the Soviet Union, they would have free rein to impose their starvation plans on the workers of the entire world. What followed was a global anti-working-class and privatizing offensive. But what has been the result? A world capitalist crisis, beginning in the stock markets and affecting the entire economy. Noting that the Brazilian economy is more than twice the size of Russia's, now in ruins, spokesmen for imperialist high finance have raised a cry of alarm. "What is at stake is not just Brazil but Latin America, the U.S. economy, and therefore the world economy," exclaimed an analyst from the Institute of International Finance (*Jornal do Brasil*, 30 September).

Imperialist worries are summed up in the title of an article from *Fortune* magazine (28 September): "Brazil: Hanging by a Thread." The bankers and imperialist politicians of Wall Street and the White House and their junior partner in the Palácio do Planalto [Brazil's presidential palace] are calling for cuts in public spending and aim to privatize essential social sectors like education and health, which are already being bled dry with low wages for public employees and terrible working conditions. They are to be turned over to the control of "private enterprise," accompanied by a package of demands including mass firings of public workers.

Today the IMF and most of the Brazilian bourgeoisie are placing their bets on Cardoso to maintain an appearance of "stability" in the face of market crises from Asia to Russia, in order to carry out their attacks on the working people after the elections. This crisis is "one of the results of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the former USSR, prepared by the Stalinists, the consequences of which we are suffering today, with the loss of rights and conquests around the world" (Class Struggle Caucus Bulletin No. 9, 18



AP
Imperialist chief Clinton (left) and his junior partner, Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

August 1998). Coming amid an inter-imperialist trade war growing out of a crisis of overproduction, more attacks are being planned against the working class throughout the world. The effects of this deepening inter-imperialist trade war bring to mind the scenes of crisis preceding the first and second world wars, along with Clausewitz's saying that "war is the continuation of politics." In Brazil these attacks are aimed particularly against the retirement system and public employees.

Capital flight has meant the loss of most of the money received from the privatization of [the previously state-owned phone company] Telebrás. Today, the IMF is calling on its marionette Cardoso for discussions on the Brazilian crisis and the preparation of a new package of cuts headed up by the demand for a fiscal "reform" to guarantee that profits will flow and speculative capital will remain in the country. The new measures being studied by the IMF will certainly bring more exploitation, more privatizations/giveaways, more police terror, more racism, more oppression of women, more attacks against homosexuals, Indians and all the oppressed, more attacks on education and the rights of youth, more bloody repression against landless peasants.

The response of the workers movement must be to organize massive workers mobilizations to defeat the Cardoso/IMF hunger plan. But this is impossible without breaking the chains which bind the workers movement to the bourgeoisie—the chains of class collaboration. The supposed "alternative" put forward by almost the

entire Brazilian left is one or another version of the popular front; in other words, a coalition which subordinates the working people to a supposed alliance with sectors of the exploiters. The "Union of the People" promoted by the reformist Partido dos Trabalhadores (the Workers Party of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), with its candidate Lula; the return to an earlier version of the popular front (Frente Brasil Popular) wished for and promoted by the PSTU (Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, followers of the late Nahuel Moreno); or more "radical" versions of the same promoted by various left groups—in reality what we are seeing is a syphilitic chain of popular frontism. Against this, we of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/League for the Fourth International call on the workers movement to break with the bourgeoisie! For class struggle, not class collaboration!

Against the "Union of the People" Popular Front of Lula and Brizola

Already in 1989 and 1994, Lula was the candidate of the Frente Brasil Popular, a classic popular front subordinating the workers movement and the left to sectors of the bourgeoisie. The PT, a reformist party, thereby subordinated itself openly to the bosses' parties. The PT has participated in governments in the Federal District and the state of Rondônia which carried out attacks against the workers and massacres against the landless peasants. In Volta Redonda, where City Hall is ruled by the Popular Front of the PSB (the bourgeois Brazilian Socialist Party of populist landowner Arraes) and the PT, it tried to lay off 2,000 city workers and was stopped only by the mobilization and strike led by comrade Geraldo Ribeiro in 1993. Now in the third year of its latest term, the Popular Front is attacking city workers' rights, increasing hourly workloads with no pay increase, sending the Municipal Guard and Military Police to invade union meetings



Kathia Tamanaha/AgenciaEstado

Workers Party (PT) leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, center, in November 13 "Marathon for Jobs." Lula chains workers to bosses through popular front "Union of the People," sabotaging powerful workers action against Cardoso's imperialist-ordered attacks on labor, poor.

and violently attack strikers. It is currently escalating its attacks, cutting the wages of almost 1,000 city workers in some cases by more than 50 percent in line with the orders of the bourgeois "justice" system.

In May of this year in Brasília, during a march for jobs called by the popular front itself, the PT governor sent the police to disperse the demonstration with the use of horses, police dogs and heavy weaponry, winning fulsome praise from [rightist leader] Antônio Carlos Magalhães and now from Cardoso himself. The same thing occurs in the countryside, where landless peasants were massacred in Corumbiara by order of the governor of Rondônia, where the PT participates in a state ministry. Now the PT has made its popular front even "broader," bringing old-line representatives of bourgeois populism like Brizola, Arraes and others into the "Union of the People."

The popular front means terrible defeats for the workers and oppressed, from France and Spain (in the 1930s) to Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1965, Chile in 1973 and today in France, where the popular front is attacking workers and immigrants. Our policy is that of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which led the October 1917 Revolution against Kerensky's popular front, the bourgeois Provisional Government.

Our position is the most intransigent proletarian opposition to popular frontism. Not one vote to any candidate of the class-collaborationist alliance headed by Lula. Given the anti-democratic election laws and the absence of a genuine working-class alternative in these elections, our proletarian opposition to the bourgeoisie and class collaboration is expressed through a *voto nulo* (casting a blank ballot).

In the face of announced plans for destroying the retirement system and carrying out mass firings of public workers, ordered directly by the IMF and implemented by Cardoso, the working class must prepare now for the coming battle. The bourgeois offensive against all the working people must be answered with a class-struggle workers offensive fighting for power. The necessary response would begin with a strike of all public employees, then extending to the private sector in a general strike paralyzing all large industry, transport and commerce, which would be a showdown with the bourgeois power. To lead this fight, it will be necessary to throw out the existing pro-capitalist leaderships and form organs of struggle, workers councils, led by a genuine revolutionary workers party which can head the masses of landless peasants in a fight for a workers and peasants government and the extension of revolution to the imperialist centers.

The Opportunist Left and the Elections

The Stalinists (PCdoB, PCB, etc.) participate directly in popular frontism, in accordance with their line of alliances with a non-existent "progressive" bourgeoisie and a "two-stage" revolution: class collaboration today, socialism never.

The Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU) is presently trying to position itself to Lula's left, seeking to win the votes of workers who are fed up with Lula's constant maneuvering with one bourgeois politician after another. But the PSTU's campaign does not represent even the beginnings of a class-struggle opposition to the popular front. They are reformists who participated directly in the Frente Brasil Popular in 1994, showing once and for all that they have nothing to do with revolutionary class politics. They never renounced that policy and only complain that the latest version is too right-wing. They want a return to the older-style popular front (talking about "the PT as it



November 7 protest in Volta Redonda, Brazil for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Class-Struggle Caucus sign says: "Down with 'Zubatovism'—Police Out of the Unions and the CUT."

was in the beginning") with a bit more "militant" and nationalist verbiage. This position is clearly expressed in the party's election program, which claims as its own the position that the PT occupied in 1994, maintaining the basic programmatic guidelines of that year's popular front.

The PSTU's program is made up solely of "democratic" slogans, demanding that the capitalists pay for the crisis. This is a social-democratic utopia which will never occur under capitalism, since it is the workers and poor of the cities and countryside who will always bear the costs of the crisis and suffer police repression. Against this reformism, our program is for revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie. The PSTU's program talks about a workers and socialist alternative, but it never talks about socialist revolution. It talks about agrarian reform, but not agrarian revolution. It talks about defeating Cardoso and his neoliberal plan, not about mobilizing the international working class in the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

The PSTU's deeds, as well as its words, show that it is a reformist cover for the popular front. In April, immediately after



Landowners' private armies of jagunços (hired killers), used to terrorize landless peasants, are often made up of cops. Cops are the armed fist of the bosses!

governor Cristóvam Buarque of the PT sent cops to attack workers and landless peasants marching in Brasília, the PSTU's candidate José Maria Almeida declared at a public meeting in the same city that if there is a second round (run-off election) between Lula and Cardoso, the PSTU will vote for Lula.

In a balance sheet of the teachers' strike in the state of Rio de Janeiro, we wrote: "In order to avoid seeming 'radical,' the PSTU pushed for calling off the movement, following the prescriptions of the CUT [PT-linked labor federation] reformists. In the midst of a growing mobilization at the state and national levels...despite all the possibilities of extending the strike movement, the PSTU went hand in hand with the reformist teachers union leaders and decided on capitulation in order to attract the PT left on the eve of the PT's state convention, in an electoralist wave in the shadow of the popular front" (*Vanguarda Operária* No. 3, April-June 1998). During the General Motors strike in the U.S., the PSTU (which controls the GM workers union in São José do Campo) did nothing to paralyze production in solidarity with the strikers—whose fight, together with the strike at UPS, showed the powerful U.S. proletariat once again on the stage of the class struggle in that country and gave the lie to these Third Worldists who ignore the struggles and importance of the proletariat in the imperialist countries. In other words the PSTU are union bureaucrats with "socialist" rhetoric.

Meanwhile, when the Military Police, the armed fist of racist capitalism against the workers and oppressed, launched their "strikes" to demand more money and better conditions (arms, etc.) for carrying out their bloody work, the PSTU proclaimed to the four winds its support for the cops! Class-conscious workers must oppose the PSTU campaign. No vote to the reformists who support police "strikes"!

The Partido da Causa Operária (PCO—Workers Cause Party, linked to the Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira) talks against the popular front, but always votes for the candidates of the popular front, calling them workers and

peasants candidates when they are actually candidates of class collaboration. That was their line in 1989. That was their line in 1994. "These fake-Trotskyist popular frontists played a game of make-believe: they simultaneously criticized the Frente Brasil Popular and called for voting for the 'worker candidate Lula,' covering over the historical characterization of popular fronts, which are a class-collaborationist 'alliance' to subordinate the workers movement to bourgeois politicians and parties" (LQB *Revista Teórica* No. 1, August 1997).

Today, when Lula's alliance includes bourgeois politicians who are even further to the right, the PCO is voting for Lula once again!

In other words, the PCO's cam-

campaign is a little appendage of the popular front. The PCO gives a left cover to the popular front when it calls for a "critical" vote to Lula, who is putting into practice the program of class collaboration. This is yet another proof of the PCO's Menshevism and opposition to genuine Trotskyism. The PCO puts forward stagism to the masses and cherishes the same hope as the PSTU: that Lula may break with the bourgeoisie or in the best case that the working class, disillusioned with Lula, may accept these parties' own program, although their program was never revolutionary. Trotsky said always to "speak the truth to the masses." The PCO does the opposite.

The PCO calls for an "agrarian reform controlled by the workers," yet agrarian reforms are decreed in laws by bourgeois governments. This means that the PCO fights for bourgeois agrarian reform and not for agrarian revolution, the historic banner of Trotskyists.

Let us recall as well the fact that the PCO supported the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in the former USSR and East Europe, a great defeat for the workers of the world. "When the capitalist counterrevolution was advancing in East Europe and the former USSR in the 90s, the PCO said, in chorus with the followers of Moreno, Ernest Mandel, Guillermo Lora and other fake-leftists: 'To make an omelette you have to break some eggs'" (LQB *Revista Teórica* No. 1).

The "Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista" (LBI) talks of the *voto nulo*. It calls itself "Bolshevik," but continues to uphold the position of voting for Lula as candidate of the Frente Brasil Popular in 1989, since then it was "only" an alliance with the national bourgeoisie and supposedly not with the IMF! In other words, their politics are nationalist, putting forward a maximum of disguised Third World nationalism and not internationalism. The LBI expresses bigoted contempt for the campaigns which the LQB and LFI carry out in defense of the specially oppressed (blacks, women, Indians, homosexuals).

The real nature of the LBI is shown in its dirty alliance with

the bourgeois state in Volta Redonda, where the co-leader of its "trade-union tendency," Artur Fernandes, has spearheaded the campaign of judicial and police repression against the revolutionary workers of the LQB and the legitimate leaders of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVV). The LBI will forever be known for its dirty "defense" of the municipal guardas (police), the armed fist of the bourgeoisie, against the will of the ranks who voted the disaffiliation of the guardas in July 1996. We demand the expulsion of police of all kinds from the CUT and all the unions!

With hypocritical words against the popular front, the LBI calls for the formation of a front of "revolutionary organizations," saying: "with all our energies, we seek even before the elections to build a Revolutionary Workers Front with other tendencies which stand to the left of the Popular Front and consider themselves revolutionary." In other words, a rotten propaganda bloc with other enemies of revolutionary politics, the composition of which, if it ever materialized, would be no more than a mini-popular front, that is, the politics of a PT or PSTU in miniature. In its manifesto on the 1998 elections the LBI is still complaining about the PSTU's refusal to discuss a common electoral policy with tendencies to the left of the PT. The LBI ends its manifesto by proposing a form of Menshevik stagism from the non-payment of the foreign debt to agrarian reform (not agrarian revolution), together with statification and workers control of the financial system, the same proposals put forward by the reformist PSTU.

The "Partido Operário Revolucionário" (POR—Revolutionary Workers Party), which follows the Bolivian centrist Guillermo Lora, criticizes "the reformist opposition (PT and allies)," but wants its own "national unity" and popular front: the "Anti-Imperialist United Front"! It was under this watchword that Lora made his front with former Bolivian president, General J.J. Torres.

As Trotsky wrote, the popular front is "the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch" and "the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism."

For a Revolutionary Workers Party—Reforge the Fourth International

Fed up with the betrayals of the reformist PT, many union and youth activists have gotten stuck in the blind alley of anarchist-influenced "abstentionism," "anti-parliamentarism in principle" or "apoliticism." But to defeat bourgeois politics, the workers need proletarian politics, a party with the program, strategy and tactics of Lenin's Bolsheviks. The struggle against capitalism in Brazil can be successful only as part of the world struggle of the proletariat. The LQB, section of the League for the Fourth International, "was born out of the evolution of Luta Metalúrgica, as an organization which will tirelessly seek to build that party. A Trotskyist party in Brazil, with a heavily black component in its leadership, would have an important impact not only in this country but internationally, from Harlem to Johannesburg. We fight for a workers and peasants government as part of the Socialist United States of Latin America and the extension of revolution to our class brothers and sisters in the 'belly of the beast' in North America, Europe, Japan and throughout the world. We go forward to build the nucleus of the Trotskyist party in the fight to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution." "In Brazil, a semicolonial country characterized by uneven and combined development, with a large and combative proletariat, the theses of Trotsky's permanent revolution show the way forward for the proletariat and all the oppressed.... Join us!" (Vanguarda Operária No. 1, July-September 1996).

For workers mobilizations against the Cardoso/IMF hunger and unemployment plan!

For proletarian opposition to the popular front and class collaboration!

For a revolutionary workers party!

Reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution!

Volta Redonda, 30 September 1998

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

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De Mobutu a Kabila, presidentes "ma..."

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For Workers Mobilization Against Starvation/Repression Assault by the PRI, PAN and PRD

Mexico:

Break with the Cardenista Popular Front Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The following leaflet was distributed to workers and students at Mexico's National University (UNAM) and elsewhere this October by our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista/México.

Four years after Ernesto Zedillo became president under the cynical slogan of "prosperity for your family," the situation of Mexico's working masses continues to get worse. After more than a decade and a half of brutal austerity dictated by Washington and Wall Street's champions of the "free market" and imposed by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI—Institutional Revolutionary Party), the results speak for themselves: the buying power of the minimum wage has fallen by 76 percent since 1979 and is now half of what it was in 1939. This is obviously not a statistical illusion: millions of Mexican workers live in the most abject poverty, while mass layoffs continue. Meanwhile, the wave of financial crises shaking the world economy threatens to have serious consequences for the already impoverished Mexican economy, on top of the interminable crises which have accompanied the domestic starvation austerity policy. Despite Zedillo's hypocritical declarations that "free trade has attenuated the effects of the crisis" of 1994 (*La Jornada*, 24 October), that crisis was the direct and conscious result of the starvation policy he put forward and continues to impose on the workers.

In this context, the strike deadline set by STUNAM [the union of workers at the National University] at the end of August is nearly up. Although the STUNAM leadership wrote

that "the strike is being prepared" (*La Jornada*, 24 October), for many years their strike threats have been nothing more than a ritual. Over the last ten years, the STUNAM leadership has accepted miserable wage increases, withdrawing the strike deadline at the last minute and accepting the conditions dictated by the university authorities. This time, there should be a real strike, paralyzing the university, mobilizing the support of students and other sectors in a joint struggle with SITUAM [the Metropolitan University workers union] as part of a class-struggle mobilization against hunger, oppression and bourgeois repression. While the government boasts that there have been less strikes this year than at any time in the past twenty-five years, it is clear that the STUNAM workers must mobilize as part of a proletarian counteroffensive against the PRI-government's onslaught of starvation measures. Yet the current leaderships subordinate themselves to the rules and politicians of the bourgeois system. In order to break out of this straitjacket, it is necessary to forge a class-struggle leadership as part of the struggle for a revolutionary workers party.

The fact that 1998 saw the lowest number of strikes in twenty-five years is the direct result of the efforts of the popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD—Party of the Democratic Revolution), which now administers Mexico City in the interests of the ruling class. The Cárdenas municipal government, elected in July 1997 and openly cohabiting with the PRI regime, is the culmination of the years in which a class-collaborationist front



Internationalist photos

Marchers from STUNAM, union of National University workers, during 1998 May Day march in Mexico City.

has existed around the bourgeois nationalist PRD.

From the wave of worker and student protests in 1986-87, through the military siege against the Cananea miners, the teachers' and Sicartsa steel workers' strikes of 1989, to the recent struggles in the *maquiladora* (free-trade zone) plants, various sectors of the proletariat have demonstrated their determination to defend themselves against the attacks of the bourgeoisie and its government. However, the union leaderships, including those who claim to be leftists, have subordinated these struggles to a supposedly "democratic" sector of the bourgeoisie. The "independent" unions [i.e., those not affiliated to the government party] are subordinated to Cárdenas' bourgeois PRD, thus forming a popular front—which also serves to subordinate to this capitalist party large numbers of poor peasants, students and discontented youth, as well as the Zapatistas' rural and urban followers and virtually the entire left. Meanwhile the PRD has offered its services in negotiations on "governability" with the PRI and PAN (Partido Acción Nacional—the rightist National Action Party) in order to dispel the threat worrying the Mexican bourgeoisie, Washington and the International Monetary Fund: that social turmoil will worsen as a result of the financial crisis. The bourgeois austerity plans include a frontal attack on education. Down with the General Education Law and the National Agreement for Modernization of Basic Education, which are part of the privatization offensive!

The role of this popular front, as we wrote in the October 1997 *El Internacionista* supplement, is to "keep the unions not controlled by the government in check, by tying them to a wing

of the bourgeoisie and thus to the defense of capitalism" [see "Mexico Elections—Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism," *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997]. The supposedly "independent" union leaderships consider the PRD the leading component of the "people's" struggle against the decrepit PRI regime and therefore consider advances by the PRD as positive in the struggle for the ephemeral "transition to democracy." In addition to the fact that various former representatives of "independent unionism" are part of the Cárdenas government (such as Rosario Robles, formerly a STUNAM leader), in their May Day Manifesto the union organizations that called the independent May Day marches kept silent on the role of the PRD, just blathering against "neoliberalism" and putting forward a few democratic demands which are perfectly acceptable to the PRD demagogues. The problem is not one or another variety of capitalism, but capitalism itself. The mortal enemy of the proletariat is the bourgeoisie, including those sectors which hypocritically claim to be "friends" of labor.

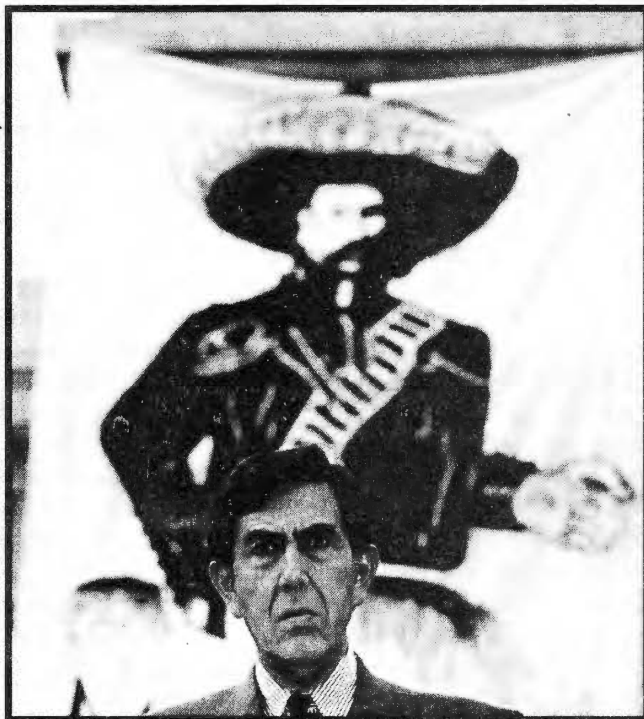
There is nothing abstract about the anti-working-class character of the popular front. With the PRD in power, attacks against the exploited and oppressed continue. For ten years we Trotskyists have warned of the real role of the popular front around the PRD, which now directly administers Mexico's capital for the exploiters. The same day that Cárdenas gave the first report of his municipal government, it was announced that hundreds of *granaderos* (riot police) had dispersed a sit-in by members of teachers union Local IX and drivers from the former Ruta 100 bus system; it was also reported that the price of tortillas had already risen 65 percent since the beginning of the year. The purchase of 750 patrol cars for the Mexico City police was announced at the same time. If the popular front fails to control social discontent from within, it does so through open repression. To be able to fight the anti-worker onslaught by the bourgeoisie and all its parties, it is urgent that the workers break with the Cardenista popular front.

30 Years After the Tlatelolco Massacre, Cárdenas Defends the Military "Institution"

Popular fronts are nothing new in history. They are class-collaborationist alliances which directly and openly subordinate working-class organizations to bourgeois politicians. One of the clearest examples was Allende's Unidad Popular in Chile. Twenty-five years after the bloodbath that followed the military coup in Chile, it is important to draw the lessons: with the myth of a "Chilean road to socialism" which meant maintaining the bourgeoisie's institutions at any cost, the Allende government tied the Chilean proletariat hand and foot and paved the way for bloody reaction. All popular fronts swear allegiance to the bourgeois state, and thus Allende time and again proclaimed his confidence in the "constitutionalist" generals, among them Augusto Pinochet, whom Allende himself made head of the army.

The popular front around the PRD in Mexico conforms to this historical rule: 30 years after the massacre of student protesters at Mexico City's Tlatelolco plaza, Cárdenas has declared that an investigation of the massacre of October 2, 1968 should put an end to "the confrontation which has existed since that time

Cuartoscuro/Impact Visuals



Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of the PRD and governor of Mexico City. Bourgeois leaders like Cárdenas wrap themselves in nationalist demagoguery to mislead workers, peasants, the poor and oppressed. Break with the Cardenista popular front!



Mexican army tanks and troops surround student protesters on 2 October 1968. Hundreds were killed in army massacre. Mexico City governor and PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas says military not to blame.

between the armed forces and important sectors of the population.... If it is made clear that individuals made the decisions which indisputably marked the administration of institutions at that time, then the institutions which were unjustly blamed and continue to be blamed will be cleared." For Cárdenas, following the class interests he represents, the most important thing is to defend the armed forces, the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. According to Cárdenas, "It is unfair that since October 2, 1968, the army has been burdened with responsibility for the massacre." These declarations are made precisely when the Mexican army continues to carry out daily actions of intimidation, persecution and provocation against the insurgent Indians in the south and west of the country; the bloodstained army in the service of the bourgeoisie has carried out attacks against the indigenous and peasant populations that support guerilla groups like the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) and the EPR (Revolutionary People's Army).

Historical experience shows that it is fundamental for the proletariat to mobilize its power on the basis of class independence. To do so it necessary to break with the bourgeoisie. To

fight for the interests of the working class and all the oppressed, against repression of the peasants and Indians, for the emancipation of women, for a genuine future for youth, against all the misery of this capitalist society, it is necessary to forge a revolutionary leadership, a party like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

Unchain the Power of the Proletariat!

For decades, the bureaucracy of the *charros* [pro-government "union" leaders] has played a key role in maintaining the semi-bonapartist PRI-government regime. The *charro*-controlled corporatist "unions" are part of the PRI, the government party, and function as a straitjacket to imprison the proletariat. The everyday role of the Mexican Workers Federation (CTM), as well as the other "labor federations" (such as the CROC, the COR and the CROM) instituted by the state to maintain and assure its control over the workers movement, is to serve as labor contractors and often as hired gun thugs for the bosses. Their main objective is to block any attempts at independent workers organization in order to impose the discipline of capital on the exploited. In order to offer up a disciplined work force, the CTM tops finger potential activists and expel them from the plants, repeatedly organizing squads of thugs to suppress any protest.

As part of the extended crisis of the PRI regime, and especially since the death of CTM boss Fidel Velázquez last year, the CTM's total control over the Mexican proletariat has been coming apart. In this situation, the task of controlling the proletariat is now continued by the supposed dissidents of the Congress of Labor (CT). Yet these neo-*charros* seek only to

do a better job of serving the regime. A clear example of this is Hernández Juárez of the telephone workers union: as the new "co-secretary" of the recently formed neo-*charro* National Workers Union (UNT), this distinguished "labor" representative is part of the board of directors of Teléfonos de México and has enriched himself at the cost of mass layoffs and the company's streamlining program.

As the great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote in his notes on "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940): "In Mexico the trade unions have been transformed by law into semistate institutions and have, in the nature of things, assumed a semitotalitarian character." The neo-*charros* of the UNT seek to play a role similar to that of the corporatist CTM in the new context of a predominantly privatized economy. The May First Inter-Union Coordinating Committee (Intersindical), which includes various "independent" union groups (STUNAM, SITUAM, CNTE, FAT, etc.), seeks to chain the power of the working class in a different way: by subordinating it politically to the back-up team of the ruling class—the Cardenistas. As Trotsky pointed out, "In the



CTM a "legitimate union"? Ask the *maquiladora* workers. Women workers at Sony subsidiary Magnéticos de México in Nuevo Laredo fight off attempts by corporatist CTM "union" bureaucrats to bus in scabs during April 1994 strike.

epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution." In other words, Trotsky pointed out that the struggle for genuine class independence can be carried out only under revolutionary leadership. This means a struggle, on the basis of the class-struggle program, against all the leaderships which under one or another label (UNT, Intersindical, Foro, etc.) seek to tie the workers to one or another sector of the capitalist class wearing a "democratic" disguise.

However, for years Trotskyism has been associated in Mexico with the case-hardened social democrats of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party [formed by followers of the late Ernest Mandel]). While they could, these practitioners of parliamentary cretinism claimed to be intransigent opponents of the PRI-government regime, at the same time as they financed their party activities with a subsidy provided by the state. Yet their program of tailism and spreading social-democratic illusions led them straight into the arms of the Cardenistas. While today the PRT has virtually disappeared, its slow death has involved the most abject capitulation to the Cárdenas popular front. At first the PRT was not formally a part of the popular front, although it made bombastic pronouncements on the "citizen rebellion against the PRI system" in order to push support to the "democrat" Cárdenas; more recently they presented candidates on the PRD slate, boasting of their alliance with this bourgeois party and trampling on everything Trotsky wrote about popular fronts and the obligation of revolutionaries to combat them.

Until a couple of years ago, the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) was the only left organization that offered a genuine program for revolutionary struggle based on the power of the proletariat and the political legacy of Lenin and Trotsky.

Key to this program was the struggle to mobilize the strength of the powerful Mexican proletariat at the head of all the exploited and oppressed. To do away with *charro* control of the labor movement and to take an important step towards the complete independence of the working class, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, upheld the following: "Against repression and the onslaught of starvation austerity, it is crucial today to *elect workers committees*—independent of the bourgeois parties, including the PRD—to *break the corporatist stranglehold* of the CTM (which functions as the PRI's labor police) over the working class, *smash the wage limits* and fight to triple the minimum wage and for a sliding scale of wages against inflation"

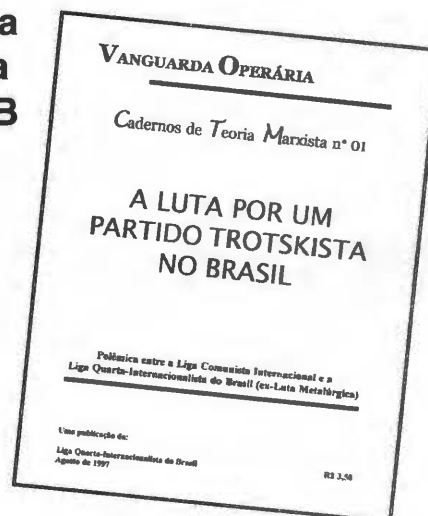
(*Espartaco* supplement, February 1995). It emphasized that a real break with the popular front required forging a Leninist party of the proletariat, to serve as the "tribune of the people" that mobilizes the power of the working class against every kind of oppression, in the fight for socialist revolution.

For a Genuine Trotskyist Party in Mexico

However, since the expulsions of the Spartacist cadres who later formed the Internationalist Group, the politics of the GEM have abruptly changed as part of the revision of one

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historic position after another, corresponding to the growing political degeneration of the ICL. Now, for example, in a series of public classes and other events GEM spokesmen have unabashedly stated that the corporatist "unions" of the CTM "are a legitimate part of the workers movement." This absurd position is a suicidal illusion: to believe that the *charros*—those responsible for imposing the bourgeoisie's white terror on the proletariat and stopping all attempts at independent class organization—are part of the workers movement is equivalent to saying that the assassins who killed the striker Cleto Nigno at the Cuautitlán Ford plant (near Mexico City) during the 1989 strike are a "legitimate" part of the workers movement.

It is equivalent to saying that the gangs of thugs that keep the *maquiladora* workers under constant threats and repression, in order to prevent them from forming independent unions, play as "legitimate" a role as the workers fighting for their rights. In recent months, in Los Reyes, near Mexico City, workers at the Itapsa autoparts factory have had to face CTM thugs who tried to break their unionization campaign. Let the GEM tell them that the CTM is a real "union"! This line means crudely prettifying the corporatist apparatus of the bourgeois state.

The GEM's line change on the nature of the CTM is not only the result of an inability to see the class line and identify the role of the corporatist "unions." It is the result of a previous revision: the GEM abandoned the historic position of the ICL on the popular front in Mexico. For nearly ten years, the Grupo Espartaquista de México was the only left group that maintained a policy of consistent opposition to class collaboration and, in particular, to the subordination of a sector of the proletariat to Cárdenas' bourgeois nationalist PRD in a popular front. Marching against the current, the GEM was the only organization to uphold the class principle of proletarian opposition to all popular fronts, thereby earning the enmity of the whole gamut of organizations that, while claiming to be revolutionary, in practice capitulated—and continue to capitulate—to this class-collaborationist alliance.

But to say there is a popular front in Mexico means you have to fight it. In accordance with the ICL's new orientation, the GEM leadership has abandoned this task. Thus in July 1997, when Cárdenas was elected governor of Mexico City—that is, when genuine Trotskyists were faced with the duty to warn the proletariat of the danger posed by subordinating its struggle to a

sector of the bourgeoisie and call on it to break with the popular front—the GEM took a dive and declared that in Mexico there is not and has not been a popular front around the bourgeois PRD. In doing so it not only threw overboard a fundamental part of what the GEM's politics had been since its foundation, but abandoned the struggle against the poisonous influence of popular frontism within the working class.

The ICL and its Mexican section went into crisis after the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. From that historic defeat of the proletariat, they drew *defeatist* conclusions, undertaking a centrist course. Arguing that there is a historic and qualitative regression in the consciousness of the world working class, the ICL abandons the fundamental thesis on which Trotsky's Fourth International was founded: that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. After betraying an important class battle in Brazil, the ICL has tried to cover its tracks with a frenzied attempt to sabotage the defense of the Brazilian Trotskyists against bourgeois repression. For more than a year they devoted enormous efforts to distorting the theory of permanent revolution, the cornerstone of Trotskyism, absurdly arguing that feudalism and semi-feudalism continue to exist in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. Recently they have traitorously abandoned the call for the independence of Puerto Rico.

The Internationalist Group, on the other hand, continues the fight for the revolutionary Marxism of our time: Trotskyism. As part of the League for the Fourth International, we struggle to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership by reforging the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky. Armed with the program of permanent revolution, the proletariat can win the impoverished Mexican peasantry to its struggle and lead the fight for a workers and peasants government as part of the Socialist United States of Latin America, extending the revolution to the south and the north, to the powerful proletariat of the United States. The crisis of the semi-bonapartist regime in Mexico provides important opportunities for building the revolutionary party, fighting clearly and resolutely against the bourgeois popular front and its henchmen of the opportunist left. This is our task!

Mobilize the working class against repression and starvation austerity!

Break with the Cardenista popular front!

For a revolutionary workers party! Reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution!

Grupo Internacionalista/México
League for the Fourth International

Uma obra imprescindível

**James P. Cannon,
A Revolução Russa
e o movimento
negro norte-americano**

Tradução e edição
anotada da LQB

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Brasil

"The bloc of leaders of the Spanish working class with the left bourgeoisie does not include in it anything 'national,' for it does not differ in the least from the 'Popular Front' in France, Czechoslovakia, Brazil or China."

—Leon Trotsky, "The Treachery of the POUM"
(January 1936)



Maurice Rivenbark/St. Petersburg Times

Riot cops in St. Petersburg, Florida during protests after black youth Tyrone Lewis was shot to death by trigger-happy traffic cops in October 1996.

continued from page 72

understood in isolation from the social, economic and political context of U.S. imperialism. While the media and politicians still prattle about the "American dream," the evidence is everywhere of capitalist decay: real wages falling steadily for the last quarter century, mass homelessness, the resurgence of diseases of poverty (asthma, TB). What is necessary to defeat this whole capitalist *system* of racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-woman, anti-worker oppression is international *socialist revolution*.

Death Penalty Is Racist Terror Machine

Pennsylvania's Republican governor Tom Ridge (who was just re-elected) has vowed to sign a death warrant for Mumia as soon as he got a green light from the courts. An application has been filed with the Pennsylvania high court to rehear Jamal's appeal, and an appeal to the federal courts is being prepared. Such legal appeals are necessary, but there must be no illusions in the role of the capitalist courts. Many liberals and reformist pseudo-socialists try to duck the fight for Mumia's freedom by calling only for a "new trial." This was the position taken by a recent full-page ad in the *New York Times* titled, "Should Mumia Abu-Jamal be executed . . . Or should he receive a new trial? You Be the Judge." Yet the decades-long cop and judicial persecution of Mumia Abu-Jamal should make it clear that there can be no "fair trial" in the capitalist courts for this fighter for black freedom.

Brutally beaten and critically wounded by a cop's bullet through his chest, Mumia's real "crime" is that he lived after the police tried to kill him 16 years ago, and that he has continued to tell the truths that they want silenced. Jamal was hounded by the capitalist state from the time when as a young teenager he protested racist Alabama governor George Wallace. At the age of 15, he was put on the FBI's Security Index of those deemed a

"threat" to "national security" for his role as Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. Two years later, Mumia's name was added to the Administrative Index of those to be rounded up and thrown in concentration camps in a "national emergency." For years he was tracked by the government's COINTELPRO program of infiltration and provocation.

Later, as a radio reporter, Jamal was hated by long-time Philly police chief and mayor Frank Rizzo for exposing Rizzo's 1978 siege of a commune of the MOVE organization. Seven years later, Philadelphia police dropped an incendiary explosive on another MOVE commune, destroying 62 homes in a black neighborhood in the firestorm that followed while burning to death eleven black women, children and men. This cold-blooded state murder was approved by Philly's black

Democratic mayor (Wilson Goode) and the explosives were supplied to the cops by Reagan's "Justice" Department. While preaching "family values," the bourgeois state celebrated Mother's Day 1985 by incinerating black mothers and their children—a graphic demonstration of what it has in store for those among the down-trodden who "get out of line."

A key role in the drive to kill Mumia is being played by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the political action arm of the racist killer cops. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is filled with justices who are endorsed by the FOP. "Hanging Judge" Albert Sabo, who ran the trial and sentenced Mumia, sentenced more than twice as many men to death as any other sitting judge in the U.S.; Sabo is a former sheriff and retired member of the FOP. The district attorney at the time Mumia was thrown in jail in 1981, falsely accused in the killing of a Philadelphia cop, was Ed Rendell; today Rendell is mayor. Rendell's wife is a judge on the federal district court. Presiding over Jamal's arraignment in 1981 was municipal judge Lynne Abraham; today Abraham is Philly's district attorney, known for asking the death penalty more often than any other D.A. in the country. The assistant D.A. who prosecuted Mumia, Joseph McGill, is now a lawyer for the FOP. They all mesh together as gears in the capitalist state murder machine.

On the top of the heap is President Bill Clinton, who regularly attends FOP conventions in order to pose with the cops. Recall that Clinton interrupted his 1992 presidential election campaign to return to Arkansas to deny an appeal for clemency by Ricky Ray Rector, a mentally retarded death row inmate. The Democratic Clinton administration has vastly increased the number of federal crimes subject to the death penalty, and in the "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" of 1996 it drastically curtailed the ability of death row inmates to appeal to federal courts over violations of their rights

in the state courts. The Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that states could execute prisoners who were innocent as long as certain constitutional procedures were followed. And according to the 1996 law, executions can go forward if the violations of defendants' constitutional rights are deemed not "unreasonable"!

Following the recent court decision, Jamal wrote in a statement from death row: "Once again, Pennsylvania's highest court has shown us the best justice that FOP money can buy." He added:

"I remain innocent. A court cannot make an innocent man guilty. Any ruling founded on injustice is not justice. The righteous fight for life, liberty, and for justice can only continue."

Philadelphia District Attorney Abraham absurdly declared that no innocent people are sentenced to die. The "Deadliest D.A." in the city that is the "capital of capital punishment" (*New York Times Magazine*) said of death row inmates, "They don't deserve to live." Yet since 1977, federal courts have overturned more than *one-third* of all death sentences issued by



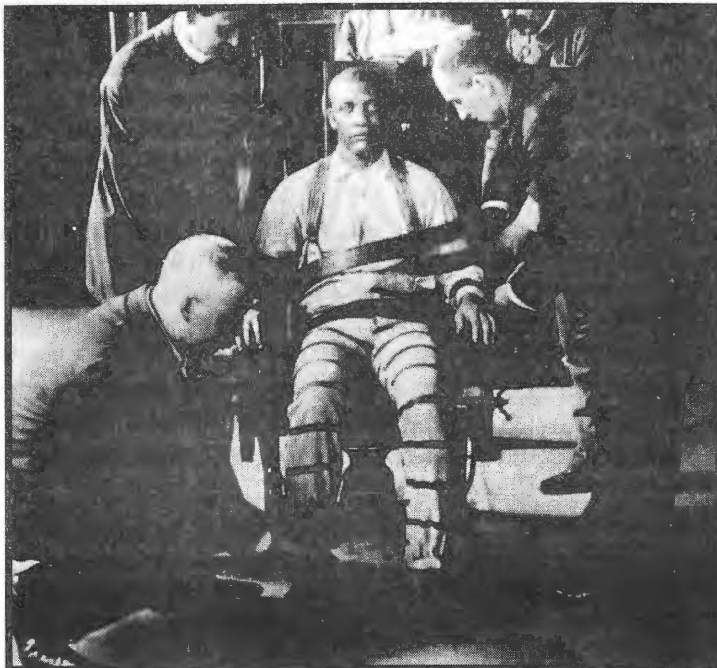
Danny Lyon/Magnum

Smash the Racist Death Penalty! Death row prisoners subjected to mass search in Ellis 1 Unit at Huntsville, Texas.

state courts. And still the death row population keeps growing: going from 2,400 when Mumia wrote a 1991 article for the *Yale Law Review* to 3,000 in 1994 when his book *Live from Death Row* was published to over 3,300 today.

The death penalty in the U.S. is inherently racist. When a 1987 appeal by Warren McClesky (a black man sentenced to death in the killing of a white cop) cited a study by David Baldus showing that those accused of killing whites were more than four times as likely to be condemned to death as those accused of killing blacks, the U.S. Supreme Court under Chief Justice Rehnquist dismissed such facts as "irrelevant." McClesky's appeal was rejected because consideration of such blatant discrimination "throws into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system." In Pennsylvania, the bulk of death row inmates are from Philadelphia and 83 percent of them are black. A recent (June 1998) study by Baldus showed that black defendants were sentenced to death four times more often than whites, while a black defendant in Philadelphia in the same legal position as Mumia was 14.6 times more likely to get a death sentence.

In fact, the prosecution in Mumia's case peremptorily struck 11 out of 14 potential black jurors, while Judge Sabo removed another. In 1987, the Philadelphia district attorney's office prepared a video instructing prosecutors on how to eliminate poor blacks from juries. In the 1995 hearings of his death sentence appeal, when Jamal's attorneys attempted to subpoena court officials to testify



Impact Visuals

Legal lynching: Black man executed in 1900.

about the numbers of black and white inmates on death row, arguing that his conviction was the product of racial bias, Judge Sabo refused.

Mobilize the Power of Labor

From the late 19th century on, the American ruling class has used the death penalty as a centerpiece of political repression designed to intimidate and outlaw radical opposition to its rule. There were the *Haymarket martyrs* in Chicago, as the bourgeoisie sought to squelch the movement for an eight-hour day; IWW leader *Joe Hill*, executed at the height of the imperialist war fever in 1915; Italian anarchist workers *Nicola Sacco* and *Bartolomeo Vanzetti* during the post-World War I anti-immigrant "red scare"; *Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* during the post-World War II McCarthyite anti-communist witchhunt. Mumia Abu-Jamal put on death row in the backlash against black militancy following the end of the Vietnam War.

This history also underscores the fact that when U.S. rulers were forced to temporarily halt use of the death penalty, in 1972, it was amid widespread antiwar agitation and following major upheavals in black ghettos across the U.S. Executions were resumed in 1976 in the subsequent period of reaction as U.S. imperialism sought to restore its power in the wake of its humiliating defeat at the hands of Vietnamese peasants and workers.

The same pattern can be seen in the granting and taking away of abortion rights for women, of affirmative action for racial minorities. The winning and losing of rights of the exploited and oppressed reflects the course of the class struggle. The capitalist rulers want Mumia dead so their cops can continue to terrorize America's inner cities like slave plantations. They want to stamp out black radicalism which has haunted Washington ever since chattel slavery was abolished in the Civil War. J. Edgar Hoover vowed to prevent the rise of a "black Messiah" as his FBI gunned down and jailed the Black Panthers, protected the

murderers of Malcolm X and viciously persecuted even the liberal Martin Luther King. Just as the plantation owners lived in fear of a slave revolt, the bourgeoisie wants to banish the spectre of revolution by what Karl Marx called its *wage slaves*.

In the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal we face powerful forces. In order to wage such a battle successfully you have to *know your enemy*, and also to *know your own strength*. Recently, U.S. capitalism has been riding high. Reveling in the counterrevolution that toppled Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the imperialists proclaimed the "death of communism." Today, American imperialism acts as global policeman, declaring itself the defender of "human rights" as the butchers of Vietnam threaten to rain down high-tech "smart" bombs on Panama, Iraq, Serbia. Their power rests on intimidating their subjects into submission. But as financial speculators engage in a wild "dance of the millions" on Wall Street, bringing world capitalism to the brink of a crash, they are in fact dependent on the tens of millions of working people who make the wheels of industry, commerce and finance turn, and who can also bring them to a screeching halt. That is *our* power, and we must know how to wield it.

Freedom for Mumia and the abolition of the death penalty will not be won in the capitalist courts. Although we are obliged to do battle there, this is the terrain of the class enemy. What is crucial is to mobilize the tremendous power of the *international working class* in battle against the capitalists and their state power. This was the strategy of the International Labor Defense (ILD) set up by the Communist (Workers) Party in the mid-1920s in conjunction with the International Red Aid, affiliated with the Communist International. The first leader of the ILD was James P. Cannon, who was expelled from the CP in 1928 for Trotskyism. The ILD brought thousands into the streets to defend San Francisco labor leaders Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, and to defend more than 200 arrested textile strikers in Passaic, New Jersey.

The biggest mobilization by the International Labor Defense under Cannon's leadership was to save the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti from the executioner. An appeal to American labor in the *Labor Defender* (July 1926) by veteran socialist Eugene Debs thundered against "the refined malice and barbaric cruelty of these capitalist tribunals high and low" who went after the "'foreign labor agitator' in the hydrophobic madness of the world war." During 1926-27, the ILD and allied labor groups brought out 15,000, 20,000 and 25,000 workers in New York City on different occasions for Sacco and Vanzetti, as well tens of thousands more in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Seattle and elsewhere around the country. Around the world, affiliates of the International Red Aid held huge demonstrations of 30,000 in London's Hyde Park, as well as in Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, and a two-day strike in Buenos Aires, Argentina demanding life and freedom



Internationalist photo

Internationalist Group supporters at November 7 Philadelphia demonstration demand "Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!"

for Sacco and Vanzetti.

Cannon pointed out that if it weren't for these mass mobilizations "the judicial vultures of Massachusetts might long ago have seized and demolished their prey." In an article on "Class Against Class in the Sacco and Vanzetti Case" (*Labor Defender*, September 1927), the head of the ILD declared:

"No faith in capitalist justice and institutions! That is the lesson of history confirmed by every development in the Sacco and Vanzetti case.

"Organize the protest movement on a wider scale and with more determined spirit!"

Despite the thunderous protest from around the world, America's rulers executed the two courageous Italian anarchist workers. In other cases, such as that of the nine Scottsboro black youths who faced the death penalty in Alabama in the early 1930s, a crescendo of international workers protests managed to stay the hangman's noose although the frame-up victims languished in jail for years. Mass demonstrations and the mobilization of labor's *power* are crucial in the fight to save class war prisoners. But it will take a socialist revolution to sweep away the death penalty and the whole system of racist injustice forever. For the capitalist system cannot survive without a massive repressive apparatus—the myriad cops, courts, secret police and armed forces that constitute the core of the bourgeois state. This is all the truer in capitalism's deepening decay, when it no longer holds out a treacherous "dream" of prosperity and equality that it will never fulfill.

When a warrant for Mumia's execution was issued in June 1995 by Pennsylvania governor Ridge, there was an outpouring of opposition from labor organizations around the world. In South Africa, where the death penalty was a mainstay of the hated regime of apartheid slavery (it was ruled unconstitutional in 1995), virtually all the major unions joined the clamor to save Jamal. In Italy and France, national labor federations took up his cause. Journalists' unions around the world came out for their fellow writer. This was a token of the kind of protest by workers and the oppressed that will be necessary to free Mumia, but it is only a token. Now those fine words must be turned into action, into mass struggle in the streets.

Within the limits of our modest forces, the sections of the League for the Fourth International are seeking to carry out this program. Our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have organized a labor-centered demonstration on November 7 in the steel center of Volta Redonda, calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and linking the fight against the racist death penalty in the U.S. with the fight against killer cops in Brazil. In Mexico, the Grupo Internacionalista introduced a resolution calling to join international protest demanding Mumia's freedom which was passed by an assembly of 150 students in the Science Faculty of the National University, as well as calling on unions to make urgent protests over the renewed threat to Jamal's life. In the U.S., the Internationalist Group has participated in several demonstrations, calling to *Mobilize Working-Class Power to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal*.

While abolition of the death penalty is a democratic question, the fight against it must be waged on a revolutionary *class* program. As the U.S. Supreme Court declared in 1986, from the other side of the class divide, opposition to the inherently racist death penalty throws into question the underpinnings of the entire criminal "justice" system in the United States. Liberal death penalty abolitionists like Amnesty International pretend that the U.S. could simply be like the rest of the West and do without legalized state murder. Yet there is a reason why the United States is the only ad-



Labor Defender

Worldwide demonstrations by thousands of leftists, labor and black activists during 1931-33 saved nine black youth in Scottsboro, Alabama from legal lynching.



Labor Defender

Huge workers demonstrations throughout U.S., Europe and in Latin America in 1927-28 demanded freedom for anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti. Above: 20,000 jammed into New York's Union Square.

vanced capitalist country today with capital punishment: the death penalty in the U.S. is inherently racist because it is a *product of slavery*.

In putting an end to the period of Radical Reconstruction following the Civil War, the Northern and Southern wings of the American bourgeoisie adopted a three-pronged program to keep down the newly freed blacks while formally maintaining the constitutional amendments that declared the former slaves to be full citizens: on the legal plane, rigid *Jim Crow segregation laws* (under the fiction of "separate but equal") along with de facto disenfranchisement through the *poll tax*; economically by reestablishing the plantation economy through *sharecropping*; and using the extra-legal terror of the *Ku Klux Klan*, in which the slave driver was replaced by nightriding lynchers (many of them former Confederate Army men) who terrorized the black population throughout the region. The death penalty is the continuation of this terror through *legal lynching*.

It took a Second American Revolution, the Civil War, to abolish slavery. Today it will take a workers revolution to get rid of the death penalty forever, as legal lynching is key to a whole system of racist repression. What is required is *black liberation through socialist revolution*. Such a program of *revolutionary integrationism*, of common class struggle against racial oppression, is sharply counterposed to black

nationalism, which from Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan *accepts* and seeks to profit from the existing segregation and discrimination. Today Farrakhan stages "reconciliation" spectacles in Philadelphia with Mayor Ed Rendell on the stage as honored guest.

Revolutionary class struggle is needed to bring down the whole edifice of legal and extra-legal oppression of blacks and other minorities. The death penalty goes together with cop executions in the streets; enforcing a two-tier economy where large numbers of blacks, Latinos and immigrants are relegated to sweatshop wages or unemployment. To lead this class struggle, a Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat must be built which can act as a "tribune of the people" in championing the cause of all the oppressed. Only by fighting for the liberation of women, for genuine equal rights for gays, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, legal and "illegal," can such a genuinely communist party carry out the program of the *Communist Manifesto*, written 150 years ago, to build a society of abundance and equality in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

It is such a party that the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International seek to build as we fight today to *Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now* and to *Abolish the Racist Death Penalty*. ■

Mobilize Working-Class Power

**FREE MUMIA
ABU-JAMAL
NOW!**

Terry/Gamma-Liaison



Court Rejects Former Black Panther's Appeal

NOVEMBER 6—Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and renowned radical journalist who has been on Pennsylvania's death row for the last 16 years, has become the focus of the struggle against the racist death penalty in the United States and internationally. After the Pennsylvania Supreme Court last week rejected Jamal's appeal for a new trial, an order for his execution could be signed at any moment. The high priests of this system of racist injustice, presiding over their august chambers in black robes, may think they have the final say in who lives and who dies. Yet they and the blood-drenched ruling class they represent can be defeated by the *power of the working class*. The Internationalist Group calls on labor, fighters for the oppressed and all defenders of democratic rights to take to the streets to demand: *Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!* and *Down with the racist death penalty!*

The unanimous decision by the Pennsylvania high court is an indication that America's racist rulers have decided to push now for the execution of Jamal. Even from behind bars, his powerful denunciations of inhumanity and injustice have mightily disturbed them. They barred his searing commentaries from National Public Radio so that his voice would not be heard. Mumia's book, *Live from Death Row*, an indictment of the barbarous U.S. prison system, has been translated into numerous languages. After its publication, prison authorities cut off his access to the press and took away his writing materials hoping that his words would not be read. And the capitalist courts and politicians quickly stepped up the drive to *silence*

forever this eloquent "voice of the voiceless." They say Mumia Abu-Jamal must die. *We say Mumia must live!*

Everyone should understand: this fight is not *just* against a bunch of kill-crazy cops, a hanging judge and a tight-knit clique of local bigwigs who run the misnamed "city of brotherly love" through police terror. All of those elements are *there*, of course. But this Philadelphia story goes beyond the Main Line suburbs, where the bankers and insurance company executives who own Philly live, to the citadels of American capitalism, Washington and Wall Street. The fight to save Mumia is at bottom a *class* question. As the rich get enormously *richer*, and the poor get poorer—both under Republicans Reagan and Bush and Democrat Clinton—the capitalists need a *beefed-up* repressive apparatus. Here the death penalty plays a *key* role along with police forces that routinely execute *hundreds* of minority youth in the ghettos and barrios. We have to *rip Mumia* out of the clutches of this capitalist *state murder machine*.

And the official terror goes hand in hand with the *unofficial* terror in the streets against racial minorities, against homosexuals, against women, against immigrants. It goes together with the lynching of James Byrd, Jr. by KKK fascists in Texas *last June*. It goes together with the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming because he was gay. It goes together with the *assassination* of Dr. Barnet Slepian in a suburb of Buffalo, New York, because he provided abortion services for women. The *case* of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the death penalty in general, *cannot be*

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Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!