

*The*

*Special Supplement*

March 2000

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# Internationalist



## Mexico

### The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution



Comité de Huelga/Facultad de Ciencias

In the face of media barrage and government threats, tens of thousands of striking students of Mexico's National University march for free public higher education, 5 November 1999.

**Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front!  
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

# Introduction

The ten-month student strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) has been a central political event in that country, whose explosive social volatility—intensified by the drawn-out death agony of the semibonapartist regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which has ruled Mexico for seven decades—continues to plague the strategists of imperialist “order.” The Mexican rulers’ attempt to exclude vast numbers of poor and working-class students from Latin America’s largest university is part of an international drive that extends from New York City to the Southern Cone of Latin America to Europe.

The impact of the UNAM strike went far beyond the students, highlighting burning social questions including mass impoverishment, the government’s system of corporatist control over labor and the uprising of Zapatista Indian rebels in the southern state of Chiapas. Demonstrations in support of the strike brought out between 40,000 and 100,000 protestors on a series of occasions, and included trade unionists, slumdwellers and Indian organizations. One of the most significant developments was the formation of sizeable worker-student defense guards during a crucial juncture in the strike. The Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, played a key role in initiating the worker guards, both in the students’ Strike General Council (CGH) and with the participating unions.

Ever-present in the struggle was the spectre of the 1968 massacre of hundreds of student protestors at Mexico City’s Tlatelolco plaza. Mexico’s increasing militarization, “made in U.S.A.” through massive infusions of weaponry from *El Norte*, was highlighted by the creation of a militarized federal police force (PFP). The PFP’s debut was to arrest almost one thousand of the courageous student strikers, first at a UNAM-affiliated preparatory school on February 1 and then invading Ciudad Universitaria on February 6. It is noteworthy that the day before this wave of repression by Mexico’s capitalist rulers, defense minister Enrique Cervantes Aguirre paid a previously unannounced visit to Washington to “exchange information” and further “collaboration” with the Pentagon.

The strike provided graphic illustration of the nature and role of the bourgeois-nationalist “opposition” party of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which after seeking to derail the struggle spearheaded open scabherding and sent the *granadero* riot police of the Mexican capital—governed by the PRD since 1997—to violently repress CGH demonstrators. A distinctive feature of the Grupo

Internacionalista’s intervention has been the call to break from the “popular front” around the PRD, which has chained workers unions, peasant groups and the dominant sectors of the student strikers to the politicians and institutions of the capitalist class. The fight for the political independence of the working class is crucial to forging a revolutionary workers party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution.

Drawing the lessons of this struggle—which became the central shaping experience for tens of thousands of student youth, many of whom are now looking for revolutionary answers—is a key task for communists. In March 2000, the GI published an extensive *El Internacionalista* pamphlet, *La huelga de la UNAM y la lucha por la revolución obrera*, on the lessons of the strike. This special supplement to *The Internationalist* is based largely on that pamphlet, together with a range of previous statements and leaflets published by our comrades in Mexico.

The struggle was a crucial test for the entire range of left tendencies in Mexico, and the Spanish-language pamphlet includes a detailed critique of their positions and actions. The polemical materials in the final part of this supplement, excerpted from the *El Internacionalista* pamphlet, focus largely on the line taken by the Mexican group of the International Communist League. The Spanish-language pamphlet also includes an analysis of the plans of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which have played a central role in the drive to privatize education. To obtain a copy, send US\$2 to the Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

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## *The* Internationalist



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Special Supplement



March 2000

## ***Urgent: Mobilize International Workers Protest!***

# **Mexican Cops Launch All-Out Attack on UNAM Strike, Over 600 Arrested**

Dulio Rodriguez/La Jornada



**Parents of arrested student strikers confront police at UNAM's Ciudad Universitaria on February 6, demanding their children be released.**

Beginning shortly after 6 a.m., this morning, February 6, more than 2,500 troops of Mexico's Federal Police (PPF) invaded the main campus of the National University (UNAM) and seized hundreds of student strikers. Backing up the militarized national police were some 500 Federal District (Mexico City) riot police, while police and army helicopters circled overhead. This sinister assault on the strikers organized in the Strike General Council (CGH), who have held out for nearly ten months in the barricaded

campus, must be fought with an outpouring of international protest, particularly mobilizing the power of the workers movement.

The arrested CGH supporters were packed onto more than a dozen buses and into black Suburban police vans. Parents of the students rushed to the Ciudad Universitaria campus, and several were arrested as they tried to block the buses from leaving. At present (3 p.m., Mexico City time) more than 400 family members and supporters of the students are gathered outside the federal attorney's offices in Azcapotzalco, where many strikers are being held, while hundreds more are protesting the arrests outside the headquarters of the federal attorney's office in downtown Mexico City, where 173 strikers are being held. A march has been called this evening heading to the Zócalo, the capital's main square.

Today, with close to 1,000 Mexican student strikers in jail and facing years in prison, we issue an urgent call for international working-class protest.

**Free the Mexican Student Strikers Now!  
Drop the Charges!**

**Mexican Army Out of Chiapas  
and the UNAM!**

**Mobilize Working-Class Power  
Against Repression and Privatization!**

The students face charges of "criminal association" and "plundering" the UNAM, while a number are charged with "sedition." In addition, 430 arrest orders were secretly issued last week for individual strikers. Another 251 striking students are already in jail, having been seized by the PFP February 1 in a violent cop assault on the Preparatoria 3 junior college. Most have been charged with "terrorism," and the government has refused to release any on bail. Following the dawn attack on the UNAM, the federal attorney general grotesquely declared that his aim was to facilitate "dialogue" and the "rule of reason." He also cynically said the cop assault was in order to "safeguard" the National University, like U.S. imperialists bombed Vietnamese villages in order to "save" them from Communism!

Dozens more students are facing up to 40 years in jail on charges of "mutiny" for participating in a demonstration outside the U.S. embassy last December 11 to defend protesters against the World Trade Organization arrested in Seattle and demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and renowned radical journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. A big banner demanding Jamal's freedom hangs from the Faculty of Medicine in Ciudad Universitaria.

Several supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International (LFI), are among those arrested, including GI spokesman José Alberto Fonseca. The GI has called since the beginning of the strike for it to be extended to university workers and key sectors of the labor movement, notably electrical workers. Last summer, the GI was instrumental in sparking the formation of workers defense guards that defended UNAM installations against threatened police-army attack. In recent days, the GI has highlighted the call for working-class mobilization against the mounting anti-strike repression.

Last week, following the police attack on Prepa 3, the Internationalist Group called an emergency picket outside the Mexican consulate in New York. An IG press statement noted:

"The PFP is a newly created police force consisting mainly of army troops. Thus, as in 1968, *the Mexican army is again occupying National University installations*. From the beginning of the UNAM strike, the spectre of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre in which the army slaughtered hundreds of student protesters has been ever-present. We demand: **No new 1968 massacre!**"

UNAM, the largest university in Latin America with over 270,000 students and 100,000 employees, has been struck for 291 days by students demanding free higher public education. The university administration, headed first by Rector Francisco Barnés de Castro and after his resignation in November by Juan Ramón de la Fuente, refused to grant the students' six-point list of demands. Instead, the authorities tried to undercut the strike by "suspending" the drastic fee increase that sparked the strike, leaving the way open to reimpose it after protest died down.

Both Barnés and De la Fuente are former top federal government officials who were in charge of privatizing state-owned industries, the first in the petrochemical industry and the second in the public health system. In addition, as the cabinet member in charge of health De la Fuente presided over a program of forced sterilization of Indian women in the state of Guerrero, a region of extensive peasant and guerrilla struggles.

To give a cover for the police-state crackdown, De la Fuente organized a plebiscite, a favorite pseudo-democratic device of bonapartist dictators. This *referendum for repression* was also supported by the bourgeois-nationalist "opposition" party, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and by so-called "moderate" student leaders linked to the PRD. With this "mandate," hardliners in the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has governed Mexico uninterruptedly for more than 70 years, called for sending in the police. A parade of bishops and other Catholic church officials chimed in.

The UNAM strikers' fight for open admissions is not just a local struggle but confronts plans designed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to privatize large segments of public education in Latin America and elsewhere. The Mexican government had agreed to impose tuition at UNAM in 1999 in exchange for a loan from the World Bank. While claiming it has to impose tuition that would exclude tens of thousands of poor and working-class students from the National University, the government is pouring close to \$90 billion into bailing out bankrupt privatized banks, more than 100 times the entire UNAM budget.

The attack on Mexico's poor and working people is not limited to the UNAM strike. Already on the agenda is the government's attempt to privatize the electrical energy industry, which has provoked mass marches by tens of thousands of electrical workers. The SME electrical workers union has supported the UNAM students' struggle for free public higher education, including sending several hundred union members to participate in worker-student defense guards when a government attack was threatened last July. SME workers are presently in contract negotiations, and many have children among the arrested student strikers. *The electrical workers must bring to bear their tremendous power to combat the repression.*

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Protest demonstration called by Internationalist Group in New York City, February 7, against mass arrests of UNAM student strikers in Mexico.

## Population Seizes Police, Forces Release of Students

# El Mexe: Rebellion in Hidalgo

FEBRUARY 23—The spectacular events of recent days in the town of Tepatepec, in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo, have poured a bucket of cold water on the repressive triumphalism of the government. For more than two weeks the regime's kept press extolled the "surgical" takeover of the National University (UNAM) ordered by president Ernesto Zedillo. Provincial bosses of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) wanted to get rid of their own hot spots of social discontent using the same iron-fisted action. But when the PRI governor of Hidalgo, Miguel Ángel Núñez Soto, ordered the arrest of 900 students and the storming of the Rural Teacher Training Institute of El Mexe, he shot himself in the foot. In the face of the armed invasion of hundreds of state *granaderos* (riot police), the population of this town in the Mezquital Valley rose up, capturing dozens of the uniformed repressors, disarming them and holding them until they were able to exchange them for the arrested students. The front-page headline of *La Crónica* summed up the bourgeoisie's nightmare: "Popular Rebellion in Hidalgo."

The El Mexe teacher training institute was occupied on January 5 by its students, who demanded an increase in the number of scholarships. The state government's response was to order the closing of the school. In the early morning hours of February 19, police in the state capital Pachuca arrested hundreds of students and parents staging a sit-in in front of the state legislature to demand freedom for dozens of El Mexe students arrested at the end of January. Then, at about 6:30 in the morning—as if imitating the details of the police takeover of UNAM could guarantee the success of this new military incursion—some 800 cops and regional security police entered Tepatepec to "take back" the institute's facilities, where they arrested 170 students. At the same time, the paramilitary forces attacked the population of the community of Francisco Madero, indiscriminately beating old people, children, youth and women.

In response to the violent police invasion, the local residents began to organize. Armed with rocks, metal bars and sticks, they headed to the school. After blocking access with a bonfire, more than 1,500 peasants advanced, undeterred by tear gas and explosive devices, to repel the attack. The several hundred *granaderos* who had been left behind to guard the school tried to flee, throwing themselves into the sewage drainage ditch or running into the fields. Yet some 68 police failed to get away, and the enraged crowd seized them. The crowd took away the cops' shoes and the tops of their uniforms, frogmarching them half-dressed into the town's main plaza, where



Carlos Camacho/La Jornada

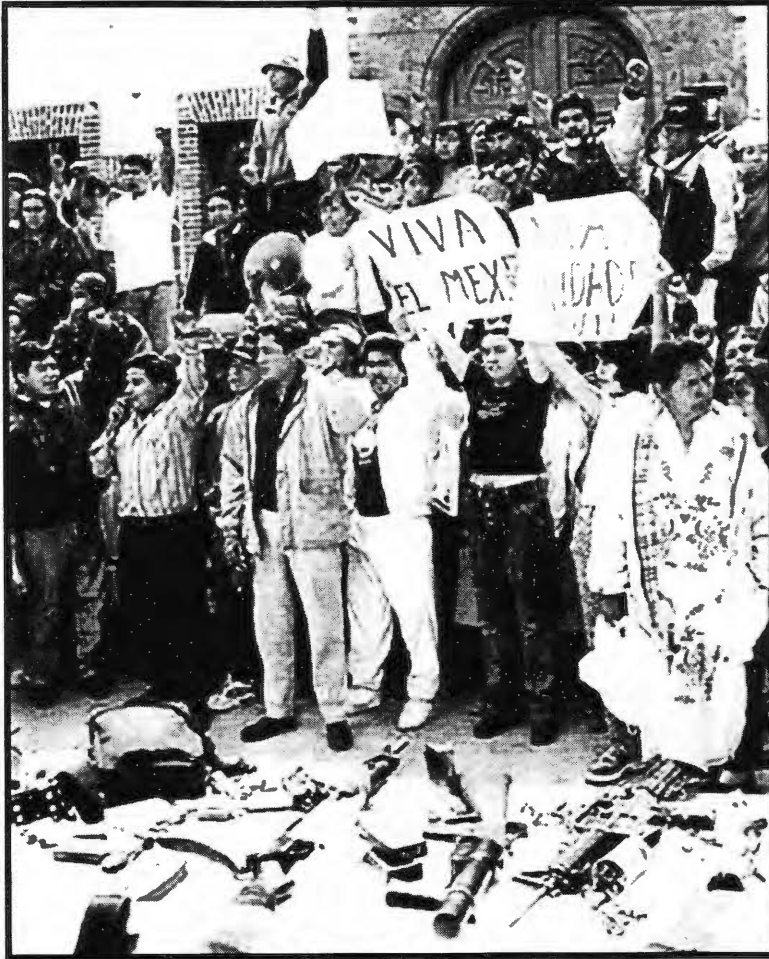
**Granadero paramilitary state police captured by the population of El Mexe on February 19. Cops were held in the municipal plaza until the arrested students were returned.**

they were put on trial by the population. In the melee, at least eight patrol cars and trucks were set ablaze, and an equal number were destroyed.

TV news and the front pages of papers throughout the country showed dramatic images of dozens of police, handcuffed and with their feet tied. They were kept face down on the ground in the Tepatepec plaza for more than 12 hours, serving as hostages during negotiations for freeing the arrested students and parents. As the hours passed, the situation grew increasingly tense. At one point in the late afternoon, a federal police helicopter buzzed the plaza. The populace immediately began organizing to resist a massive police attack. At 7 p.m., negotiations finally began, and an accord was reached to release the *granaderos* once the students arrested during the course of the day were returned.

**However, at least eight student leaders are still in jail and the judicial "investigation" of 800 people is continuing. El Mexe is not alone! The Grupo Internacionalista calls on the working class throughout Mexico to mobilize its power to free all the jailed students and strikers, both from UNAM and in Hidalgo.** There have already been work stoppages by education students in Oaxaca and other states, organized by the dissident teachers of the CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers). These protests must be generalized into a **national strike demanding freedom for the arrested comrades and against privatization.**

The arms that the population seized from the *granaderos* were presented at a press conference on Monday, dramatically



Residents of El Mexe display weapons confiscated from the state police sent by the governor.

refuting the governor's claim that the attack was carried out by "unarmed" police. At first, the governor claimed the 15 AR-15 and Galil rifles, ten kilograms of bullets, tear gas and riot sticks belonged to the students, but the state interior minister later admitted they belonged to the riot police. The right-wing press has also sought to promote a campaign against "subversion" in El Mexe, noting that it was the *alma mater* of Lucio Cabañas (a guerrilla leader in the 1950s and '60s) and that the student leaders are affiliated with the Mexican Federation of Socialist Peasant Students. They pointed out that in the public presentation of the police arsenal, the students and parents sang the socialist anthem, the *Internationale*, with their left fists in the air. Indeed, El Mexe has been the object of relentless hounding by the regime, which considers it a "nest of reds"; in the fall of 1995, the police laid siege to the school.

But the main target of the government's broadsides was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution, which it accused of "whipping up the population." In reality the PRD, a bourgeois-nationalist party, has acted as fireman for the bourgeoisie, offering its services to put out the blaze of rebellions provoked by PRI governments. And if need be, PRD-run local governments send in their own *granadero* riot police. That is what was done by Rosario Robles, PRD head of the Federal

District government, against the UNAM student strikers, slum dwellers in Iztapalapa, CNTE teachers and others. The PRD governor of Zacatecas, Ricardo Monreal, also sent *granaderos* against students of the Matías Ramos Rural Teachers Training Institute when they tried to present their demands to President Zedillo on January 13. In the case of El Mexe, the PRD mayor acted as a mediator in the negotiations, after the interior ministry (Gobernación) expressly requested that the PRD's national executive committee intervene in the conflict.

In Hidalgo and Mexico City, a mobilization of the working class is urgently necessary against the repression and the starvation policies that the bourgeoisie seeks to impose through terror. Following the violent suppression of the UNAM student strike, they attempted a second edition of this onslaught of repression in Hidalgo. The regime of President Zedillo and PRI presidential candidate Francisco Labastida is also preparing to strike with an iron fist against the Indian peasants who have risen up in Chiapas. There have been reports from the Zapotec Indian city of Juchitán, Oaxaca (*El Universal*, 21 February) of the passage of an enormous military train, the largest convoy of soldiers and equipment since the 1994 uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

Some on the left paint the situation in El Mexe in terms of rustic folklore, calling it a Fuenteovejuna, after the 17th-century Spanish playwright Lope de Vega's work about a town that metes out justice against an oppressive local potentate. But what happened in Tepatepec was not a matter of an isolated town rebelling against misgovernment on the local

or state level. The population of El Mexe heroically resisted an attack that is part of a *national* offensive of repression. Seeking to reassure financiers concerned for Mexico's political stability, PRI candidate Labastida denied that the conflict in Hidalgo would give rise to the "*México bronco*" (rebel Mexico) of the beginning of the 20th century. But what the rebellion in El Mexe recalls is precisely the outbreaks of rebelliousness in the years leading up to the Mexican Revolution. In addition to strikes by textile workers in Río Blanco and copper miners in Cananea, Mexico during the years of 1900-1910 also saw explosions of discontent among Yaqui Indians and workers enslaved by debt peonage in the Yucatán.

In the Mexico of the year 2000, in addition to student strikes there is widespread discontent in the countryside. In addition to the Zapatista Indians in Chiapas, there are guerrilla groups in Oaxaca, Guerrero and other southern and central states, and a host of agrarian struggles. Agricultural workers in the San Quintín Valley in Baja California, accused of burning down a packing plant at the beginning of December because the owners failed to pay their back wages, have been linked by Mexican intelligence services to communist organizations. University workers throughout the country threatened to strike

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## PRI and PRD: Partners in Strikebreaking

# The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution



John Moore/AP

In open defiance of threats by a bourgeoisie united against them, thousands of student strikers march on Mexico City's main plaza, the Zócalo, on February 4, demanding freedom for the hundreds arrested in Preparatory School No. 3 by the militarized federal police.

MARCH 15—Jailing 996 students of the National University (UNAM) during the first days of February and ordering the arrest of almost 500 more, Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León began the final stretch of his six-year term under the sign of mass repression. After “bullet-proofing” his regime economically with billion-dollar loans from the International Monetary Fund and militarily with the new Federal Preventive Police, which was created as a direct instrument of Gobernación (Mexico’s interior ministry), now the regime is going into action. Other targets of Zedillo’s repression are the Zapatista Indians in the southern state of Chiapas and sectors of the working class which have escaped direct control by the regime’s corporatist apparatus. The government repression began with the students, on the assumption that by sending

the federal police to take over Ciudad Universitaria (University City, the sprawling UNAM campus in Mexico City) it could get rid of the obstinate student strikers who for almost ten months refused to cave in to the intimidation and pressure of the capitalist state, all its parties and the bourgeois media. *But they were wrong!*

The police action did permit the university bureaucrats to “reclaim” their fancy executive chairs in the Administration Tower. However, arresting the entire assembly of the students’ Strike General Council (CGH)—and then having *porros* (professional thugs) burn the red-and-black strike banners while a mariachi band played for the occasion—has not succeeded in breaking up the struggle for free higher public education available to all. Instead, it unleashed a mobilization demand-

**Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front!  
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

ing freedom for the students jailed under absurd, trumped-up charges such as “terrorism,” “sabotage,” “mutiny” and “looting.” Three days after the invasion of the National University by troops of the Third Brigade of the Military Police, dressed in the gray uniforms of the federal police, while 2,500 *granaderos* (riot police) sent by the Federal District government cordoned off the area, on February 9 more than 100,000 people surged into the streets (the semi-official daily *Excelsior* reported up to 200,000), completely filling the Zócalo, Mexico City’s main square, to demand, *Free the political prisoners!*

The government occupied Ciudad Universitaria, but the struggle to free the prisoners and for the demands of the strike continues in the streets. Even inside the university campuses, many oppose resuming classes while strikers are in jail. The mobilization of tens of thousands of electrical workers, university workers and teachers has already resulted in the release of hundreds of arrested students. Nevertheless, almost 200 students remain behind bars. The regime’s real purpose is to carry out *selective* repression, scapegoating strike leaders Alejandro Echavarría (“El Mosh”), Alberto Pacheco (“El Diablo”), Mario Benítez, Leticia Contreras and others. Nevertheless, *once again the regime is mistaken*. But what needs to be done to defeat the government strategy? It is illusory to set the goal of a supposed “dialogue”—as the dominant sectors of the CGH call for—with the rector (university president), who is responsible for unleashing mass arrests and *porro* thug attacks. It is necessary to bring into the streets the only force capable of defeating the bourgeois state: the power of the proletariat. The Grupo Internacionalista calls for *class-struggle mobilization to fight capitalist repression*.

While Zedillo’s long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) “reclaims” UNAM, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is carrying out its own electoral reclamation operation. As the PRI mounts a “fear campaign” for the July 2 elections under the watchword PRD = CGH, the PRD is posing as defenders of the imprisoned *cegehacheros* (CGH members). “Not one vote for the PRI” was one of the slogans most widely chanted during the February 9 march. “*Nor for the PRD!*” replied furious student strikers. In the past, UNAM students were one of the bulwarks of this bourgeois-nationalist “opposition” party. From 1988 on, sectors of the bourgeoisie have sought to divert discontent over the regime’s starvation policies into electoral channels through a “popular front” around Cárdenas. Their purpose is to chain the workers, and all the exploited and oppressed (peasants, Indians, poor people along with students) to the exploiters through this machinery of class collaboration. But the extended UNAM strike considerably eroded support for *cardenismo*, above all due to the repression launched against the students by the PRD government of the Federal District (DF) under Cárdenas and his successor, Rosario Robles.

The UNAM strike of 1999-2000 has been the biggest student struggle in Mexico’s history. On the eve of the military/police invasion of Ciudad Universitaria, after almost a year of struggle, the CGH was able to mobilize tens of thousands of students in a February 4 march to the Zócalo. Additional tens

of thousands of university workers, electrical workers, teachers and residents of poor neighborhoods went into the streets time and again to support the strike. The student struggle occupied the center of the political stage for months. It was the object of denunciations and maneuvers by all the parties, and its impact extended to the farthest reaches of the country. The strike fought the privatization plans imposed by the highest circles of imperialism, and in contrast to what happened in Mexico in 1968, over the course of many months it confronted not only the regime’s harassment but the hostility of almost all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois opinion. For many participants, the strike has been the most important experience of their lives. It is all the more urgent, therefore, to draw the lessons of the UNAM strike, beginning with the understanding that it lacked *the revolutionary leadership necessary to defeat the enemy in this hard battle against capitalist power*.

Contrary to all the criticisms of the “radicalism” of the students’ Strike General Council, in reality the dominant tendencies in the CGH never broke with the bourgeoisie. From the PRD “moderates” to the so-called “mega-ultras,” all of them counted on receiving “toleration,” at least, from the *cardenista* government of the DF. The PRD’s response was to carry out secret negotiations with the rector and the federal interior ministry (Gobernación), and to send its *granadero* riot police against the strikers. The various “ultra” groups adopted the policy (first put forward by the PRDers) of vainly seeking a “democratic dialogue” with the PRI university authorities. But the rector and Gobernación preferred the “dialogue” of police riot batons, and so it was. The CGH’s dominant tendencies did *not* undertake the fundamental step required to win the strike: fighting to mobilize the working class. This refusal reflected the *bourgeois-democratic program* of these petty-bourgeois sectors. For their part, the labor bureaucrats allied with the PRD opposed an all-out mobilization of their unions together with the CGH. Both the student and labor leaderships were tied to the bourgeoisie through the Cárdenas popular front.

The Grupo Internacionalista insisted from the outset of the struggle at UNAM that, while formally the strike only sought a bourgeois-democratic demand, free public higher education, at bottom it posed a *class struggle*. We stressed that the struggle cannot achieve its goals solely through the action of a sector of the petty bourgeoisie, the students, in a single university, even the largest in Latin America. We fought insistently to *extend the strike to key sectors of the working class*, beginning with those most affected by the privatization offensive (electrical workers, teachers and university workers), in order to join the UNAM strike with the struggle of the proletariat for its class interests. As part of this perspective, we fought for *workers defense of the strike*, and we achieved a partial success in July with the formation of *worker-student defense guards* involving the participation of hundreds of workers of the SME (electrical workers union), STUNAM (National University workers union) and SITUAM (Metropolitan University workers union). Today, beyond the efforts to close various schools and departments, and more than the 24-hour national work stoppage, essentially of the universities, that



Francisco Gómez/El Universal



**Women student strikers of the CGH arrested in Prepa 3 on February 1, in the Reclusorio Norte jail. Free all the arrested comrades!**

the CGH has proposed, it is urgently necessary to organize a *national strike for the liberation of all the arrested comrades and against privatization of education and the electrical industry.*

As Karl Marx emphasized, every class struggle is a political struggle. You cannot fight for free public education without fighting politically against the class forces which oppose it. In this case, *the entire bourgeoisie closed ranks, overcoming its tactical differences, to put an end to this strike.* Today the dominant tendencies in the CGH and various union bureaucrats are attempting to revive the phantom National Front in Defense of Free Education or form a National Struggle Committee, which would simply confine the struggle to the bourgeois framework of popular frontism. Today when the PRD with utter cynicism mounts an electoral campaign on the issue of freeing the jailed students, the Grupo Internacionalista insists: *Down with the PRI, PAN and PRD – bloody parties of the bourgeoisie! Break with the Cárdenas popular front!* It is necessary to fight against all the capitalist parties and their political alliances, proven enemies of the UNAM strike, and address the most conscious workers in the fight to forge a *revolutionary workers party.*

### **For Workers Mobilization Against Police-State Repression!**

The press is currently filled with disgusting calls for “reconciliation” from the same authorities who were installed by police riot clubs. How many times have we read calls to “heal the wounds” from those who most insistently called for repression to put an end to the strike! How shameless are these

university department chairmen who talk of reconciliation and even “concord” *with hundreds of strikers in jail!* And don’t forget the hired intellectuals who signed an ad paid for by the university administration and published February 4, on the eve of the police takeover of the UNAM, which supported the rector’s anti-strike referendum, calling the CGH an “intolerant minority” and demanding the “immediate return” of the struck facilities. Some of these mercenary writers, accomplices of repression (like Carlos Monsiváis, Carlos Fuentes and Elena Poniatowska) later tried to cleanse their hands by asking that the jails be opened to let out the political prisoners. Others, police scribes such as Héctor Aguilar Camín, only want to make the charges more specific.

In Ciudad Universitaria, rector Juan Ramón de la Fuente and his general staff think they are a victorious gang of “untouchables.” They even reactivated a “Dialogue Commission” under the baton of the administration’s gray eminence, José Narro Robles. A body for “dialogue” set up by De la Fuente is like a commission against organized crime appointed by Al Capone. In fact, according to leaked reports, the topic of discussion at this outfit’s first meeting (behind closed doors) was how many students should be left to rot in the Reclusorio Norte jail. Meanwhile,

a veritable witchhunt is being carried out in the university. Cars full of thugs parked in front of the schools, police action to throw demonstrators out of football games. School directors are required to turn in detailed reports about the political groups present in their departments, complete with names, telephone numbers, activities, etc. The watchword is *every administrator a police spy.* But despite all this, they have not been able to restore “normalcy.”

The rector who requested the federal police invasion of UNAM now pretends to favor freeing the arrested students. What gall! Bit by bit, judicial bodies dismiss the “serious” charges against some students, declaring that they can be released under “*reserva de ley*” (pending “investigation” of their “crimes”). At the same time, bail of 100,000 pesos (US\$10,000) is imposed, or 50,000 pesos in cash, which the strikers and their families can’t possibly pay. To top it off, the university administration says that in order to show its “benevolence,” it will help the families “arrange” to pull together such enormous sums! What is really happening, since there are no specifics to the charges, is that the authorities decide which students “may” be released according to political criteria, giving preference to the most “moderate” strikers. In early March some 180 strikers were left in the Reclusorio Norte, dozens of them suffering from illness due to conditions at the prison.

Since there isn’t a shred of evidence to support the “serious” accusations (even federal Attorney General Jorge Madrazo mocked the charge of “terrorism”), the federal prosecutor’s office claimed, and pliant judges concurred, that the CGH prisoners represented a “danger to society,” in order to prevent them from being let out on bail. This arbitrary charge

inevitably recalls the earlier charge of "social dissolution" pinned on railroad strikers in 1959 and student protestors in 1968. And what exactly might this danger be? That the students might occupy the National University again. This same "aggravating circumstance" was used to keep in jail four Argentine students and academics whose only "crime" was being present at the CGH meeting on the fateful night of February 6. (After student protests in Buenos Aires, they were freed, and immediately expelled from the country for supposed violation of the "population control" law.) In reality, the prisoners are hostages of the regime, which thinks it can put a stop to the struggle by keeping them behind bars. In order to free them, what is needed is a class mobilization of the power of the proletariat against these police-state measures, and against the privatization and starvation policies that the repression is supposed to "bullet-proof."

Such a mobilization could have a tremendous revolutionary impact. The chiefs of the PRI-government, whose disdain for the "commoners" rivals that of another Old Regime, would do well to recall how in 1789 the starving masses of Paris stormed the prison of La Bastille. Two centuries later in capitalist Mexico, there persists the explosive mixture of prisoners and starvation. After the events at the El Mexe rural teachers institute—in which the population of the town of Tepatepec captured and disarmed 68 *granadero* police, who "watched in horror the six-foot-high bonfires in the main plaza" where they were put on trial by the townspeople—Luis Gutiérrez y González remarked (*Excelsior*, 28 February): "So prick up your ears, Federal Government, state and municipal authorities, and take a good look around. What happened in Tepatepec could become contagious nationally. At Versailles, La Fayette heard King Louis XVI's facile explanation of the mobs besieging the palace: 'They are rioters.' To which the general replied: 'No, sire, they are revolutionaries'."

The Mexican capitalists and their imperialist masters are fully conscious of the explosive potential of the Mexican social volcano. The *Wall Street Journal* of 14 February caused a stir with an article reporting that "In Washington, U.S. Defense Department officials are concerned that guerrilla groups still have the ability to 'distract and disrupt' the electoral process" in Mexico. According to the *Journal*, sources in the Mexican Defense Ministry and Cisen (Mexico's main intelligence agency) reject the Pentagon's vision of the spread of rural guerrillas as out of touch with reality. Nevertheless, on a number of occasions reports leaked by the regime's military intelligence apparatus have detailed more than 20 different guerrilla groups active in the country. Meanwhile, "hard-line" sectors of the PRI, the government, the church and the univer-



SME

**Electrical workers of the SME march in support of the UNAM strike, 23 April 1999. It will require mobilizing the class power of the proletariat to win this struggle against the bourgeoisie.**

sity authorities tried (without success) to link the UNAM strike to the guerrillas, in order to justify the repression.

The various guerrilla groups have their own particular characteristics, from the mass uprising of the EZLN in the Indian regions of Chiapas to groups whose real existence is somewhat dubious. But politically they all raise one or another variant of a program of bourgeois "democratic" reforms. The EPR (People's Revolutionary Army) and its several offshoots call for a "democratic people's republic"; the Zapatistas no longer demand more than the approval of a rather vague statute on Indian rights (the San Andrés Agreements). In reality, they all act as electoral pressure groups within the framework of popular-front politics. They also have in common their orientation to the peasantry, a petty-bourgeois sector which, as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky pointed out, does not have the ability to lead a social — much less a socialist — revolution. This role falls to the proletariat and its communist vanguard.

In fact, both the PRI regime and the PRD government of the Federal District concentrate on preparing to crush *urban* uprisings. It is reported that the DF police department is purchasing expensive espionage devices to intercept and monitor voice and data communications, faxes and cellular telephone messages (*El Universal*, 6 March). For what purpose? Well-placed Mexican commentators fear that student activists in the cities, particularly after the police takeover of UNAM, are already adopting more far-reaching objectives. As Pablo Hiriart wrote in *La Crónica* (14 February): "They were after the country, not open admissions or canceling the tuition and fee structure. And that's what they're looking to do."

The heroic struggle of the UNAM students has landed a blow against the PRI regime and its plans to privatize education and key economic sectors. Everyone now recognizes that behind the struggle for free public education is a protest against

the government's starvation policies, which over the last two decades have produced an explosion of extreme poverty. This is why the strikers received the support of millions of workers throughout the country. Currently, groups of Indians from several states are converging on the DF to show their solidarity with the jailed fighters. Electrical workers of the SME and dissident teachers of the CNTE are negotiating labor contracts. There is talk of a national teachers strike on March 17 – almost a month and a half *after* the police assault on University City! – which would amount to a big demonstration, when what was needed for the past *ten months* of the student strike was *all-out workers mobilization*. Today, it continues to be possible to unite the various struggles in a single powerful fist against the state party and the parties of the bourgeois “opposition.” But to do so, it is necessary to break the chains that bind the oppressed to their oppressors.

The bourgeois media nervously pointed to the slogans chanted in the Zócalo on February 9: “If there is no solution [to the students’ demands], then there will be revolution!” During the February 14 march called by the CGH and parents of the arrested students, various banners were emblazoned with the communist hammer and sickle. For now, these revolutionary references don’t go beyond symbolism. But they are indications that the upshot of the UNAM strike could be a search for revolutionary politics by many of those who through long months of arduous struggle resisted the onslaught of the bourgeoisie. So far, the struggle has been guided by a populist-nationalist, i.e., bourgeois, perspective, opposing “neo-liberalism” and “globalization.” However, among the fundamental lessons of the strike—which met opposition not only from the “neo-liberals” of the PRI and the PAN but also from the nationalist populists of the PRD—is the unavoidable conclusion that its fundamental objectives can be won only through *international socialist revolution*.

#### UNAM Strike – A Class Battle

For many among the tens of thousands of students who have participated in the strike, the National University has been a little universe, their “*patria chica*” (home turf), when in fact it is only one battlefield in the class struggle. First of all, because over and above the disputes in the ruling class, the strike ultimately confronted a united bourgeoisie. Liberal intellectuals joined with “neo-liberal” capitalist ideologues to vituperate against the “insatiability” of the CGH (*La Jornada*), and its “archaic millenarian discourse” (*La Crónica*). The Mexican Conference of Bishops beat the drums and sounded the trumpets for a holy war, virtually a *crisiada* (the 1920s Catholic clericalist revolt against the Mexican Revolution)



Andrew Wining/Reuters

**UNAM strikers in front of banner with hammer and sickle, marching on February 9 to demand freedom for all the arrested students**

against the strike. They even criticized the federal government for intervening “too late,” due to fears of “the shadow of 1968” and the risk of “dirtying their hands” with repression (*El Universal*, 24 February). In order to defeat a bloody ruling class whose high priests preach the gospel of dirty hands, which murdered hundreds of students in 1968 and which continues to perpetrate massacres against dozens of peasants every year, what is required is revolutionary class politics.

The struggle for free university education is a class struggle also because it clashes with the present policies and interests of the bourgeoisie with regard to education. The attacks on public higher education go hand in hand with the campaign to privatize the steel, petrochemical and electrical industries, water and other basic resources. They are part of a general capitalist offensive against social services and the living standards and defensive organizations of working people. Mounting impoverishment is revealed by the fact that in the last five years, consumption of beef has fallen by 30 percent; it currently stands at half the level of the 1960s, and about 40 percent of the population never eats it at all. During the last five years there has also been a fall in the consumption of milk, with the elimination of milk subsidies for low-income families; of tortillas, with the elimination of the tortilla subsidy; of beans and basic grains, due to the elimination of the minimum prices that made production of these foodstuffs profitable for peasants. Yet Mexico is not the only place this is occurring.

The privatization offensive is frequently termed “neo-liberalism.” Earlier, in the 1980s, the catchword was “Reaganomics.” In the ’70s, it was the monetarist “Chicago boys.” This vocabulary comes from reformist pseudo-socialists and bourgeois pseudo-progressives, and behind the diagnosis is a program: to “reform” capitalism. They want to substitute another “model” for the current one, for example replacing export production with the previous policy of industrializa-

tion through import substitution. However, the attack against social services and the rights and living standards of the working people is not the product of a particular doctrine but of an offensive by the capitalist class worldwide to ratchet up the rate of exploitation through a general attack on the workers. It began right after the United States lost the war on Vietnam in 1975, and its first targets were the U.S. workers themselves. Hundreds of thousands of public workers were laid off in the late '70s, large numbers of students were forced out of the public universities, hundreds of factories were closed.

The unions were the initial target of this capitalist onslaught, from the defeat of the 1977-78 coal strike in the U.S. to the destruction of the air controllers union in 1981 by Ronald Reagan, the defeat of the 1984-85 British miners strike by Margaret Thatcher, and many others. At the same time the economic and military pressure of imperialism was drastically stepped up against the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. The privileged Stalinist bureaucracy, which vainly sought "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, undermined the foundations of the planned economy, preparing the way for capitalist restoration. From the time of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 on, the counterrevolutionary offensive escalated, leading to the destruction of the deformed workers states

of East Europe and the USSR during 1989-92. In an atmosphere of everyone for themselves, the Stalinists handed everything that had been built with the workers' toil over to the imperialists on a silver platter.

Drunk with victory, the capitalists proclaimed the death of communism and even (in the case of some ideologues of Yankee imperialism) the end of history. They thought it was the end of the "red threat" they had feared ever since the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 under the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. The bourgeoisie promptly opened fire on the West European trade unions and populist leftist movements in Latin America. The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua fell, and a few years later the Salvadoran guerrillas surrendered. In Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari opened his six-year presidency with a bazooka attack against oil "union" leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia (*La Quina*), sending him to prison for more than a decade. Ernesto Zedillo began his term in Los Pinos (the presidential residence) with the destruction of the Mexico City bus drivers union, SUTAU-100. All this underscores the lesson: *a revolutionary program and leadership are indispensable to win in the face of this counterrevolutionary offensive.*

The capitalist assault against the working people is now

## Cárdenas Popular Front Against the Workers

Its actions during the strike showed with crystal clarity how the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in office uses the force of the capitalist state to attack workers, peasants, students and the urban poor who have been its electoral support. On **4 August 1999**, *granadero* riot police of the Federal District (controlled by the PRD) assaulted striking students who were blocking a scab facility; 107 were arrested. On **October 14**, the *granaderos* gave a furious beating to supporters of the students' Strike General Council (CGH) on Mexico City's Periférico highway, leaving several bleeding profusely on the pavement. On **December 11**, when students held a protest meeting in front of the U.S. embassy to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned radical black journalist on death row in Pennsylvania, and to protest the repression against demonstrators at the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle, the *granaderos* viciously beat them, arresting 98. On **1 February 2000**, the capital police acted as a shield while the federal police evicted strikers from Preparatory School No. 3, jailing more than 250. Five days later, the *granaderos* surrounded the main UNAM campus at Ciudad Universitaria while the federal police rounded up 750 people, arresting the entire CGH assembly and many more students and workers who were guarding the facilities.

After February 6, it is no secret that the PRD has desperately sought to reintegrate its "wayward sons and daughters" in the dominant tendencies of the CGH. At the same time, PRD candidates held meetings with leaders of the "independent" unions, i.e., those who are not part of the PRI's

*charro* apparatus of corporatist labor fronts (including the CTM, CT, CROC, CROM and allied "union" groups). Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas presented his labor platform to bureaucrats of the SME, STUNAM, SITUAM, the Coordinadora Sindical 1° de Mayo and the UNT federation dominated by the telephone workers. The PRD platform would leave intact the straitjacket of capitalist state control of the workers, as well as the starvation wages it protects. Even if wages were raised a couple of points above the 12 percent ceiling and the miserable 10 percent "increase" in the minimum wage, this would mean nothing to the Mexican working class whose real incomes have fallen 40 percent under Zedillo and more than 75 percent over the last two decades. Like the other capitalist parties, the PRD defends the system of merciless exploitation of the working people; Cárdenas only proposes to throw some aspirins into the "basic market basket" to dull the pain.

Meanwhile, the PRD sends the capital police against the workers. On **25 May 1999**, the *granaderos*, motorcycle squad and mounted police busted up a demonstration of thousands of teachers of the CNTE from the states of Michoacán, Guerrero and Oaxaca. The SNTE, the pseudo-union linked to the PRI and its CTM, justified the beating of the dissident teachers. On **June 14**, Mexico City riot police clashed in Iztapalapa with residents of the Frente Popular Francisco Villa-Independiente, a split-off from the FPFV, which is politically aligned with the PRD. More recently, on **28 January 2000**, while the federal police were already occupying UNAM facilities, the riot cops of *la granadera*

being repeated against the students. That it isn't just a case of "neo-liberalism" is shown by the fact that the UNAM strike was opposed not only by the spokesmen of the PRI and PAN, but also those of the PRD. In fact, at crucial moments in the strike *the cardenistas were the spearhead of the bourgeois attack against the CGH* (the proposal by the emeritus professors in July, the attack by *granadero* riot police in December, PRD scab-herding in January). The same bourgeois *iron front* can be seen in the rabid accusations of "lumpenism" against the strike. *La Crónica* (6 January) editorialized against "The Lumpenization of UNAM." *Excelsior* of the same date vituperated against the "Revenge of the 'Lumpen' at UNAM." After the mass arrests, the same attack on the student strikers was leveled by one of the regime's most prominent intellectuals, Carlos Fuentes, who joined the official chorus demanding that the "ringleaders" of the CGH remain in jail:

"All the students who are not facing *de officio* charges should be freed.... UNAM is not an elitist university, but *neither should it be a university of lumpens or of a resentful lower middle class.*"

Yet the intelligentsia which considers itself as belonging to "the left" expressed this same hatred—that of a privileged upper middle class—toward the strikers. *La Jornada Semanal*

Robles used massive violence to break up a demonstration by hundreds of workers, most of them women, from the Autonomous University of Chapingo who were staging a sit-in in front of the federal labor ministry. Dozens were injured.

Both in order to win the UNAM strike and to defend workers' struggles, the first task is to fight for the political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. In our propaganda, in resolutions and interventions in the CGH and student strike committees, and also intervening in workers union meetings, the Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista have emphasized this fundamental issue. On January 12, GI comrades participated in a discussion with some 60 workers of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) at a plant in central Mexico City. The discussion centered on the question of the PRD. We stressed the need for a joint struggle of the students and workers. We also explained how the popular front around the PRD serves as an escape valve for social discontent, and how PRD students had negotiated with the UNAM administration and the federal government to break the strike. We illustrated the bourgeois character of the PRD with the fact that the Cárdenas government was the first to begin the process of privatizing the electrical industry by taking bids last fall for the construction of a cogeneration plant in the DF.

During the discussion, a worker defended the PRD and excoriated the striking students for their "extremism." But other workers, the majority, understood that the "isolation" of the strike was due to the fact that the regime had mobilized its forces against the students — from demonization in the bourgeois media to police repression — just as it has done against the electrical workers. What's needed, they stressed, is that

(6 February) published a diatribe titled "The Lesson of UNAM," in which Augusto Isla writes of the CGH: "They are and feel themselves to be social scum." Their demands, he continues, show "the mask of their resentment"; they are "desperate" people who will not engage in dialogue, a "deranged minority" marked by "primitivism" and a "dialectic of insatiable appetites"; a distilled "poison" which has adopted "the logic of violence." The violence, however, came from the police, which that very day took Ciudad Universitaria. "Maestro" Isla's vituperations were accompanied by a drawing of an "ultra" in rags (*Lumpen*, in German) which perfectly illustrates this visceral loathing toward the strikers. Isla attempts to justify his disdain toward the "social scum" by writing, with regard to "the most radical elements," that:

"The real problem was not tuition but social exclusion. Their faces, their clothing, their provocative gestures, speak of youth from popular sectors who, while they may have found a place in the university, do not see the future clearly, not only because of their presumably poor academic performance, as shown by the verbal crudeness of their spokesmen, but also because the social model itself tends to displace them."

Isla ends by calling the student strike "one more indication

we mobilize *our* strength. But instead, the SME bureaucracy seeks to channel the struggle into a classical popular front "against privatization," set up to include the PRD and even elements of the PRI. When the front against the privatization of the electrical industry was set up a year ago, the Grupo Internacionalista explained: "Waving the flag of 'national sovereignty,' the same slogan occasionally used by Ernesto Zedillo himself, its main purpose is to *prevent* a class-struggle, internationalist mobilization of the power of the working class."

The GI called for a "joint strike by UNAM students and workers, electrical workers and other workers," and to "form *defense groups* of students and workers (including SME members and with the active support of other sectors of the workers movement)," which was later carried out. And we insisted:

"Needless to say, the CTM and the corporatist SUTERM 'union' in the electrical industry back the Zedillo government's privatization scheme to the hilt. Today a strike with class-struggle leadership would provide backing for a fight for *workers committees* genuinely independent of the bourgeois parties, to *destroy the charros' corporatist straitjacket*, a crucial part of the PRI's semibonapartist regime. It would pose social questions, from the oppression of women and Indian peasants to the repudiation of the imperialist debt, which can be resolved only through a socialist revolution and its international extension to the imperialist centers. This is the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution."

Based on this program we must forge a revolutionary workers party, which is Leninist and Trotskyist, in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

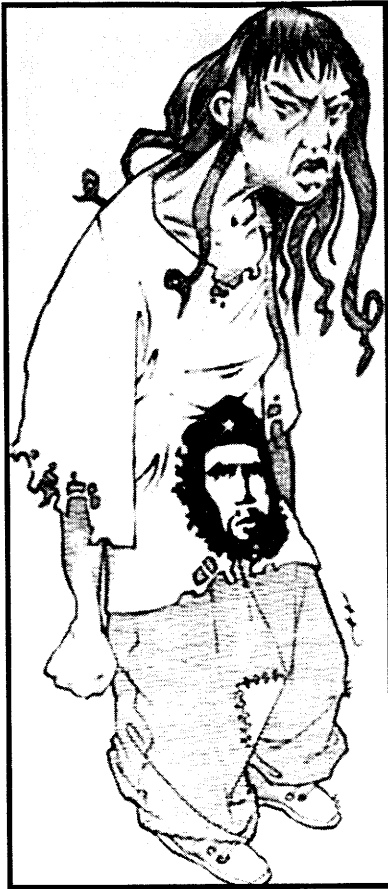


Image of an “ultra” according to *La Jornada* reflects the “anti-lumpen” hysteria of well-off petty-bourgeois sectors.

of our social vulnerability.” What we have here is the terror of a protected and well-off petty-bourgeois layer anxious to protect its privileges, which is oriented toward the PRD but feels itself vulnerable in the face of the demise of the regime which has been the host for its parasitic existence. The “anti-lumpen” fury expresses the horror of the Conaculta (the government cultural council set up by Salinas) intelligentsia which fears that the demons of the CGH will endanger their sinecures, their trips abroad and cushy jobs, even if they only have a cubicle at UNAM. Behind these epithets is the fact that the large majority of the strikers do not come from the well-to-do middle class, from the Pedregal or Coyoacán, but from

poor neighborhoods, in many cases from families who live in abject misery and whose future is utterly somber in a Mexico governed by the PRI, PAN or PRD. Their clothing – and their inability to pay 100,000 pesos in bail – reflect their social situation.

A recent study by Banamex indicates that while the government is reporting that the national income is growing 5 percent annually, the number of Mexicans who live in “extreme poverty,” with incomes that fail to cover even basic food needs, doubled between 1992 and 1999, going from 13 to 26 million people. During the same period, the number of people in “intermediate poverty,” with incomes roughly equal to what a working-class family used to earn, fell from 24 million to 14 million (*La Jornada*, 13 February). This dramatic inversion shows the effect of the massive impoverishment of the Mexican working class. Another study carried out by economist Julio Boltvinik indicates that in reality “extreme poverty” extends to 54 percent of the population, more than double the official figures (*La Jornada*, 25 February). This is the hard reality which the Mexican working masses live in, and which UNAM students confront, far from the wonderland described by Zedillo in which the poverty of the women workers in the *maquiladoras* (free trade zone factories) represents “progress.”

It is largely for this reason that the parents of the student strikers have been so committed to their sons’ and daughters’ struggle at the University. Throughout the struggle, the Assembly of Parents has actively participated in marches, and the day of the cop assault on UNAM they courageously confronted the federal police. Today, parents continue to be camped out in front of the Reclusorio Norte jail and the Administration Tower, where they represent a real headache for the authorities – to the point that the outrageous category of “pseudo-parents” had now been placed in the official lexicon, next to the term “pseudo-students.”

In accusing the CGH members of being “lumpens,” some petty-bourgeois intellectuals want to give a Marxoid veneer to their expressions of fear and loathing. Marx and Engels defined the *Lumpenproletariat*, the proletariat in rags, as “the ‘dangerous class,’ the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society,” which due to its lack of steady work lives off of petty theft and begging, and whose conditions of life “prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue” (*Communist Manifesto*). But the poverty of many of the strikers and their parents is an expression of the increasing immiseration of the *proletariat* itself in the final stages of the imperialist epoch, when the rotting of *capitalism* has reached the extreme of destroying fundamental productive forces. In the countries of the OECD alone, which essentially includes the highly developed capitalist countries (plus Mexico), 50 million jobless are officially recorded; on a world scale, there are more than a billion unemployed.

At bottom, this middle-class hatred and fear reflect the evolution of Mexican capitalism. For decades, in addition to supplying leading cadres for the PRI and the regime’s bureaucracy, the National University also provided an avenue for individual social advancement by preparing career “professionals.” But following the explosion of the Latin American “debt bomb” in 1982, millions of jobs disappeared; the same happened, even more drastically, during the economic crisis touched off by the December 1994 devaluation of the Mexican peso. Many students had to work in order to cover their families’ expenses, with the result that it took longer to finish their studies; others saw no perspective of getting a job after leaving UNAM. The political scientist Alfonso Zárate says the members of the CGH are the “product of desperation; they are the losers of modernity and globality.” *El Universal* (27 January) sums up its interview with Zárate:

“The researcher stated that for some years now UNAM has ceased to be an option for social mobility and was turned into a big ‘social parking lot.’ He maintains that the strategy of the government – from Luis Echeverría [in the 1970s] on – was to admit thousands of students in order to defer the pressure for jobs; the University became a buffer given the impossibility of offering them jobs.

“In this sense, he went on, the phenomenon of the ‘ultras’ is related to neo-liberalism and its logic of exclusion. They have no place in its designs, and they can’t see why every option of development is closed to them.”

Zárate, who does not sympathize with the strikers (he accuses them of having a “delirium of omnipotence” and even



**Federal Police occupying Ciudad Universitaria on February 6. Mural in background, showing Che Guevara and the UNAM shield, was painted over after police attack, as were all other student murals, including one showing Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh that was a decade old.**

a “mania for martyrdom”), concludes that “they aren’t waging a strike, they’re making a revolution.” This fear of the UNAM strike as a revolutionary hotbed, expressed by the possessing classes and their scribes, is based on their own certainty that *you can’t put an end to the poverty and social exclusion which the strike denounces without a social revolution*. In their own way, many strikers have come to see this as well during the course of the struggle, which has continued for so long due to the stubborn refusal, not only by the administration but also by PRD professors and researchers, to accept the principle of free higher public education. As a result of the police suppression of the strike, today many more strikers must understand that the only way to achieve their objectives is through a socialist revolution which sweeps away a society based on competition and poverty, and in its place begins to build a society based on a planned economy, ruled by the proletariat, not the lords of finance.

### **Key to Victory: Forge a Revolutionary Leadership**

The strikers’ experience fully confirms what Leon Trotsky wrote on the basis of the experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917:

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”

Trotsky directed his polemical essay, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), against the falsification of Marxism and Leninism by the Stalinists, with their Menshevik program of “two-stage revolution” and their nationalist pretense of achieving “socialism in

one country.” Determining that today democratic tasks can be achieved only through the seizure of power by the proletariat, the Bolshevik leader drew the programmatic conclusions:

“The realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the Communist Party....

“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 fulfillment 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.”

In basing ourselves on this perspective of permanent revolution, the Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista have fought continuously in the student mobilization for the revolutionary program necessary to win this class battle. With regard to the CGH’s demands to eliminate the fee hike (in reality, the introduction of tuition) and abrogate the university reforms of 1997 (which blocked automatic admission of all graduates of UNAM-related preparatory schools), we wrote: “We support these demands and, at the same time, we point out their limited character” (*El Internacionalista*, 3 August 1999). Now a press release of the CGH (9 March) seeks to minimize the scope of the struggle, chiding rector De la Fuente: “So he can’t figure out how to resolve these demands, which are elementary and signify nothing other than a return to the situation of three years ago, which the University functioned under for three decades, so all of us can then decide UNAM’s future?” But we definitely do *not* want a return to the situation of the past, nor that anything be “decided” together with the bourgeois repressors in the administration and its bureaucracy.

Warning against reformist/populist illusions in a “democratic and popular” university, in our August 3 pamphlet we stressed that “revolutionary communists present a series of demands pointing to the fundamental need to carry out a socialist revolution.” Even before the strike began, we called for a joint strike between the UNAM students and SME electrical workers in the face of the regime’s privatization campaign. We insisted throughout on the need to break with the Cárdenas popular front and forge a workers party. Concerning the students, we wrote:

“Against the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist godfathers, the struggle against tuition must be a struggle for free, secular public education, for free access to higher education, with all the assistance required for this to be accessible to children of poor and working-class families. We must not only *smash the tuition hike*, but tuition itself must be *abolished*. Students should receive a *living stipend* so they can devote themselves to their studies. The administration must be abolished and the university must be run under *student-teacher-worker control*. A single union of all university workers must be forged (expelling

the professionals of bourgeois repression such as the campus cops who are members of the UNAM workers union) and linked to the struggle of the primary and secondary school teachers.”

–“Workers, Students: For a Class-Struggle Mobilization Against the Bourgeois Attack,” translated in *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999

At the same time, we stressed that “a class-struggle mobilization of this scope would mean a struggle against growing government repression, highlighting the demand for *immediate withdrawal of the Mexican army from Chiapas and Guerrero.*”

Based on this program, the Grupo Internacionalista intervened in the strike assemblies of different schools and in the Strike General Council, putting forward motions for a joint strike of the UNAM (CGH and STUNAM), SME electrical workers and CNTE teachers; to reject the “dialogue” proposed by the administration, denouncing it as “a trap whose purpose is to negotiate an end to the strike at the lowest possible cost”; to “organize a worker-student defense to defend the picket lines and protect the strike” (these motions are reproduced in *El Internacionalista*, 23 June 1999). This last demand was approved in a assembly of the School of Philosophy and Literature at the beginning of July, and we immediately set about putting it into practice. We were thereby able to initiate the formation of workers brigades in defense of the UNAM strike with the participation of several hundred union workers of the SME, STUNAM and SITUAM. These brigades appeared in Ciudad Universitaria on the night of July 7 when an ultimatum from then-rector Barnés expired. Their presence blocked the expected police/military attack (see “Mexico: Worker-Student Defense Guards Formed,” in this pamphlet).

At the same time, we insisted that this step, which put into practice on a modest scale a point of the Transitional Program of the Fourth International, should be extended to key sectors of the workers movement and included in a strategy to mobilize the proletariat against the entire bourgeoisie. Over the course of the strike, we also introduced several proposals to concretize proletarian internationalism. At the beginning of June, the Grupo Internacionalista put forward a resolution, which was approved by the CGH, to make a contribution from the striking Mexican students to the auto workers of Zastava, Yugoslavia and to take a stand for the defense of Yugoslavia against the imperialist war. In October, the GI presented a motion for workers action to win freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, which was approved by the CGH hours before the governor of Pennsylvania signed a death warrant for Jamal (which was later stayed by appeal to U.S. federal courts). The GI also fought for the CGH to call a demonstration demanding freedom for Mumia, which took place on December 11 and was brutally attacked by the *granadero* riot police of the PRD.

While there have been plenty of empty references to the “strike of the end of the century” or the end of the millenium, what is true is that the UNAM strike takes place in the dying days of the PRI regime. All the bourgeois parties sought to maneuver around the strike, and then agreed to put an end to it. The actions of the PRD in this extended strike show what its “democratic transition” would be like: precious little “carrot”

for the working masses. lots of “stick” to beat those who offer resistance to its capitalist government. But even though the dominant tendencies in the CGH are angry with Cárdenas and his party, they have not broken with the Cárdenas popular front; moreover, with their populist/nationalist program, they opposed a *class-struggle internationalist* fight. In order for the experience of the UNAM strike to serve to educate future cadres of the socialist revolution, it is necessary that this be part of the struggle to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, the indispensable tool for victory. The Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, calls upon the most determined fighters to undertake this task together with us. ■

## Mexican Cops Launch...

*continued from page 4*

The National University workers union (STUNAM) is also directly affected by the repression. While STUNAM financially supported the strike and university workers participated in defense guards, the union did not join the strike. In addition, the Auxilio UNAM campus cops (including some who participated in the police provocation at Prepa 3) are in the union. **Cops are not workers but repressors for capital.** The Grupo Internacionalista has called on the STUNAM to throw Auxilio UNAM out of the union, and a resolution introduced by the GI urging the union to do so was passed by the CGH last week.

During almost ten months on strike, the students have faced brutal repression both by police of the federal government of President Ernesto Zedillo’s PRI and by the *granadero* riot police of the Mexico City government controlled by Cárdenas’ PRD. The Grupo Internacionalista has emphasized the danger posed by the “popular front” of class collaboration around Cárdenas and his PRD, which ties the workers and oppressed to a section of the capitalists. The urgency of this warning is underlined by the recent events, in which all the bourgeois parties have students’ blood on their hands. The GI fights to break the working class from the Cárdenas popular front and to forge a revolutionary workers party.

The Mexican government’s plans to privatize and restrict university education to a well-off elite are part of a broad offensive against the working people and poor. Last week, President Zedillo declared to the bankers and capitalist politicians assembled in Davos, Switzerland that the Zapatista Indian uprising in the southern state of Chiapas was nothing but a historical “detail,” and there was no point in further “dialogue” with the EZLN rebels. De la Fuente, in turn, tried to whip up anti-strike frenzy by charging that leftist guerrillas were involved in the UNAM strike. Now we get from Zedillo and his hand-picked rector Mexico’s capitalist rulers’ idea of “dialogue”—behind bars!

The dramatic events in Mexico are part of a worldwide offensive by the capitalist rulers against the working people. The League for the Fourth International urgently calls on workers organizations, students and all who stand for democratic rights and defense of the oppressed to hold demonstrations and protest actions against the brutal assault on the Mexican student strikers. ■





Carlos Camacho/La Jornada

Pick-up trucks of Hidalgo state police burning after local population captured 68 riot cops who attacked the El Mexe Rural Teachers Training Institute, confiscating their weapons. **Free all the arrested students!**

## El Mexe: Rebellion...

*continued from page 6*

at the end of January. A few days ago, Dina auto workers in Ciudad Sahagún, Hidalgo went on strike for a wage increase. All this shows a great potential for struggle. Some UNAM students hold that El Mexe shows the road to victory, because students there won "the support of the people." But neither a mythical "people united" nor isolated union struggles are going to defeat the bourgeois oppressors. Without a revolutionary leadership the discontent will be drained off by the *Cárdenas popular front*.

The events of El Mexe dramatically exposed reformist slogans like "the people in uniform are also exploited," which try to hide the nature of the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. As we have insisted, it is necessary to expel the police from all unions (Auxilio UNAM out of STUNAM). In Brazil, our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil fought against police, judicial and gangster repression, to throw *guardas municipais* (municipal police) out of the ranks of the union of workers of the steel city of Volta Redonda.

After the destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states throughout East Europe, the international bourgeoisie has intensified its attacks against the working class. The reformist and popular-frontist left in Latin America has been left prostrate. In Mexico, most of the organizations which claimed to be socialist dissolved into the bourgeois PRD. But the class struggle continues uninterrupted. In many places around the continent there have been local rebellions, such as the 1993 uprising by government workers in the tiny Argentine city of Santiago del Estero. Others followed, but they were always subordinated to popular fronts with dissident sectors of the bourgeoisie. When they reached larger proportions, with hunger riots such as the *caracazo* in Venezuela, they have been easy prey for populists in uniform, as also occurred recently in Ecuador, where an Indian uprising was taken over by military officers and gave rise to another government devoted to dollarized looting.

The rebellion at El Mexe was a lightning bolt that shows the possibility of a class struggle extending throughout the

country against the wave of repression currently underway. But in the absence of a class-struggle workers leadership, it will naturally fall – with the help of the popular-frontist left – into the hands of the PRD. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas made clear his position when he called the events in El Mexe a big "danger"... for Mexican capitalism. In order that the outbreak in El Mexe not remain an isolated local event, and so that it doesn't become booty for the electoral campaigns of the bourgeoisie, it is urgently necessary to forge a revolutionary workers party. What's needed is a party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, which fights for workers revolution extending beyond the border to the very centers of imperialism.

**Immediate freedom for all those arrested! Drop all the charges and arrest orders!**

Grupo Internacionalista,  
section of the League for the Fourth International  
23 February 2000

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## To Defeat It: Revolutionary Class Struggle

# Bourgeois Holy Alliance Against the UNAM Strike

The repression against the UNAM strike in the first days of February recalled the classic period of the regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), when the enormous, well-oiled state party orchestrated absolutely everything. The deluge of praise in the press, the parade of governors expressing their approval, the head of the CTM "labor" federation expressing the "workers" support. The "ombudsman" of the Federal District human rights commission was part of the rector's rubber-stamp commission. His federal counterpart gave his support to the rector's ultimatum, and accompanied De la Fuente to deliver his *diktat* to the CGH on February 4. The sham negotiations took place in the former seat of the Holy Inquisition, on the same floor as an exhibit of torture instruments! At that point, according to the testimony of the head of the Federal Preventive Police, the military/police takeover of the UNAM was already being prepared. If a slight smile crept over the lips of those on the rector's side of the table, it was because they could already imagine their "interlocutors" in beige prison uniforms.

Beyond the alliances and electoral maneuvers, the posture taken toward the UNAM strike by the main bourgeois parties reflects the coming apart of the PRI regime that has governed Mexico for more than seven decades. Responding to PRI accusations that Cárdenas' supporters have their fingers in the student movement, the PRD replies that Zedillo controls the UNAM administration. In fact, UNAM's governing apparatus reflects the situation of a capitalist country governed by a state party that is intimately intertwined with the state bureaucracy it created. And the crisis of this apparatus is a direct reflection of the death agony of this *semi-bonapartist* regime, the PRI-government.

At the end of the 1930s, the great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, exiled in Mexico, characterized the bourgeois-nationalist government of general Lázaro Cárdenas as an example of "bonapartism *sui generis*" (of a unique kind). By this he indicated that the weakness of the bourgeoisie in the semicolonial countries, with re-

lation to the proletariat on the one hand and imperialism on the other, gives rise to regimes which claim to raise themselves above the classes in society, when in reality they balance between the different forces in order to defend the fundamental interests of the ruling class. They impose the chains of a police-military dictatorship on the workers, but also, on occasion, grant them concessions, such as the nationalization of the railroads and oil industry in 1930s Mexico (see "Mexico: Regime in Crisis," *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997). After Cárdenas Sr., who consolidated the PNR (precursor of the PRI) and subjected the CTM to direct state control, subsequent governments turned to the right and later adopted some parliamentary trappings, taking on a *semi-bonapartist* character.

Lázaro Cárdenas laid the basis for an extensive statified capitalist industry, which included oil, heavy industry, mining, railroads, maritime and air transportation. Over the years, various media were added, as well as a whole cultural apparatus; in 1982 the banks (which were practically bankrupt) were nationalized. To administer this vast enterprise—and following the principle of "no reelection," a battle cry of the 1910 uprising against the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship which set off the Mexican Revolution—the PRI formed a layer of bureaucrats, a sort of capitalist *nomenklatura*, which circulated from one post to another in this apparatus. (This also served to keep the regional machinery of the party under centralized control.) As an integral part of this system, UNAM has been administered not by academics but by functionaries who are part of the government bureaucracy, who go from jobs in state-owned industry to positions in the central government, and from there to the university and posts in the party apparatus.

The distribution of leadership positions at UNAM is fundamentally *political*. The rectors are normally tied to one or another of the cliques in the upper reaches of the PRI, and arrive at the University with a whole team of collaborators. De la Fuente, the current "born leader" of what is pompously dubbed the "highest house of learning," was formerly minister of health (and a failed contender for the PRI's presidential candidacy); his predecessor, Barnés, was head of the Mexican Petroleum Institute. Many top UNAM officials belong to the group of Jorge Carpizo, who became rector in 1986, provoked the 1987 student strike and later entered the government of Carlos Salinas, where in rapid succession he went from head of the national human rights commission to head of the interior ministry (Gobernación) to attorney general. UNAM's enormous police apparatus, filled with former Judicial Police agents, is in the hands of the "Carpizo group" and takes its orders directly from Gobernación.

At the same time, the National University traditionally served as an academy for the hierarchy of the state party, educating and supplying the leading cadres of the state and



Francisco Labastida



La Crónica

**The Cárdenas popular front in action. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (right) together with Superbarrio (at microphone) in campaign meeting sponsored by the Frente Popular Francisco Villa at El Molino, January 11.**

party bureaucracy. Legions of PRI lawyers and engineers got their degrees and titles at UNAM, as did the protégés of the regional party bosses. Today, the former head of the law faculty is a top adviser to PRI candidate Francisco Labastida's presidential campaign. Labastida's wife, María Teresa Uriarte, was made director of the Institute of Esthetic Investigation, which makes her part of UNAM's top leadership body. Nelia Tello, until recently head of the School of Social Work, is the sister of Jorge Tello Peón, former head of the Cesin intelligence agency and current assistant secretary in charge of "security" at Gobernación. Already last July she was demanding that the police enter the struck campus to "look for arms" among the strikers, whom she tried to link to guerrilla groups.

But when a new generation of technocrats under Salinas and Zedillo took charge of the regime, the National University ceased to fulfill the function it had under previous PRI administrations. The bulk of the current crop of rulers was educated at institutions such as the Monterrey Technological Institute, where they studied together with scions of the powerful capitalist groups from the north of Mexico, as well as future PAN politicians, and then went on to graduate studies at universities abroad such as Harvard and Yale, where they networked with future imperialist rulers. With the exception of petroleum and electricity, 90 percent of the state-owned industry and financial institutions have already been sold off, and the new owners recruit their managers from private universities. The PRI machinery has been slimmed down, and while it still needs large numbers of *mapaches* (specialists in rigging elections), the party bureaucracy which in the past watched over the state bureaucracy has been slashed along with its sources of funds in the secret budgets of the presidency and the state governors.

Thus the UNAM as it was no longer serves the "new"

PRI, and certainly not the PAN. For Cárdenas' PRD, on the other hand, the National University is still a provider of personnel, on a large scale. From being student leaders in the 1980s and '90s, the PRD's university cadres have gone on to fill seats in the Federal District legislative assembly and federal congress, as well as the government apparatus of the DF. The head of the DF government, Rosario Robles, was a leader of the 1987 student strike, and later part of the leadership of the STUNAM university workers union. The head of the PRD legislative assembly fraction, the head of the PRD in the capital, and the heads of several *delegaciones* (subdivisions of the Mexico City government, equivalent to boroughs in New York City) are all former student leaders. A number of top PRDers are married to prominent professors and academic researchers at UNAM. As for the PAN, many of its leaders, along with top capitalist spokesmen like the head of the Coparmex employers federation, would like to shut UNAM down altogether.

But while the PRD did not favor the introduction of tuition, it certainly didn't want to see a movement with "radical" overtones arise. It was the PRD which started all the hubbub against the "ultras," which negotiated with Barnés in June to make the fees "voluntary." From the moment the CGH rejected this maneuver, Cárdenas' party became the spearhead of opposition to the strike. At the end of July, the PRD sponsored the proposal of the "eight emeritus professors," to "suspend" (but not cancel) the fee hike. In October, the *cardenistas* were behind the so-called "five schools proposal," which became the basis for De la Fuente's "institutional proposal" in January, to "put in abeyance" the fees, as well as to hold a "university congress" under administration control. At the same time, the PRD repeatedly sent its *granadero* riot police against the strikers, and whipped up attempts to organize strikebreaking. Following De la Fuente's plebiscite fraud in January (officially supported by the PRD and Rosario Robles), the PRD in cahoots with the UNAM administration organized scabs to attempt to take the main campus by assault.

It was only after the failure of the PRD's attempts at *scabherding* that the federal government decided to send in the paramilitary police. And following this gross violation of university autonomy, while Cárdenas pretends to defend the hundreds of imprisoned students, the academic René Drucker, a former official of the PRD government of the Federal District, joined De la Fuente's team, making official a kind of joint PRI/PRD government at UNAM. In the division of labor among the political representatives of capital, above and beyond their internal conflicts, the *Cárdenas popular front* played a front-line role in the joint effort of the bourgeoisie to undermine and later smash the strike. To defeat this holy alliance of capital and *win* the strike it was necessary to *break* with all wings of the bourgeoisie and wage a *revolutionary class struggle* extending from the students to university workers and key sectors of the proletariat. ■

## Chronicle of an Outrage Foretold

# “Operation Provocation”

When the Federal Preventive Police burst into the Che Guevara Auditorium at UNAM's School of Philosophy and Literature at 6:35 a.m. on Sunday, February 6, brandishing their riot batons and arresting the entire assembly of the students' Strike General Assembly (CGH), it was an operation that had been foretold long beforehand. Some academics and intellectuals of the “democratic left” (i.e., apologists for the Party of the Democratic Revolution of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas) whined that they had been “betrayed” and that this was not the “outcome” they had desired for the strike. These Pharisees want to wash their hands after backing each and every one of the steps taken by rector Juan Ramón de la Fuente to prepare this act of state force. As part of the PRI's strategy of provocation, the PRD intelligentsia soaped the rope for the lynching of the CGH. This infamy will forever be the mark of these kept literati of the regime.

As was obvious from the beginning, De la Fuente was put in not in order to carry out “dialogue” but to suppress the strike movement. The beginning of the year brought the rector's “institutional proposal” and with it a barrage of media hype. Yet this plan did not grant a single one of the strike's six demands. Immediately, university authorities began holding meetings in the different schools and departments, excluding not only strikers but also sympathetic professors. It was a hasty “discussion”: in four and a half hours the University Council approved the rector's proposal; the CGH was given a deadline of 90 hours to respond. When the strike council criticized the “proposal” but unexpectedly agreed to discuss it, the rector took an “all or nothing” stance and called a plebiscite for January 20. The UNAM administration said that if this yielded a favorable vote, it would “obey” this “mandate” and “implement” the “institutional proposal.”

We have noted that the *plebiscite*, a mechanism in which the population is asked to vote for or against a particular measure, is one of the favorite instruments of bonapartist regimes seeking to create the appearance that their arbitrary rule enjoys popular support. True to this tradition, the UNAM admin-



José Luis Magaña/AP

**Militarized federal police storm Preparatory School No. 3 on February 1. This provocation against the CGH set the stage for the arrest of 1,000 students.**

istration announced the content of its plebiscite three days before it was held, adding to approval of the “proposal” a second “question”: should the proposal “conclude” the strike? None of the PRD-affiliated “moderates” even raised an eyebrow. This corporate vote produced a result of 89 percent in favor of the rector's proposal. The press dutifully reported that “the majority” had supported the rector and not the CGH. But what about the 600,000 people who voted in the referendum organized by the CGH on January 18-19, including 100,000 UNAM students, teachers and workers, 85 percent of them in support of the strikers' demands? They were never mentioned again. For the major media, “the silent majority” had finally spoken, with a monolithic voice, in favor of the authorities. Modern marketing techniques prepared the triumphal entry of the riot batons.

With the rector's *diktat* strengthened by the supposed agreement of “the university community,” events accelerated rapidly. On January 25, the rector arrives at Ciudad Universitaria to hand over the results of the plebiscite, but is unable to keep going due to the presence of a swarm of pseudo-photographers. In the pushing and shoving, someone tugs at the rector's suit. The authorities point to the presence of “provocateurs” among the strikers, but the provocateurs had a different origin: adopting journalistic disguise is a registered trademark of Gobernación (the interior ministry). In unison, the bourgeois

media—not just the captive press of the PRI but also that of the PRD and PAN—denounces the CGH. Columnists of *El Universal* (27 January) lay out the scenario of what is to come: “The drums of war, of police intervention, of the use of public force, have begun to sound around the conflict in the National University, where the strike could be resolved one of these mornings,” wrote one. Another added:

“The warning is clear: any facility which is not handed over peacefully by the strikers will be cleared out with the support of the Federal Preventive Police...on the pretext of rumors that there are guns or explosives.”

The strategy of provocation reached its high point in the incident at Preparatory School No. 3 on February 1. This was used by De la Fuente as the pretext to ask for federal police intervention against the students, which led to the arrest of 256 strikers that day. The administration later accused the CGH of carrying out an “attack,” calling it “inexplicable.” But the explanation is quite simple: the strikers weren’t the ones who attacked, but instead were the victims of an elaborately staged provocation. The yellow press circulated the story that “ultras” from the CGH had brutally beaten “university workers,” which even, inflammatory media reports initially claimed, resulted in some “deaths.” They waved around photos of the bloody face of one of these “workers.” But the next day, *El Universal* (4 February) published an article revealing that the individual in question,



Daniel Aguilar/*El Universal*

**Rector Juan Ramón de la Fuente leaving the former building of the Holy Inquisition after announcing ultimatum to the CGH. The police takeover of UNAM campuses and jailing of student strikers was already being prepared.**

Victor Cortés Briseño, was a division chief in the campus police and that he headed up a group of shock troops. But what really drew attention was his pay stub, indicating that he receives a salary of almost 30,000 pesos (US\$3,000) a month, three times that of a full-time regular professor.

Even more interesting was his notebook, where he had written down the names of 27 thugs he had hired as well as the private security agencies Ópalo and Rubí, where he had rented their services. A video made by the CGH surfaced a few days later, showing that “a hundred employees of the UNAM and unidentified individuals participated actively and for more two hours heaved rocks, sticks and bottles at the strikers” (*La Crónica*, 14 February). A shocked columnist for the paper commented:

“Dozens of obvious and cowardly paramilitaries appear inside the Prepa in groups of four. Some with crew-cuts, hefty types, almost all of them in their 40s; some of them with dark glasses like those used by the Judicial Police... “It is clear, perfectly clear, that the students had nothing in their hands. You can see how the [paramilitaries] inside the building regrouped. How they provoked the students. How they started the aggression....

“You can clearly hear the desperate appeals the students make to each other not to fall into the provocation.

“You can see the projectiles thrown out of the building toward the students: rocks, sticks, firecrackers, metal bars....

“You can see how those paid by the administration, and certainly by other government agencies, incited the students to respond. It is clear they were aiming to kill. It is only due to providence that we aren’t lamenting dead students. “The Mexican government will have to explain to the entire world why those who organized this brawl are not in jail, while the students who did everything possible to avoid it are.

“And the TV and radio, whose cameras and tape recorders can also be seen in the video, will have to explain why they only broadcast, duly edited, what was convenient for the government.”

This crass provocation was the preparation for the attack of February 6. There will be no explanation; it is the “official story.”

### “Auxilio UNAM” Out of STUNAM and the UNAM!

The revelations about the February 1 incident also throw light into the dark cellars of the administration. When it was revealed that those inside Prepa 3 were not “anti-strike students” nor “workers” but cops, thugs and hired goons, all of a sudden information appeared on how “the UNAM security services set up a special group, called ‘Sigma,’ which until December 1999 was called ‘Cobra’ and included some 400 members” (*El Universal*, 4 February). Further on the report cites the figure of 680 members of this shock troop, which was formed with the participation of dozens of former members of the Judicial Police. The article continues:

“Some of the operatives and ‘fingermen’ (personnel dedicated to spying activities and following suspects) of the Grupo Sigma were present during the attempt to reclaim the Law School.... Among those present was Brígido Navarrete, director of UNAM Community Protection [the

campus police force formerly named and still known as 'Auxilio UNAM'].

"The Grupo 'Sigma' also had a strong strategic presence in front of the Administration Tower when Juan Ramón de la Fuente attempted to hand the CGH the results of the university plebiscite of January 20...."

During the 20 years that Brígido Navarrete has been in his position, these groups of provocateurs have had different names, among them "Pumas," "Zorros" (foxes), "Aguilas" (eagles), and "Condores." A leader of the UNAM Workers Union (STUNAM) admitted "that some union members might have been involved with them." The STUNAM newspaper, *Unión* (25 January), reported that the Security Department "goes into the slums to hire poor guys who need money" and orders these mercenaries to "act like people who don't want the strike." Other tasks included "mixing in with the demonstrations of the students' CGH, causing disasters like what happened at the U.S. embassy and leaving students trapped." The article also reports that "death threats are the order of the day in the security sector." One of these armed *empleados de confianza* (non-union employees), who was seen in photos of the scab attack against the Law School and also at Prepa 3, was later arrested after attempting a hold-up in southern Mexico City.

A particular job of the UNAM's repressive apparatus is running the various groups of *porros*. After the federal police operation at Prepa 3, professors at the CCH Vallejo (a community college linked to UNAM) announced that the Grupo Cobra/Sigma has a close connection to the "March 3" group of *porro* thugs which operates at that campus. At the beginning of January, slogans were painted on the walls of Prepa 8 from the MURO, an organization of fascist *porros* from the 1960s and '70s similar to the "Tecos" at the Autonomous University of Guadalajara. Their graffiti proclaimed, "Pinochet is Innocent" and "*Ruhe und Ordnung*" (peace and order, in German). Football teams from various schools have also served as *porros* to beat up leftist activists, as have corporatist youth groups associated with the PRI's Revolutionary Youth, mainly in the Law and Engineering schools, and always in close coordination with the "*orejas*" (paid spies) and bosses of Auxilio UNAM. The *porros* not only harass students, they also kill. Under rector José Sarukhán, a high official of Auxilio UNAM "was involved in the assassination of a student, who was killed by *porros* under his control" (*El Universal*, 5 February).

The same day that the references to the administration's shock troops were published, STUNAM's council of representatives voted to investigate the operations of the UNAM security department. But to call for "cleaning out" Auxilio UNAM, or abolishing the Grupo Cobra/Sigma, as does STUNAM union leader Agustín Rodríguez Fuentes, is simply putting a new face on the same police apparatus. These sinister repressors must be thrown out of the UNAM, and the

**Luchamos porque la universidad no cierre sus puertas a los hijos de los trabajadores. Por defender el derecho de todos a estudiar. Y por eso decimos: La educación debe ser gratuita.**



**CGH poster proclaims: "We fight so that the university won't shut its doors to the children of the working people." The fight for free public higher education is a class struggle against capital, and requires a revolutionary working-class program and leadership to win.**

administration's whole repressive apparatus dismantled! And as the Grupo Internacionalista has insisted from before the beginning of the strike, STUNAM must expel from its ranks the members of Auxilio UNAM. They are cops, agents of the class enemy, and thus they have no place in a workers organization. This question has become even more urgent in recent days: on the one hand, more than 60 union members participated in the February 1 provocation against the students' CGH, while on the other hand at least 51 university workers were arrested by the federal police in their February 6 invasion. *Auxilio UNAM out of STUNAM and the UNAM!*

The lengthy UNAM strike has clearly revealed the need for a revolutionary class-struggle program and leadership which fights the PRI and its rector and its accomplices of the PRD; which fights to throw the pro-PRD bureaucracy out of STUNAM; and which unmasks the reformist and centrist leftists who are the caboose of the Cárdenas popular front, in order to forge a revolutionary workers party which draws the lessons of defeats in order to prepare victory. ■

**Uma obra imprescindível**

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

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## Leaflets and Statements of the Grupo Internacionalista/ Internationalist Group Published During the Strike

23 June 1999

# Mexico UNAM Strike: Mobilize Worker-Student Defense!

On April 20, students at the National University of Mexico (UNAM) occupied their campuses in a strike to protest a drastic “fee hike”—in effect the introduction of tuition—that would mean the exclusion of tens of thousands of poor and working-class students. Now in its third month, the struggle at the largest university in Latin America (260,000 students) has been the object of virulent denunciations and threats from Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo, while all the bourgeois parties have called for an end to the strike. However, the student strike has won the support of significant sectors of the labor movement, including university workers, electrical workers (themselves facing the threat of privatization) and militant teachers, who occupied the center of Mexico City for weeks.

The Grupo Internacionalista/México has actively intervened, emphasizing that what is posed is a sharp *class* struggle and calling for a joint strike of UNAM (students and workers), SME (electrical workers) and CNTE (primary and secondary school teachers). The GI has also fought for and helped organize worker-student defense of the strike against threatened



AP/José Luis Magaña

Some 100,000 striking students of Mexico's National University and supporters march May 21 in defense of free public education.

attempts to break it. We print below a translation of a 23 June 1999 supplement to *El Internacionalista* on the strike. The leaflet included motions (see below) presented by supporters of the GI in meetings of different facultades (schools) and at the Strike General Council (CGH).

### Bourgeois Parties Demand End to Occupation, Threaten Police Attack

## UNAM Strike at the Crossroads Mobilize the Working Class to Win!

### Break with the Cardenista Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Two months after it began, the student strike at Mexico's National University (UNAM) is approaching a decisive juncture. In recent days senators from the PRI and the PAN [the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party and rightist National Action Party] have called for using “public force”—in other

words, a police assault—to “rescue” UNAM, while spokesmen for the PRD [Cauhtémoc Cárdenas' bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution] and the bourgeois media have launched a hysterical red-baiting witchhunt. “UNAM Imperils National Security,” screams *Reforma* (21 June), basing itself on reports leaked by the Ministry of the Interior (Gobernación) and “various intelligence sources.” *Proceso* (20 June) rails in true McCarthyite style against supposed “ul-

tras” and even “mega-ultras” in the UNAM Strikers General Council (CGH). “Distinguished” professors demand that the federal and Mexico City governments, run by the PRI and PRD respectively, go after the strikers with an “iron hand.”

They claim the university administration has already given in by declaring that student *cuotas* (fees, or tuition) will be “voluntary” and that strikers will receive “amnesty.” However, this would leave intact the drastic tuition hike (from 20 centavos to almost 1,378 pesos [approximately US\$150] a year, equivalent to a month’s pay for many skilled workers) so that payments can be made “obligatory” after the wave of protests recedes. As for the supposed amnesty, it would be inapplicable to those accused of offenses against persons or property. Now, under a hail of threats and escalating provocations, including the threat of state repression as in 1968 [when hundreds of student protestors were murdered in the Tlatelolco Massacre], a dialogue is supposed to be held with UNAM rector Francisco Barnés in the Chamber of Deputies. In this supposed dialogue, the CGH representatives will be subject to the direct pressure of the bourgeois politicians who have repeatedly demanded an end to the strike. To follow this path, as the CGH proposes, will lead to defeat and the abandonment of the defense of free public university education which tens of thousands of students have been fighting for over the course of more than 60 days on strike.

How can this onslaught, unleashed by *all* the bourgeois parties and the capitalist state apparatus, be resisted? It is not enough for strikers to dig in at Ciudad Universitaria [University City, the huge UNAM campus in Mexico’s capital], foraying out periodically for so-called “forceful actions” like blocking roads and highways. What is required is a fundamentally different strategy, a *class-struggle* program and leadership to mobilize the tremendous power of the proletariat, the only class capable of stopping the escalation of repression currently being readied and defeating the bourgeois front that has been formed against this strike. As for the hue and cry over the temporary shutdown of a number of research institutes, it’s obvious that all UNAM facilities should be shut tight and that the STUNAM university workers union should have stopped work and been part of this strike from the very beginning.

The Grupo Internacionalista has insisted that to win, the strike must be extended! Really forceful actions are needed—not to inconvenience a few motorists but to break the encirclement and siege of the strike that the authorities are organizing, and to hit the ruling class where it hurts. *The STUNAM, the SME electrical workers union, the CNTE teachers movement* and other union sectors should join the UNAM students in a powerful joint strike, against the attempt to undercut public education and privatize the electrical industry. It is also urgent to organize worker-student defense against the repressive onslaught.

An outcry has been raised against the supposed “politicization” of the strike. The reality is that from the outset this has been a fight against the PRI regime’s policy of privatization, which obeys the directives set forth by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which have spurred attacks against university students in a whole series of Latin

American and European countries. UNAM rector Barnés, a puppet of Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo, doesn’t hide his politics. He wants cops on campus and strike militants in jail. Some “dialogue”! But it’s not just the PRI. While at the beginning various politicians from the bourgeois-nationalist PRD expressed vague sympathy for the UNAM strike, *today the PRD is leading the campaign to sink the strike*. They claim that “ultras” want to cause problems for the Mexico City government headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Meanwhile, Cárdenas himself declared that “if there are roadblocks we will use the police force to unblock them” (*El Economista*, 17 June).

The Grupo Internacionalista has emphasized since the beginning of this struggle, as we have stressed for many years, that it is necessary to *break with the Cardenista popular front and forge a revolutionary workers party*. As we noted in a leaflet last March, the student leaders who follow the PRD, “like the university administration itself and the heads of the ruling PRI, PAN and PRD..., view this conflict as a prelude to next year’s elections, and they want to avoid any problems for Cárdenas’ presidential campaign” (see “Workers, Students—For a Class-Struggle Mobilization Against the Bourgeois Attack,” *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999). Now our warning has been fully confirmed. Columnist Carlos Ramírez recently wrote that “Cárdenas and the Mexico City PRD...had to confront complaints from strikers that they were maneuvering to prevent the outbreak of the strike in order to avoid damaging Cárdenas’ chances in the year 2000” (*El Universal*, 7 June).

Ramírez revealed that local PRD leader Carlos Imaz, a founder of the CEU (University Students Council) which led the 1987 UNAM strike, along with the head of the PRD parliamentary group in the municipal legislature, Martí Batres, a leader of the 1990 UNAM strike, met with CGH leaders, and that UNAM rector Barnés asked Cárdenas to intervene to put an end to the strike. It was subsequently reported that Cárdenas had met secretly with strike leaders and that the plan to declare the tuition hike “voluntary” was negotiated directly with the head of the Mexico City government. Since then the unconditional followers of the PRD in the CGH—organized in the Red de Estudiantes (Student Network), the “historic” CEU tendency and the Comité Estudiantil Metropolitano (Metropolitan Student Committee)—have gone all-out to lead the strike into the channels of “dialogue,” the better to sell it out, following the pattern set by Imaz and Martí Batres. This is how the ambitious make a career for themselves in the PRD. Yet the so-called “ultras” of the Left Student Bloc (BUI) follow the same line, just a step or two behind.

In the case of the En Lucha (In Struggle) tendency, based in the School of Sciences, its representatives said towards the beginning of the strike that they opposed the Barnés “dialogue,” but then they voted in favor of accepting the administration’s proposal. Others, such as the leaders of the Political Science students, want a bit more of a brouhaha. But to what end? Their aim is to pressure Cárdenas and the PRD so that they in turn will put pressure on the PRI. Other groups, such as the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS), which is part of the pseudo-Trotskyist Morenito tendency, or the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS) and the student journal





Tens of thousands of strikers march on Mexico City center on June 10, anniversary of murderous attack on students by police agents in 1971.

*ContraCorriente*, talk about imaginary general strikes, which is their all-purpose formula. But they too conceive of the struggle as simply a democratic one, and tail after the PRD.

For its part, the Grupo Espartaquista de México (Mexican section of the International Communist League) has been strikingly absent from this convulsive struggle, paying occasional brief visits to the massive strike assemblies. Since they now deny the very existence of a popular front which ties the workers to Cárdenas and his PRD, they do nothing to fight against it. Meanwhile, they have taken up the slogan of "national sovereignty," the watchword of the nationalists and popular frontists. In contrast, the Grupo Internacionalista has fought for a class-struggle leadership against both the self-proclaimed Cardenistas and the BUI leftists, insisting that the strike confronts a *capitalist* onslaught which can be defeated only by openly combating the bourgeois PRD and launching a revolutionary working-class offensive.

Last week the government of president Ernesto Zedillo decided to invest 22 billion pesos (US\$2.4 billion) in Banca Serfin to save it from bankruptcy. This is more than *three times* the UNAM budget. The bank bailout will total *850 billion pesos* (US\$92 billion), more than the entire public foreign debt. The seven Mexican members of Forbes' list of the world's richest men have personal fortunes totaling more than 200 billion pesos (US\$22 billion). Compare these sums with the few million pesos they want to squeeze out of low-income families and students through the fees pushed by Barnés! It's clear that the purpose of the Barnés Plan is not to raise funds but to exclude tens of thousands of students from the largest university in Latin America.

The UNAM strike has awakened widespread sympathy among the working people of Mexico City and other areas. The fight to defend free public higher education coincided with protests by the SME (Mexican Electricians Union) against plans to privatize the electrical industry. Shortly thereafter, thousands of

members of the CNTE teachers movement carried out sit-ins for several weeks in the Zócalo (Mexico City's central plaza) and in front of the Secretariat of Public Education, demanding a 100 percent wage increase, cancellation of plans to "municipalize" primary and secondary education, as well as the satisfaction of the UNAM strikers' demands. Yet in the 39 days of the teachers' sit-in, the CGH leaders never made a serious effort to unite these struggles in a single fist. At the same time, the leaders of the CNTE, and above all of the SME, eventually demobilized the union ranks instead of launching a joint counteroffensive. Throughout this period, the Grupo Internacionalista insistently called for a joint strike together with the SME and CNTE.

While the UNAM administration hardens its position, the bulk of the student leaders and activists have opted for the perspective of negotiations, calling for dialogue with Barnés and/or his sidekicks. Instead of orienting to the working class, they focus on so-called "civil society," asking the petty, medium and big bourgeoisie to mobilize in their favor. This will be the popular-frontist approach of the Front in Defense of Free Public Education which is making its debut today. This has been and will continue to be the policy of the EZLN in Chiapas. But the agreements which the Zapatistas negotiated with representatives of the federal government have not been carried out, nor will any deal negotiated with the UNAM administration under the auspices of the Mexican Congress. The reality is that harsh repression, such as occurred in 1968, could be unleashed at any moment. We all know what happened in 1968 on the night of October 2 [the Tlatelolco Massacre], but few talk about what happened earlier that day. Representatives of the students' National Strike Council (CNH) met with representatives of president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz to arrange conditions for a "dialogue"; they thought they had achieved "positive results" (Luis González de Alba, *Los días y los años* [1971]). The next day, after the massacre which claimed hundreds of victims, the CNH delegates found themselves in jail along with hundreds of other students.

We call for the *abolition of the UNAM administration and its replacement by student-teacher-worker control of the university*; for the abolition of tuition (fees) and for subsidies to students who need them in order to complete their studies. It is clear that these demands cannot be won by a movement which limits itself to the striking UNAM campus. Repeated marches by CNTE teachers and the enthusiastic participation of SME electrical workers in UNAM student demonstrations show the potential for a struggle which extends to the proletariat. But in order to realize this perspective, what is required is a revolutionary leadership fighting to mobilize the working

class to break with the Cardenista popular front and forge a revolutionary workers party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. In semicolonial countries like Mexico even "democratic" questions can be resolved only through socialist revolution extending to the heart of imperialism in the U.S. If the Mexican bourgeoisie says the UNAM strike poses a threat to "national security," our response must be to wage the struggle on an international and class-struggle level.

*No capitulation! Extend the strike to win!*

Grupo Internacionalista/League for the Fourth International  
23 June 1999

## Motions Presented by the Grupo Internacionalista

### No to the "Dialogue" Trap! Extend the Strike! UNAM, SME, CNTE: Strike Together Now!

WHEREAS, the UNAM administration's "dialogue" proposal is nothing more than a trap aimed at negotiating an end to the strike at the lowest possible cost;

WHEREAS, it would be an illusion to think that the administration, instrument of the bourgeoisie at the head of the university bureaucracy, can reform itself to serve the interests of students, the workers and oppressed;

WHEREAS, the imposition of "fees," a means of class exclusionism, is part of the onslaught of privatizations and anti-union attacks which also threatens the electrical workers and teachers currently in struggle; and

WHEREAS, what is needed is to win the strike, abolishing tuition and other restrictive "reforms" (such as elimination of the automatic entry to UNAM after graduation from affiliated secondary schools); to abolish the administration and establish worker-teacher-student control of UNAM, to guarantee access to a free quality university education for all, with a living stipend for all who need it; therefore be it

RESOLVED:

1. To categorically reject the "dialogue" with the university authorities and strikebreakers;
2. Not to end the strike but rather to extend it to other universities (Metropolitan University, Polytechnic Institute, Chapingo, etc.), schools and key sectors of the workers movement, as part of a class-struggle fight against the bourgeoisie's onslaught of repression and starvation measures against the working people. For a joint strike of the UNAM, SME and CNTE, now!

### Break with the Cardenista Popular Front! For Worker-Student Defense!

WHEREAS, after more than two months of arduous struggle, the UNAM strike has gained the support of hundreds of thousands of workers and others who identify with this struggle

against the capitalist onslaught and hope it will lead to a fight against this system of hunger and misery; and

WHEREAS, the bourgeois authorities are threatening to use violence and repression to terrorize the strikers, from the administration's attempts to instigate an attack by hired thugs (*porros*) against the UNAM schools, to the commission of the Chamber of Deputies which is seeking to pressure an end to the strike alleging the "risk and imminence of a violent confrontation"; and

WHEREAS, the strike has been the target of arbitrary arrests, kidnappings and provocations of all types, including the rape of a young woman activist; and

WHEREAS, the Mexican presidency and Interior Ministry (Gobernación) practice large-scale political espionage and are whipping up a "red" scare in the media, while the Mexico City government is now threatening to unleash its police, with Cárdenas himself stating that "if there are roadblocks we will use the police force to unblock them," one day after the riot police and mobile units dispersed homeless people in Iztapalapa; and

WHEREAS, the Mexican Employers Association (Coparmex) is demanding that Cárdenas intervene to resolve (i.e., put an end to) the university strike, while all the bourgeois parties (including the PRI, PAN, PRD and smaller parties) have issued a joint declaration demanding an end to the strike at the same time as the Cardenista popular front deploys its forces for that purpose; therefore be it

RESOLVED:

1. To organize a worker-student defense to defend pickets and protect the strike. To seek the active participation of the union movement, in particular its most combative sectors. To organize a defense based on mass mobilizations through commissions chosen by the various schools and faculties, responsible to their assemblies and integrated into a central coordinating body.
2. To confirm the prohibition of the "General Directorate for Protection of the Community" (campus cops) on the university campus—police, guards and *porros* (hired thugs) out of the secondary and preparatory schools, University City and other schools! We call on the STUNAM to expel campus security guards from the union.
3. To mobilize the students, workers, teachers and students' families to stop the strikebreaking provocation of "off-campus" classes and exams.
4. To restructure the CGH so it will be capable of leading an all-out struggle, forging a class-struggle leadership that definitively rejects the treacherous "dialogue" with Barnés and his clique and which would take the necessary measures to extend the strike in order to win.
5. To form a joint committee to coordinate efforts with the STUNAM, CNTE, SME, the Colegio de Bachilleres union and other sectors that join the struggle.

## In Face of Threats to UNAM Strike

19 July 1999

# Worker-Student Defense Guards Formed

The student strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), now in its 90th day, is convulsing the Mexican capital. President Ernesto Zedillo has denounced the strike as a "brutal aggression" and demanded that the students "return" the huge campus which they continue to occupy. Threats of police and even military invasion of the university have been rife. Simultaneously new evidence has become available about how the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of hundreds of student strikers was ordered straight from the presidential palace. Everyone is aware of the possibility of a "new '68." But this time key sectors of the labor movement have begun to mobilize to defend the students. *Worker-student defense brigades* have been formed including members of the university workers union (STUNAM), and beginning on July 15 the powerful

Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) has dispatched squads of its members to stand guard against a possible attack by the authorities. Other unions have indicated their support. The prospect of facing organized workers contingents can give Mexico's capitalist rulers pause, as such a confrontation could have unpredictable consequences.

As we write, several hundred SME and STUNAM workers are participating daily in round-the-clock defense guards together with students, thousands of whom have occupied university installations for the last three months. The SME-STUNAM-student brigades began at the School of Philosophy and Literature, one of the largest components of the sprawling Ciudad Universitaria (CU), and have since been established at a number of UNAM schools, including Cuautitlán, Iztacala, Aragón and other campuses. This is an extremely significant development in the class struggle, whose importance extends beyond Mexico. The Grupo Internacionalista/League for the Fourth International has played a key role in initiating and helping organize the worker-student defense guards, as part of its struggle to extend the student strike to key sectors of the working class which has the power to take on the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist patrons.

The UNAM student strike has been front-page news in the country's leading papers almost daily for the last three months. All wings of the ruling class want to find some way to put an end to the occupation of the largest university in Latin America, with some 270,000 students on 38 campuses. Following the directives of the World Bank and International Mon-



SME  
**Workers defense guards of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) at the National University, July 1999.**

etary Fund, the ruling party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has run Mexico uninterruptedly for the last 70 years, wants to crush this knot of resistance to its policies of wholesale privatization and gutting of public higher education. The bourgeois-nationalist opposition party, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a leading presidential candidate and head of the Federal District government, has for some time now sought to put an end to such wrenching social turbulence in the capital. But the strike continues.

For the last two weeks, a charade has been carried out in the Palacio de Minería in downtown Mexico City where flunkies of the UNAM rector and representatives of the students' Strike General Council (CGH) have been discussing ground rules for "dialogue." On Thursday, July 15, the administration issued a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum, refusing to discuss the strikers' six-point set of demands and insisting that they turn over the UNAM campus forthwith – i.e., abandon the strike. In the aftermath, reports have circulated that an assault on the occupied university is increasingly likely.

The UNAM rector, Francisco Barnés de Castro, a veteran PRI bureaucrat, last March ordered the imposition of a hefty tuition in the guise of drastically increased student "fees," carrying out a commitment of the Mexican government to the World Bank. Barnés has refused to talk to students or other opponents of this measure that would in effect abolish free public higher education, instead issuing a series of deadlines, ultimatums and decrees by the dutiful University Council. The council had de-

clared that student strikers had to turn over the campuses by July 7 "or else." But the deadline came and went. Instead, the first workers defense brigades appeared at the CU.

The Grupo Internacionalista has been agitating from the outset for extending the strike to include the SME, dissident teachers of the CNTE and other sectors, while calling for a break from the popular front around PRD leader Cárdenas which has tied militant workers as well as peasants and students to this wing of the bourgeoisie. The GI introduced motions concretizing this perspective in meetings of colleges, schools and the Strike General Council (see the 23 June GI leaflet, "UNAM Strike at the Crossroads, Mobilize the Working Class to Win!"). On July 2, the assembly of the College of Philosophy passed a GI-introduced motion calling for, among other points: "1. To organize a worker-student defense to defend pickets and protect the strike. To seek the active participation of the union movement, in particular its most combative sectors." A Liaison Commission was named, including a militant of the Grupo Internacionalista, to establish contact with the unions.

Contact was established with the STUNAM, SME, CNTE and other unions. Already on July 1, Grupo Internacionalista supporters had attended a meeting of the union of workers of the Metropolitan University (SITUAM). At the invitation of SITUAM workers, a GI spokesman urged that union to strike in support of the UNAM struggle. In a near unanimous vote, the union decided to stage a one-day solidarity strike the next day. On July 2, the three Metropolitan University campuses were solidly shut down, with picket lines of dozens of workers. The GI organized a bus load of students from the UNAM to go to the campus at Xochimilco; the bus drivers union SUTAU-100, whose 17,000 members were fired by Zedillo in a brutal union-busting attack in 1995, dispatched a bus to transport them. Striking SITUAM workers and the UNAM students marched from the Xochimilco campus to Preparatory School No. 5, also on strike, in a show of solidarity. In the afternoon, representatives of the SME, STUNAM, SITUAM and CNTE addressed a demonstration of some 5,000 in downtown Mexico City declaring their support for the UNAM strike.

That evening, workers from the Central Library at the UNAM invited a spokesman of the Grupo Internacionalista to attend their union meeting to present arguments for STUNAM joining the strike and for the formation of worker-student defense guards. The call was well-received, and on Monday, July 5, GI supporters led a brigade of UNAM students and STUNAM workers to an installation of the Central Power and Light company to talk with the SME workers about forming worker-student defense brigades. The following day, while the leaders of the Strike Committee (CGH) were meeting with the administration representatives, a group of workers and students gathered at the School of Philosophy to discuss the possibility of forming joint defense brigades.

On July 7, the day of Barnes' "deadline," a meeting of the STUNAM's General Representatives Council was held to discuss what to do. At the workers' invitation, the GI representative spoke to the council urging them to join the strike, form worker-student defense guards and remove campus cops from

the union. The Council voted to form defense brigades, declaring that campus workers would give up their vacations (scheduled to begin on July 9), and "call[ing] on all workers and union delegates to organize solidarity guards with the strike movement." In the afternoon a "human chain" of 600-1,000 students, campus workers and parents was set up in front of the main entrance to CU on Insurgentes Avenue. That night reports circulated of movements of Mexican Army units from outlying areas into Military Camp No. 1, the staging ground for the 1968 massacre. But the rumored attack never came.

The bourgeoisie was livid. *Excelsior* (7 July), the authoritative pro-government paper, denounced "student violence" by "minority groups, manipulated with obscure aims," and complained bitterly about the union's intention to "set up guards and protect the strikers, in the face of concerns that the university authorities and the Federal Government are preparing a 'violent outcome' to the problem." A couple of days later *Excelsior* vituperated against "ultraleftists" who were out to "destroy the UNAM," but also reported a growing body of (bourgeois) "reluctance to use the police force" against the strikers. Simultaneously, the federal government announced the transfer of an entire Military Police brigade of some 5,000 MPs to the newly formed Federal Preventive Police. This brigade is the same one whose members executed youths in death-squad style in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Mexico City in 1997. Now these infamous killers will be used to "armor" the regime against perceived threats as next year's presidential elections approach. Their first target could be the UNAM strikers.

The Grupo Internacionalista continued to push for strengthening the defense guards, in particular approaching the electrical workers union. On July 15, GI supporters went to SME headquarters to again urge union leaders to dispatch workers to join in defense brigades at the struck campuses. The students received a positive response, and that afternoon several dozen SME members, including the union's Central Committee (executive board), went out to the School of Philosophy at Ciudad Universitaria where they put up a banner declaring, "The SME Supports the Students on Strike at UNAM." The electrical workers were enthusiastically greeted by students and by a delegation of a dozen STUNAM workers who had been participating in defense activities. A welcoming meeting included remarks from the SME, other students and the GI, which stressed that the formation of worker-student defense guards pointed to the need for a joint strike against the government's privatization offensive.

Since July 15, worker-student defense brigades have spread to a number of UNAM campuses and installations. In addition to the danger of a police or military assault, there is the threat of attack by *porros* (hired thugs), which university authorities have used in the past. Close to 400 SME members have been participating daily in the defense guards organized on rotating eight-hour shifts. Additional unions have indicated interest in joining the brigades. The SME and other "independent" unions (in contrast to the PRI's corporatist labor fronts) have often talked solidarity, while in fact subordinating the workers to Cárdenas and the popular front. Today effec-

tive action in support of the UNAM strike runs directly up against this class-collaborationist front, and requires a revolutionary leadership capable of waging sharp class struggle. The formation of worker-student defense guards is an important step. Leon Trotsky, in the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, underlined:

“Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers’ groups for self-defense.*”

As the Grupo Internacionalista has repeatedly stressed, the formation of worker-student defense guards and the struggle to extend the UNAM student strike to key sectors of the labor movement are part of a strategy to mobilize the working class in struggle against all sectors of the capitalist ruling class. Where the CGH and union leaders seek to pressure Cárdenas to pres-

sure the PRI, seeking a treacherous “dialogue” with the bourgeoisie, the GI has warned against this trap and called instead to rely on the power of the proletariat. The GI has insisted on the need for the working class and oppressed to break with the Cárdenas popular front and forge a revolutionary workers party. Where student and union leaders appeal to Mexican nationalism, posing the struggle in terms of defending “national sovereignty,” the GI has emphasized the need for an *internationalist* struggle against this *capitalist* (not just “neo-liberal”) offensive against workers and students from the Southern Cone of South America to Europe, an offensive emanating from the centers of imperialism. It can only be defeated through socialist revolution extending to the imperialist heartland in the U.S., where Mexican and other immigrant workers form an important and growing sector of the proletariat.

*Mobilize the working class to win the UNAM strike! Break with the Cárdenas popular front—forge a revolutionary workers party!*

3 June 1999

## In Defense of Yugoslavia Against NATO Attack UNAM Strike Sends Aid to Yugoslav Workers

### Internationalist Group Letter to COBAS (Italy)

SLAI Cobas Milano, Italy

Dear comrades,

On Thursday, June 3, just before midnight, a meeting of the Consejo General de Huelga (Strike General Council) of the students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) voted to send a contribution to the Yugoslav workers being bombed by NATO. The meeting, attended by hundreds, represented the tens of thousands of UNAM students who have been on strike for the past six weeks, occupying their campus 24 hours a day fighting against a vicious “fee” increase that would lead to the exclusion of many poor and working-class students. The motion was introduced by supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, and had previously been voted by student assemblies of the College of Philosophy and the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature. The text of the motion (translated into English) follows:

“CONSIDERING the crucial importance of international solidarity, and

CONSIDERING that the defeat of the imperialist aggression and defense of Yugoslavia are of vital importance for the struggle of the exploited and oppressed worldwide,

The UNAM students on strike

RESOLVE: To donate 1,000 pesos to the workers of the Zastava factory, destroyed by the NATO bombs when it was occupied by the workers themselves, at a cost of



Striking Mexican students sent aid to Yugoslav workers at Zastava auto factory, here repairing production line after NATO bomb attack.

tens of lives, and to the workers of Yugoslavia. We are sending this donation and our combative greetings through the ‘Sottoscrizione per gli operai di Zastava’ initiated by the SLAI Cobas of Alfa Romeo.”

The Mexican students would greatly appreciate it if you could convey their greetings to the Yugoslav workers courageously facing NATO’s bombs.

We encourage working people and opponents of imperialism to join in this initiative and to mobilize the power of the proletariat to defeat the imperialist war through class war.

Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International  
3 June 1999

## Cárdenas' Cops Assault Students, Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front!

10 August 1999

# Following Brutal Cop Attack *Defend, Extend the UNAM Strike!*

In a massive display of wanton cop violence, on Wednesday, August 4, the government of the Federal District (Mexico City), headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, unleashed brutal repression against striking students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). More than 150 members of the *granaderos* (riot police) participated in the assault, along with two dozen motorcycle cops, members of the Grupo Escudo, police dogs and helicopters from the Condor squad. The police furiously attacked a picket of some 200 strikers, indiscriminately beating women, professors, parents and students. The picketers were blocking access to a strikebreaking center where the administration was attempting to carry out registration for a new semester, even though university facilities are still under occupation. Kicks and blows from riot sticks rained on the strikers during the melee as police cocked their pistols and submachine guns. Afterwards, in order to humiliate them, scores of arrested protesters were forced to get down on their knees with their hands against the bars of a fence. According to press reports, a majority of the 107 arrested suffered injury, and six students had to be hospitalized with serious wounds.

The guard dogs of capital carried out their function of maintaining bourgeois law and order by violence. They also demonstrated the collusion between the ruling PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and Cárdenas' PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) against the UNAM strike, giving a taste of what the police takeover of the university facilities, already in preparation, would be like. The police operation was obviously planned beforehand. The riot cops were put on alert beginning at 3 a.m. The police arrived at about 10 a.m. at the Conalep (technical college) where the "off-campus" proceed-



Rubelio Fernández/Reforma

**Mexico City police attack strike picketers on August 4, arresting 107.**

ings were taking place, but didn't attack until three hours later, after an attempt by *porros* (hired goons) to break the line had failed. Hours earlier, UNAM rector Francisco Barnés de Castro sent a written request for the "protection" of the capital police, and during the morning he was with Cárdenas, the PRD head of the Federal District government. The police assault was immediately hailed by the PRI federal Interior Ministry.

The carrying out of "off-campus" activities has been a constant provocation against the strike. From the phony "classes" which university authorities orchestrated in hopes of breaking the strike shortly after it began to the "re-registration" procedures during the last week, this official scabberding serves a definite political purpose: to prepare the way for putting a violent end to the strike which has shaken the capital of the country for the last 112 days. This is unalloyed provocation: Barnés himself admits that the UNAM can't find the thousands of classrooms it would need. Blocking this type of activity, as well as combatting all kinds of scabbing, is vital to the UNAM strike. At the same time, as the Grupo Internacionalista has repeatedly stressed, *it is indispensable to extend and strengthen the worker-student defense of the strike*. This is even more urgent following the *porro* attack on

Preparatory School No. 9, carried out on Saturday, August 7, in which three strikers were badly beaten. These repressive actions come on top of a whole series of provocations carried out by the UNAM police. We call on university workers to demand the expulsion of the campus cops (Auxilio UNAM) from the university workers union, STUNAM.

With their indiscriminate clubbing and mass arrests, the uniformed thugs dealt out a hard lesson on the class character of the *bourgeois state*, which is not neutral but rather the fundamental weapon of the exploiters against the exploited and oppressed. At the same time, they revealed the real content of the "popular front" around Cárdenas which ties the workers to sectors of the bourgeoisie and acts as a barrier against all those who would dare to oppose the dictates of capital. It is necessary to learn well these lessons from the university of the class struggle.

Following this experience, some in the Strike General Council (CGH) have come to the conclusion that it is time to throw in the towel. A leaflet along these lines is circulating which calls for lifting the strike in exchange for Rectoría (the university administration) agreeing to the proposals of the group of emeritus (retired) professors. After reciting how much the strike has accomplished and stating that "the six points of our list of demands are within our reach if we take the path which will enable us to strengthen the strike," this leaflet calls for "strengthening" the strike by calling it off! This is a fairy tale for fools. At the same time as these barely disguised PRD supporters are singing the praises of the strike in order to bury it, Luis Villoro (who was an official advisor of the Zapatista Indian rebels), speaking on behalf of the emeritus professors, stated that, "The strike has been very damaging" ... to justify the same conclusion. So far these siren songs that would inevitably lead to shipwreck of the strike have been rejected. But what is the alternative?

Despite the fact that the CGH assembly of August 7 declared Cárdenas *persona non grata*, i.e., banned him from the struck campuses along with Mexican president Zedillo, Mexico City police chief Gertz Manero and UNAM rector Barnés, there are still illusions that the PRD, a bourgeois party which defends the interests of its class against the proletariat and the oppressed, could represent a "progressive alternative." Following last Wednesday's repression, at various student assemblies there have been calls on Cárdenas to "find out who was really responsible for the repression." Pablo Gómez, the outgoing interim president of the PRD and a former Communist youth leader in the 1968 student strike, declares that the UNAM authorities are setting the stage for a "dangerous and provocative game." Gómez is trying to portray things as if Cárdenas were not responsible for the repression. It's obvious, however, that he is. The popular front around the PRD has as its goal preventing social discontent from overflowing the bounds of bourgeois politics. Recent events are definitive proof of this, and it is necessary to draw the conclusions.

Above all, in order to win the strike it is necessary to forge a class-struggle leadership with a revolutionary program. Now Cárdenas says that "the police will intervene every time that it is

necessary," in order to supposedly prevent more "acts of violence among university students." He has already given proof positive of what he means by this. However, as we quoted in our supplement of August 3, supposed "ultras" such as the supporters of the POS (Socialist Workers Party) said that "the government of Cárdenas must understand that it has to be more flexible in the way in which it applies the law." En Lucha, another reputed "ultra" group, held the view that repression of the student movement would be "very difficult" for Cárdenas, because it would cause "an enormous political cost for him and his party." In contrast, the Grupo Internacionalista has repeatedly declared, for example in our leaflet of October 1998, that "if the popular front cannot control social discontent from within, it will do so by resorting to open repression." Well, then, who was right about Cárdenas? And what are the programmatic conclusions? We already gave them: "Break with the Cárdenas popular front! Forge a revolutionary workers party!"

The truth of the matter is that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has not fallen into any trap or game of the government, contrary to what all the left partisans of the Cárdenas popular front claim; on the contrary, he has offered his services to capital in order to carry out the dirty work for Zedillo and Barnés. For the same reason, Cárdenas has engineered the "opposition" alliance with the PAN (National Action Party) of Vicente Fox, the Mexican front man for Coca-Cola and for agribusiness conglomerates like Green Giant, who dreams of carrying out a new Cristero War\* while keeping his boot on the necks of the peasants and workers of the state of Guanajuato (of which he has been governor). Just prior to the police crackdown, a spokesman for Mexican investors, Ernesto O'Farrill of the Bursamérica brokerage house, declared that their response to a victory of the opposition coalition in the year 2000 elections would be "euphoric." The following day, John Reed, head of Citigroup, opined that "world finance" would wish success to the opposition alliance. *The brutal repression unleashed by Cárdenas against the students is his acceptance of the extended hand of Mexican and imperialist big capital.*

The Grupo Internacionalista has emphasized that the only way to win and defend the strike is by extending it to key sectors of the working class. The students are clearly targets of the same policies of privatization and slashing of social programs which are devastating the workers and poor. Students are being repressed literally in order that the government can take milk from the mouths of children: this year alone, more than 1.2 million people have been excluded from the subsidized milk program Leconsa. The bourgeoisie is billy-clubbing the students today because tomorrow they want to do the same to the electrical workers protesting against privatization of state-owned electricity sector and the layoffs this will bring about. What is urgently needed is common struggle, a class-struggle offensive against the bourgeoisie. The carrying out of a joint strike of the UNAM, the SME elec-

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\*The 1926-29 revolt of Catholic reaction against secular education and anti-clerical government measures following the 1910-17 Mexican Revolution.

trical workers union and the dissident teachers of the CNTE—the potential for which has been shown in the huge demonstrations of students and workers, as well as in the formation of worker-student defense guards in various schools of the UNAM—would open the possibility of defeating the starvation policies being carried out by the government and the entire bourgeoisie in the name of the “free” market.

This class-struggle perspective, however, requires a consistent struggle against the Cárdenas popular front and those who follow its lead. It implies a hard fight to replace the present political line and leadership of the CGH. Although many in the CGH are now more critical towards Cárdenas, and now some school assemblies such as in Political Science correctly say that the struggle is not just against Barnés but against the state, including the Cárdenas government, the truth is that their reaction is that of the “disillusioned,” not that of staunch opponents of the popular front. The present leaderships, including of the “independent” unions, tie the proletariat hand and foot to *cardenismo*. In the SME there is talk of pressures from the Ministry of the Interior (Gobernación), while in the STUNAM there are references to Barnés’ threats of closing the National University in order to threaten the workers, of whom there are many, who understand that now more than ever it is necessary to strengthen the bonds with the striking students.

Today, as the UNAM strike faces the false dilemma of capitulation or violent repression, the Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista emphasize the need to fight for a class-struggle leadership which breaks definitively with all forms of class collaboration and which mobilizes the enormous strength of the proletariat in an international struggle, from Buenos Aires to Athens, to counter the capitalist-imperialist attack on public education and the historic gains of the labor movement. In the context of the “New World Order,” the imposition of these policies goes hand in hand with brutal imperialist ag-

gression, such as the recent NATO war on Yugoslavia.

*Break with the Cárdenas popular front—Reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution!*

Grupo Internacionalista  
10 August 1999

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## Mobilize the Working Class to Win Key Fight Against Capitalist Offensive

24 August 1999

# The Battle for UNAM Student Strike Under Siege



Dulio Rodríguez/La Jornada

University workers union STUNAM confronts scabs, August 23.

*The following article is based on a supplement to El Internacionalista, published on August 3.*

AUGUST 24—The explosive student strike of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), now in its fifth month, is a political struggle of the first order. It is already the largest and longest student walkout in Mexico's history. The thousands of students who are occupying 36 campuses and other university facilities have been the target of threats by President Ernesto Zedillo, insults by the high clergy and demagogic electioneering by candidates in next year's national elections. Now right-wing scabherders are trying to set the stage for a police or military assault by attacking the strike with incendiary devices and trying to break into the huge Ciudad Universitaria campus in southern Mexico City. Vigilance and a militant response by strike defenders have repulsed these provocations.

Fighting for free public higher education, the strikers have repeatedly gone into the streets in the tens of thousands, alongside thousands of militant workers. In an important development, worker-student defense brigades were formed with the

participation of hundreds of electrical workers and university workers. The strike is opposed by all the capitalist parties, from the governing PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and the rightist PAN (National Action Party) to the bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Although the limited demands of the strike are strictly democratic, at bottom it is part of a class struggle. *To win this battle requires breaking politically with all wings of the bourgeoisie and extending the strike to key sectors of the workers movement.*

When UNAM rector Francisco Barnés de Castro had his pliant University Council adopt a new General Schedule of Payments in mid-March, he never expected to unleash such tenacious opposition, nor that a strike by National University students would win support from important unions. It was a major miscalculation, one that Barnés now says he "repents" having taken. From the outset, there was massive opposition to his imposition of student "fees" amounting to 1,360 pesos (US\$150) a year, the equivalent of a month's salary for an industrial worker in

**Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front —  
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

Mexico. The UNAM chief justified the measure arguing that he was "raising the academic level" of the institution and attracting students from "the best private schools." In the face of his refusal to hold a university-wide discussion on this de facto introduction of tuition – which many professors called the beginning of the privatization of the National University – students called a walkout on March 12 which shut down the entire UNAM system with its 270,000 students.

When students threatened to attend the meeting to oppose the vote by the University Council, the administration began putting plywood in doors and welding them shut. When hundreds surrounded the Rectorate Tower in a *plantón* (sit-in), Barnés had the Council meeting held in a secret off-campus location, sending cars to pick up his flunkies. On March 15, after scouring the city, students discovered that the meeting was being held behind barbed wire in the National Institute of Cardiology. Several thousand rushed to the scene where they were met by squads of *porros* (paid thugs) and several hundred Auxilio UNAM campus cops. More than a third of the Council members, including most of its student members and all who opposed the fees, were excluded from the meeting. Three days later, tens of thousands of students marched to Mexico City's Constitution Plaza, the Zócalo, together with thousands of militant electrical workers protesting Zedillo's plan to privatize electrical energy and with supporters of the Indian rebellion led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the southern state of Chiapas.

In mid-April, after several mass student assemblies and another walkout at the 36 UNAM facilities in Mexico City, a Strike General Council (CGH) was formed. A vote was held in which well over 90 percent of the 110,000 who cast ballots opposed the introduction of fees and demanded a public "dialogue" with the rector. When Barnés still refused, the CGH called an unlimited strike starting at midnight, April 20. That night thousands of students occupied Ciudad Universitaria (CU) as well as the numerous junior college level Colleges of Science and Humanities (CCH) and UNAM-linked preparatory schools around the capital. At the Law School, some 1,200 strikers had to force out the director, Máximo Carvajal and a hundred of his thugs. Barricades were erected at CU entrances. In each department and school commissions were set up to take care of security, maintenance, cooking and other essentials.

Over four months later, in the face of an endless barrage of threats, vituperation and constant provocations from the university administration, the bourgeois press and the government, and now escalating *porro* attacks, the red-and-black flag (the traditional symbol of workers strikes in Mexico) still adorns UNAM facilities. From the beginning, hundreds of students stayed through the night, later assisted by workers defense brigades, to guard against attack. CGH meetings are attended by up to 1,000 students or more; on those days, an average of 3,000 meals are prepared. Early on, students took over campus police offices and forced Auxilio UNAM cops off campus. Patrol cars were painted over with slogans denouncing repression. When it was discovered that electronic surveillance was

being coordinated from a building near campus, several hundred students surrounded the building, forced the cops out and carted off boxes of videotapes and files on students. Excerpts from the detailed reports on demonstrations and meetings by the administration's spies (*orejas*) were released to the press along with a *bitácora negra* (Black Book) by the Strike Committee documenting campus repression.

Organizationally, maintaining the strike and occupation of 36 different installations for more than 120 days has been an enormous undertaking. The students have braved police attacks on several occasions. On August 4, the government of the Federal District (Mexico City) headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas dispatched squads of *granaderos* (riot cops) who brutally beat students and parents picketing a scab registration operation, arresting 107. This caused a wave of outrage among the students, where Cárdenas' bourgeois-nationalist PRD has traditionally had strong support. Despite the repression, strikers continued to send out brigades in many cases shut down the UNAM administration's cynical ploy of registering students (and collecting "voluntary" fees from them) for non-existent classes at the struck university. Several student leaders have been kidnapped, beaten and slashed by goons. The strike has also had a tragic toll as a student was crushed by a bus after a demonstration at the Zócalo.

### Class-Struggle Leadership Key to Victory

The battle for UNAM has been largely ignored by the bourgeois media outside of Mexico. One of the few items in the U.S. press, an article in the *Houston Chronicle* (25 July), condescendingly described the student strikers:

"They flaunt hair colors that range from fluorescent marine-green to a bold strip of spray-paint red. Yet they see themselves in the tradition of Cuba's Che Guevara or Mexico's Subcomandante Marcos. "If this were a Hollywood script, it might be tagged 'Emili[an]o Zapata meets Generation X.'"

The university administration also clearly thought that UNAM students were an apolitical Generation X, and figured it could push through its plan to knife free public higher education by decreeing that the student "fees" would only apply to incoming student, not to those presently enrolled. This attempted bribe backfired, underscoring that the strikers were acting not for themselves but for those who would come after them.

Now the *New York Times* (13 August) complains that "the [UNAM] administration looks increasingly helpless" and that "neither the rector, Francisco Barnés de Castro, nor government officials want to storm the campus." The authorities are "constrained," the *Times* writes, by "the horrendous memories of 1968 when, shortly before the Mexico City Olympic Games, Mexican security forces mowed down waves of protesting students with gunfire" in the infamous Tlatelolco Massacre. But the Mexican regime hardly lacks bloodthirstiness: the massacres of Indian rebels in Acteal, Chiapas and peasant protesters in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero prove that. And any hesitations about the unpredictable consequences of an assault have not stopped the PRI-government from sending in its *porros*, with the police and army not far behind.

UNAM strikers have shown great determination and organizational capacity, and won broad support among working and poor people. Official repression, attacks by paid thugs, a campaign of demonizing the students in the media, ultimatums, unpostponable deadlines which are then postponed: nothing has gone the way the authorities hoped. Nevertheless, the strike has reached a dead end with the current strategy and strike leadership. It is no secret that participation in guard shifts has fallen off, although hundreds and even thousands of students are still at their posts together with the worker defense guards. Neither the openly pro-PRD "moderates" nor the reputed "ultras" in the CGH have a policy to win in the face of an obstinate adversary. It is possible to overcome the wear and tear that is the result of waging an intense struggle for such a long time, but what it will take is adopting a *class-struggle policy* capable of defeating the enemy through working-class mobilization, by striking a hard blow and not just digging in.

*Above all, there is an urgent need for revolutionary leadership to win this strike.* Up to now, it has been conducted under the watchword of seeking "dialogue" in order to "democratize" the university. The Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista have insisted from the outset that "dialogue" with the university bureaucracy, the instrument of the bourgeoisie, is a trap. This fight will not be won by inertia, nor by competing to see who is the more committed to dialogue. The main tendencies within the CGH talk of a university "in the service of the people," and of a struggle against "neo-liberalism." This populist language is typical of all nationalist bourgeois parties, such as the PRI historically and the PRD at present, and implicitly accepts the capitalist framework. Moreover, today all the presidential primary candidates of the PRI (Horacio Labastida, Roberto Madrazo, Manuel Bartlett and Humberto Roque) denounce "neoliberalism." The CGH is fighting on the same political terrain as the enemy, and that is no way to win.

Although in formal terms the fight for free public higher education doesn't go beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy, in fact it is fighting against a *capitalist* offensive. In



Comité de Huelga/Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

**Scab-herding thugs (porros) during August 23 provocation.**

this epoch of imperialist decay, above all following the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the international organs of imperialism such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the OECD have ordered drastic budget cuts for public university education. In the midst of a frantic race to drive up the profit rate, none of the bourgeois parties or political currents takes a stand in defense of free public education. Thus the fact that the strike has become bogged down has a political explanation: the political subordination of all the tendencies active in the strike to an alliance, open or disguised, with a sector of the bourgeoisie.

As a member of the Grupo Internacionalista remarked at the strike assembly of the School of Sciences on July 13, today "the only way to defend the strike is at the same time the only way to win it; by extending it to the workers movement." The only way out other than capitulation consists in *integrating the UNAM strike into a broader class offensive of the proletariat.* The working class is the only social force capable of defeating the capitalist onslaught. Our June 23 leaflet was titled, "UNAM Strike at the Crossroads: Mobilize the Working Class to Win!" And this is not an impossible dream. The Grupo Internacionalista has fought tirelessly since before the beginning of the strike for a joint strike by the UNAM, the Electrical Workers Union (SME) and the dissident teachers of the CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers). In our leaflets, in motions put forward at strike assemblies and in going to the most relevant unions, we have underlined the need for a worker-student defense of the strike. The presence of workers brigades from the powerful SME, the National University Workers Union (STUNAM), the Metropolitan University workers union (SITUAM) and other labor organizations defending the UNAM is the product of these efforts by the GI and above all of the understanding by broad layers of workers that the interests of all working people are at stake in the strike.

There is an immediate need for a vigorous defense of the strike. It is urgent to *expand and extend the worker-student defense brigades* to all UNAM facilities. We insist on the expulsion of all cops and porros of any sort from the UNAM, and urge STUNAM to throw the uniformed thugs (and plainclothes spies) of Auxilio UNAM out of their ranks. At the same time, it is necessary to fight for a *joint strike together with important sectors of the labor movement* (SME, CNTE, STUNAM, SITUAM and others) and to call for active support of workers and students on an international scale. Above all, it is necessary to *forge a new class-struggle leadership* for the strike to become part of a broad proletarian offensive against the onslaught of capital.

### **I. No to the Bourgeois "Democratic" Fraud – For a Class-Struggle Fight!**

Week after week, the bourgeois media have waged a rabid campaign against the strike, presenting the students as stubborn elements who are unwilling to peacefully resolve the conflict, therefore supposedly leaving the authorities no alternative but to take back the installations by force. *Reforma* (21 June) printed excerpts from leaked reports from the federal ministries of the interior (Gobernación), defense, education

and various spy agencies under the headline, "National Security Threatened by UNAM." The head of the UNAM School of Social Work—who is the sister of the deputy secretary of the interior and long-time director of the Cesin intelligence agency—declares that "the UNAM case is a problem of national security and the government should intervene." In fact, the government is preparing a wave of arrests of leaders of the strike movement.

The university administration has acted throughout with authoritarian disdain for the strikers. On July 12, when representatives of the rector's Contact Commission sat down in the Palacio de Minería to discuss arrangements for "dialogue" with the strikers, they denounced the strikers in union as "subversives." Administration spokesman Rafael Pérez Pascual announced that they would not discuss any of the strikers' demands. Another member of the rector's Commission, Angel Díaz Barriga, vituperated against the students' "dangerous popular democratic project," saying that "the institutions of higher education are neither democratic nor popular" (*La Jornada*, 13 July).

This openly anti-democratic rhetoric of the administration's hired flunkies recalls that of right-wing Catholic intellectuals in Spain in the 1930s such as Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset, who both greeted Franco's military revolt against the republic in 1936. Two retired law professors of the UNAM Law School, Ignacio Burguoa and Raúl Carrancá y Rivas, have filed criminal charges demanding eleven years imprisonment of members of the Strike Council. They are joined in their hysteria against the student strike by the high clergy, which would be quite comfortable in a Francoist regime. The cardinal primate of Mexico, the bishop of Cuernavaca and the head of the education commission of the Mexican Conference of Bishops say that the strike is following orders from Subcommandante Marcos of the EZLN.

Now the president of Coparmex (the Employers Federation of Mexico) is insisting on "closing" UNAM "for a period of two, three, four or however many years are necessary," as the only way to solve the conflict. He also says that students must "be prepared to join the labor market in a competitive economy and a globalized world, and the UNAM is not giving them that." In the past, the National University provided cadres for the party-government of the PRI regime, and for the large number of state-owned companies and institutions. It continues to fill this function for Cárdenas' PRD—just look at the number of UNAM ex-student leaders in the Federal District government. But since the rise of the "technocrats" led by former president Carlos Salinas and his disciple and successor Zedillo, graduates U.S. Ivy League universities, the National University no longer fulfills the same function for the ruling class. What Mexican capital and its government wants these days is above all that the university should educate management and professional personnel for private companies. If it were necessary to close the university in order to assert their control over it, they would do so.

Such calls are not isolated voices of fascistic elements but the expressions of the mindset of much of the bourgeoisie which

is "tired of arguments which have been used up by history," as *Excelsior* (7 July) put it. Until recently, ruling class "hardliners" have limited themselves to "pots and pans demonstrations" of the "Women in White," calling on drivers on the Periférico (beltline highway) around Mexico City to turn on their lights to demand an end to the UNAM strike. Now they are unleashing their *porros*. In the final analysis, it comes down to the capitalist state with its armed forces. Jurist Burguoa, who supplied the pretext for a government crackdown, pretends he is only calling for the intervention of the "judicial force of law" and not the "public force" of cops and troops. But the latter are the indispensable armed fist of capital, and the core of its state.

## II. "Moderates" and "Ultras" in the Cárdenas Popular Front

Key to understanding why the strike has bogged down is the role of the Cárdenas popular front. The PRI regime and the UNAM administration insist that the PRD is "behind the strike." They hold Cárdenas' party responsible for all protests against the fee hike and the rest of the elitist "reforms" promulgated by the rector Barnés. The reality is rather different: it is well-known that the PRD leaders have repeatedly tried to *stop the strike*. For that very reason, particularly following the August 4 cop attack, there have been calls in strike committee meetings for the expulsion of the PRD and the student groups linked to it. However, even after the openly pro-Cárdenas "moderates" were discredited, *the reputed "ultras" have also undercut the strike*, looking for arguments to lift the occupation or to take flight at the first threat of action by the repressive forces. This is because these leftist currents *are also part of the Cárdenas popular front*. Even as they criticize the PRD, they recognize and respect the limits of what is tolerable for the bourgeois "opposition" to the PRI. In order to win this battle it is utterly necessary for the workers and student strikers to break with the Cárdenas popular front.

When after a month and a half of the strike the University Council, as always following the baton of its *ex officio* leader Barnés, declared the new student fees to be "voluntary," pro-Cárdenas student Council members of the Democratic Coalition (CD), the University Student Council (CEU) and the University Student Network *voted in favor* of the modified Barnés plan. It was obvious to all that the Rectorate was counting on changing the "voluntary" fees from "voluntary" to "required" as soon as things calmed down. At the same time, the University Council decreed heavy new fees for using laboratories and other university services. It was clear that nothing had been won, and student strikers were not about to accept the capitulation that the PRD prepared for them. Furious, Barnés leaked to the press that he had negotiated the changes directly with Cárdenas, and that the latter had met behind closed doors with PRD student leaders.

While student PRDers with their multiple organizations, now banded together in the Independent University Council (CIU), are trying to deliver the strike on a platter to the UNAM authorities, the Federal District and national government, the supposed leftist "ultras" have been stumbling over each other looking for the nearest exit in case of a serious clash. The most



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**Banners on walls of struck UNAM campus: "The Electrical Workers Support the Demands of the University Students for Free Education!" "No to the Privatization of UNAM." Black-and-red strike banner in middle.**

notorious case is that the the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS), labeled by *Proceso* (25 July) "the least radical part of the radicals of the University Left Bloc (BUI)." In a shameful leaflet dated July 3, the POS' youth group declared: "After more than 70 days, the movement has become worn out, weary and weakened. It is a fact that we no longer have the presence of contingents of electrical workers in our mobilizations...." However, this "fact" was not a fact.

In its newspaper, *El Socialista* (July 1999) the POS speaks of "weariness" after such a long strike, and of "the perception of our strike by the population coming off the intense campaign of pressure by the government." While its previous issue headlined, "Long live the STRIKE!" the POS now pretends that the "voluntarization" of the student fees approved by the University Council "constitutes a heavy setback for Barnés and the Zedillo government." They insist that "The assemblies will have to be very objective in their analyses in order to determine the right moment to call off the strike and gains resulting from it, even if it's felt that not all of the points of the list of demands have been met."

This is an unvarnished call for capitulation in the face of the onslaught by the government *and above all by the Cárdenas popular front*. The POS even joined the bourgeois brouhaha against "the ultras," publishing an entire page outrageously quoting Lenin and Trotsky against ultraleftism, while attempting to equate them with gems from their late maestro, Nahuel Moreno, in the social-democratic phase of his chameleon-like political career. Like all social traitors, the POS presents as "gains" what are really nothing but crumbs swept from the table of Barnés (with the approval of Zedillo and Cárdenas). Moreover, this disgusting defeatism came just as the first defense brigades were formed by STUNAM university workers and then SME electrical workers, and the day after SITUAM shut down the campuses of the second largest university in the Mexican capital in solidarity with the UNAM strike!

So where does the Morenoites' zeal to put an end to the largest and longest Mexican student struggle in decades come

from? They are not capitulating to the current mood of the strikers, nor of the workers who have come to support them. On the contrary, their program directly reflects the pressure of the bourgeoisie: the quote from the POS almost admits as much. POS leader Cuauhtémoc Ruiz expressed illusions in the PRD in an interview with *Proceso* (27 June), arguing that "the Cárdenas government has to understand that it must be more flexible in the way it applies the law." When they came to realize that the head of the Federal District government was ready to send the *granaderos* against student strikers, as it had earlier done against CNTE teachers, the POS leaders decided that the moment had come to "determine the right moment to call off the strike," i.e., to abandon it.

These illusions of the POS in Cárdenas are not limited to tactical questions. In the *Proceso* article quoted above, after admitting that the PRD is a bourgeois party, Ruiz states: "At most it wants to make a democratic reform, not a revolution, which it should have done in 1988." "In 1988," the POS leader continued, "cardenismo sucked up all the currents of the left." Indeed. When Cárdenas visited the UNAM in May 1988 during his presidential campaign, the POS (then called the PTZ) published an open letter calling on him to "come out for unity in action" to "democratize" the university and "defend the vote." This attempt to sidle up to the former PRI politician (Cárdenas had been governor of the state of Michoacán) was part of Nahuel Moreno's program for a "democratic revolution," in reality a reformist program of bourgeois populism.

Another component of the University Left Bloc, which has since split, is the En Lucha current, based in the School of Sciences. En Lucha and the Propaganda Commission of Sciences which it controls have published a series of leaflets and wall newspapers justifying the strike. En Lucha gave a certain workerist flavor to its propaganda, for example writing "SME, UNAM On to the General Strike!" (Antiojos, 16 March). But when spelled out in the text, what this came down to is that the SME should "declare its intention to strike" against the privatization of the electrical industry — a legal procedure asking permission to strike

from the state Conciliation and Arbitration Board, which would never give it. For a number of weeks, En Lucha spokesmen opposed "dialogue" with the university administration, or rather demanded certain conditions before holding it. But at the decisive moment, En Lucha *voted in favor of the phony dialogue* with Barnés' minions, leading the strikers into the trap and helping prepare the current dead-end of the strike.

A Discussion Document No. 9 (30 June) of the Sciences Propaganda Commission headlined a call for "*Firmness!*" in the face of the intimidation by the government and media. But in the middle of the document they begin talking about "our strike in exile," even as the occupation of university facilities continued. This "strike in exile" is no doubt conceived of as the "long march" by the ex-Maoists of En Lucha, and the conception is hardly abstract. On the night of July 7, when there were reports of troop movements by the army, the watchword put out by the CGH Security Commission was to evacuate the campus in the event of an attack. But the evacuation didn't take place, in large part because that night the first workers defense brigades appeared, infuriating the authorities. While the so-called "ultras" of the CGH were getting ready to decamp into "exile," the Grupo Internacionalista presented motions in strike committees and spoke in union assemblies of the STUNAM and SITUAM seeking to form workers defense guards, which in fact were formed.

En Lucha sees an essentially student strike, dressed up with a little "popular" solidarity, which would be incapable of resisting the repressive forces. When they would occasionally send out brigades to factories or poor neighborhoods, it was mainly to collect money in cans and to receive passive shows of sympathy, not in order to win the workers to a common struggle. En Lucha tails after the union bureaucracies to

give itself a little "labor" cover, and never fights to mobilize the ranks in a class-struggle program. At bottom, the panic which reigned among these alleged "ultras" in the face of the government's threats was due to the fact that they, like the POS, look to Cárdenas.

In Document No. 9, En Lucha supporters write:

"Now the riot police are under the orders of Cárdenas, and he knows well that there would be a tremendous political price to pay for himself and his party if he dirtied his hands simply by occupying the University and repressing the student movement. This leads one to think that this possibility would be very difficult...very broad sectors of the worker, student, teacher and popular movement would never forgive him."

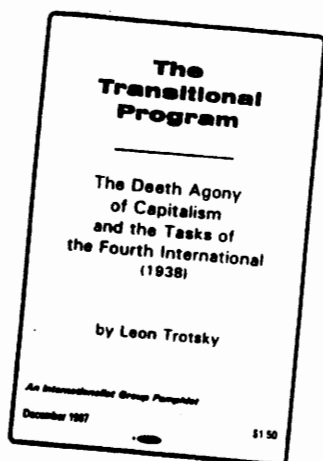
Thus En Lucha bases itself on and feeds the illusions of sectors of the masses in Cárdenas & Co. But when it realized that the possibility of clearing out Ciudad Universitaria by the capital police wouldn't be that "difficult" for Cárdenas, En Lucha made an abrupt about-turn and began to prepare to jettison the strike in favor of the chimera of a "strike in exile."

Among the hardcore sectors of what the bourgeois press calls the "ultras" is the School of Political Science. In a leaflet they distributed together with strikers from the ENEP Acatlán (a UNAM-affiliated professional school) and others outside the Palacio de Minería, they criticized the 120 delegates of the student commission meeting there with the rector's Contact Commission for usurping the functions of the CGH. But, significantly, the leaflet did not reject this phony "dialogue." It said: "Does it seem to you that sitting down with the authorities is an advance. No doubt it is." On the contrary, this didn't represent an advance but rather accepting the terrain of battle of the bourgeoisie. The struggle for free public education will not be won in polite "dialogue" with the the deaf administration. It is necessary to wage it on the battlefield of the *class* struggle of the working people against the capitalist onslaught.

In calling for more combative tactics, the Political Science militants state that what is needed for a serious strike are "hardhitting actions, which force the authorities to give in faced with our organizational capacity." An example is "cutting off vehicular access to the Federal District for several hours" (leaflet by Political Sciences strike committee, May 1999). It is pure illusion to think that this would show the strength of a university strike against the bourgeois state. And as justified as it is to try to stymie the government, the immediate target of such actions would be automobile drivers. Above all, the political perspective behind such tactics is the same popular frontism of the supporters of "dialogue." In an interview with *El Universal* (24 June), Alejandro Echevarria, labeled by the bourgeois press the "*megaultra*" of Political Sciences, recognizes that taking over highways would only by "a political pressure action." To make matters perfectly clear, he stresses that "we are not against Cárdenas." Well, we are.

Once again, this is a reformist populist viewpoint. In the Political Sciences leaflets there are constant references to "the people," without class distinction: they speak of "winning greater popular support," of creating "spaces of people's power," that "the only way to avoid repression is with the people," etc. This

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language is common to all tendencies in the reformist and nationalist left. The inveterate Stalinists of the Communist Party of Mexico (M-L), for example, call for a struggle "Against the Anti-People Policies of the Regime" (*Vanguardia Proletaria*, March 1999) and for "a democratic, scientific and popular university" (*Joven Guardia*, 9 July). *En Lucha* calls for "an education in the service of the people," and in its 1998 May Day manifesto it argues that "the people of Mexico demand" efforts for "unity capable of overturning the neoliberal policies of the regime." The "ultras" of Political Sciences speak of "the formation of a united front of the people against neoliberalism." So does this "people's unity" against "neoliberalism" extend to PRI stalwarts Labastida, Madrazo, Bartlett and Roque?

Nationalism and populism also characterize the politics of a host of pseudo-Trotskyist outfits. *Umbral*, the publication of the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS – Socialist Unity League), calls for a "government of people's power," at the same time as it denounces the militants who shut down the UNAM research institutes as "provocateurs" and says that "the CGH's turn to the ultraleft... could lead to the partial defeat of the students and the jailing of some of them," i.e., it blames the victims for government repression! The Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT – Revolutionary Party of the Working People) is a founding constituent of the Cárdenas popular front. The PRT has already put forward this bourgeois politician as its presidential candidate. For its part, the Militant group, which absurdly presents itself as a "Marxist tendency" of Cárdenas' bourgeois party, demands: "The PRD must decisively join the action and support the UNAM students and SME workers." We already know the way in which the PRD "supports" the student strikers and the electrical workers, attempting to sacrifice them to the government in order to give itself a "respectable" image in the presidential elections.

Although various left-wing groups make criticisms of Cárdenas, their positions do not fundamentally differ from those of the bourgeois PRD. The national-reformist leftists of the CGH plays the same tune of yearning for the "golden days" of the PRI regime, when it called itself "revolutionary nationalist" and financed a broad range of petty-bourgeois "progressive" intellectuals and even a fraudulent "left-wing opposition" on the take. Zedillo's assault against the UNAM is not simply due to a "neoliberal" policy, which could be changed by a new team in government, but rather reflects the intensified exploitation of the working people coming out of the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe. In order to combat this, it is necessary to pose a class struggle for socialist revolution and its international extension, the only way to guarantee free public education and other urgent needs of the exploited and oppressed masses. And for this what is need above all is to *forge a revolutionary workers party*.

### III. For a Class-Struggle Program!

To a large extent, the current UNAM strike is following the same outline as earlier student struggles in 1968 and 1987. Today they have raised a six-point list of demands, as was the case in '68; students are demanding public dialogue, again as

in '68. The strike also reflects that from 1986 on, the university bureaucracy has repeatedly attempted, without success, to impose fees in order to block access to the National University of an ever greater number of applicants. Thus the organization and demands of this strike have a certain "traditional" character, and reflect a general democratic (bourgeois) program. This corresponds to the petty-bourgeois character of students overall, and the "democratizing" policies of the left in the face of the decay of the semi-bonapartist PRI regime. The fact that the democratic demands of the strike don't go beyond capitalist limits means that they cannot solve the underlying problems.

It is absurd to propose that a "university that serves the people" should be achieved through a democratic university congress, even if you add "constituent" or "decisive" to its name, and much less when this is done in negotiations with Barnés and his PRI patrons. An education in the service of the population in general will only be possible when social classes have been abolished, that is to say, under socialism; even then, it would not be for a national "people" but in a society with global economic planning. "Education first for the sons and daughters of the workers, education later for the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie" (a popular strike chant) poses a redistribution of services *which will never place so long as capitalist exploitation persists*. Even in the 1930s when President Lázaro Cárdenas wrote "socialist education" into the Mexican constitution, education went *first* to the offspring of the bourgeoisie...and the basic proposition of this "socialist" education was to train the working class for capitalist exploitation.

There is a long history of illusions about education associated with *cardenismo*, which are reflected in current calls for a "popular and democratic" university. As we fight against populist-reformist utopian conceptions, revolutionary communists put forward a series of demands which point to the fundamental need to carry out a socialist revolution.

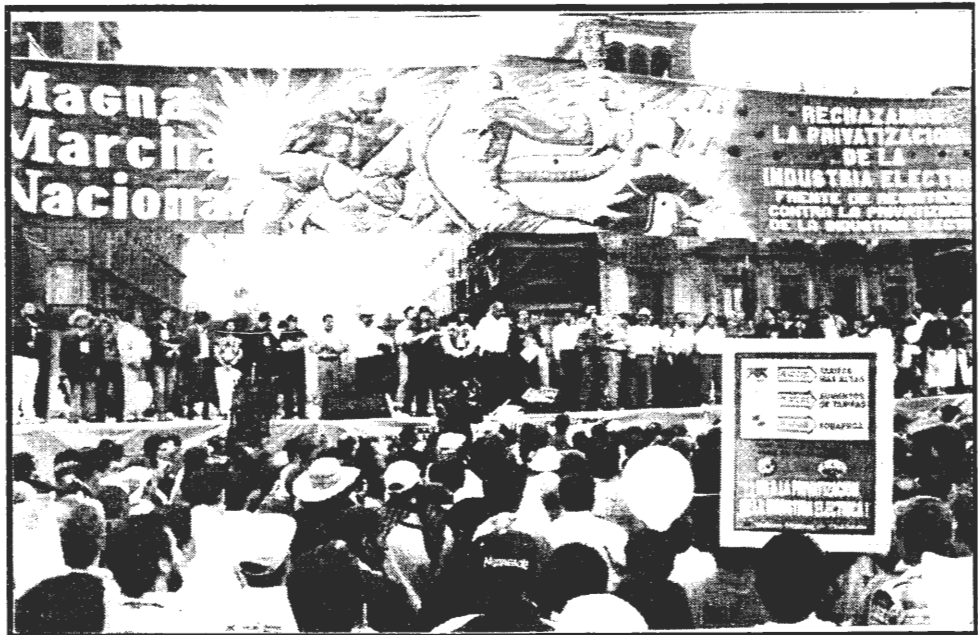
The present university strike originated in opposition to a "fee" increase. The Strike General Council has also demanded cancellation of the 1997 "reforms" and reestablishment of the "automatic pass" for students graduating from the CCHs and preparatory schools linked to the UNAM. We support these demands at the same time as we point to their limited character. The Grupo Internacionalista calls for abolishing student fees (tuition) in their entirety, and for the establishment of *free and open admission* for all, not only from the schools of the UNAM system. Even so, for students with limited family resources and for the large number who must work while studying, a quality university education will not really be within their reach for economic reasons due to capitalist exploitation. Thus we demand a *living stipend* for all students which will permit them to dedicate themselves to their studies.

The list of demands of the Strike General Council proposes "dismantling the repressive apparatus implemented by Rector Barnés de Castro." We demand the *expulsion from all the schools of any kind of cops, guards and porros*, and we urge STUNAM to *throw out of its ranks the professional thugs of Auxilio UNAM*. The strike's demands also include the call for a university congress to "democratize" the National University. The administra-

tion rejects this demand out of hand, as an attack on its "legality." But the various formulations of this demand all include the university bureaucracy, and some even call upon the rector to organize such a congress. The Grupo Internacionalista calls for abolition of the Rectorate (university administration) and for the establishment of student-worker-teacher control of the university.

Some pseudo-Trotskyists like the ex-Morenoites of the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (Socialist Workers League) and the youth group it leads, Contra-Corriente (Against the Current), raise a slogan that might seem similar, calling for a "democratic, tripartite government" based on "delegates of the workers, teachers and with a student majority." The LTS has clearly formulated this as an extension of the CGH's list of demands, fighting for (bourgeois) democracy. Moreover, in calling for a student majority it expresses a petty-bourgeois disdain for the workers who make the university facilities function. Even more notable in this respect, Pablo Gómez, a former Communist Party student leader in 1968 and today the coordinator of the PRD parliamentary fraction in Mexico's Chamber of Deputies, has introduced a bill which envisions a UNAM governing body with ample representation of professors, students, researchers and the university administrative hierarchy, but with only one representative of the workers. The CGH has expressed its support for this disgustingly antiworker proposal.

It is necessary to provide an international framework for the struggle, but the CGH has not made an effort to seek support of students and workers of other countries. All its manifestos are addressed to "the people of Mexico." This nationalist and popular-frontist orientation limits the influence of the strike, to the point that there has been almost no coverage outside of Mexico. Our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil were able to get a motion passed by the congress of the União Nacional de Estudantes (Brazilian National Students Congress) calling for actions in solidarity with the strike at UNAM, the largest university in Latin America. The pseudo-Trotskyist LTS claims that the UNAM strike represents the "Vanguard of a New Student Movement in Latin America" (Estrategia Internacional, July-August 1999). Contrary to this vision of a petty-bourgeois "new vanguard," what's clear is the potential of uniting students with powerful workers mobilizations. In May there were impressive student and worker protests in Argentina which forced the Menem government to back down on its budget cuts against the universities. But in order to achieve a united struggle of students and workers against capital, what is needed is a proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist leadership and program.



Electrical workers demonstrate against privatization, 28 August 1999. SME tops seek to contain ranks' militancy by tying them to Cárdenas popular front.

#### IV. Extend the Strike, Mobilize the Working Class!

Aside from the strike's demands, it is necessary to extend it beyond the university campuses. Already there are student propaganda brigades going out to the poor and working-class neighborhoods; union donations of food and money to the strikers; joint participation of student strikers, militant teachers and electrical workers in demonstrations; a limited solidarity walkout by workers at the Metropolitan University, and many calls for the unity of workers and students. But all of this is far from sufficient. Mario Benítez of En Lucha claims that what has prevented the strike from being broken by police force was "the invisible barricades of the people." On the contrary, it was the *very visible defense brigades of the SME electrical workers and STUNAM university workers* which blocked an attack on the occupied facilities. In order to counter anti-strike repression, the working class has strategic positions in mass transit and public services, as well as the capacity to mobilize on a mass scale, which would make it possible to shut down the capital. Once again, what is lacking is the leadership.

The struggle to extend the strike to important sections of the working class cannot be an isolated event. It must be a part of the fight for the class independence of the proletariat. We Trotskyists fight to form *workers committees to break the corporatist stranglehold* of the CTM and other pseudo-union federations (CROC, CROM, CT) which have acted as a strait-jacket to control Mexican workers for six decades. For their part, the various "democratic" unions and opposition groups within them criticize the corporatism of the old-line charros ("cowboys," referring to the bosses of the government-controlled "unions") of the CTM and denounce the PRI. But at the same time they promote class collaboration with the bourgeois-nationalist PRD. Rather than "democratic" oppositions which



accept the capitalist framework, communists seek to build a class-struggle and revolutionary opposition in the unions. It is necessary to sweep out the bureaucrats and fight for a revolutionary workers party to carry forward the class struggle to the final burial of this system of exploitation and poverty, through international socialist revolution.

One of the most important cases of the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie is that of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union. Following Zedillo's announcement of the privatization of the electrical sector, the SME carried out a number of mobilizations against the government policies. The first student marches in February and March had heavy participation of electrical workers. Student and worker contingents marched behind banners proclaiming "UNAM-SME, united we will win." Nevertheless, following the formation of the "Front of Resistance Against Privatization of the Electrical Sector" at the end of February and the annual March 18 demonstration celebrating the 1938 nationalization of oil by Lázaro Cárdenas, the SME leadership began systematically *demobilizing* its ranks. It obviously fears being outflanked by the membership and a joint struggle with the students. In fact, the main component of its "front," aside from the SME itself, is the bourgeois PRD. In addition to Cárdenas' party, it even includes the Renewal Tendency of the ruling PRI. In this way the electrical workers' discontent has been diverted into the sterile channels of bourgeois parliamentarism by *cardenismo*.

The SME bureaucracy spreads illusions among its membership that a Cárdenas government would not strike as hard against the proletariat because, in some sense, it would be a government of friends of the proletariat. Yet Cárdenas has gone out of his way to assure imperialist investors who want to swallow the electrical industry that his is their friend, as he emphasized on his visit to Wall Street in 1997. Zedillo's plans for privatizing electricity will not be defeated by appealing to Cárdenas, or to PRI candidates Bartlett or Madrazo, nor by swearing fealty to national sovereignty. As in the case of the student fee hikes at UNAM, this project is the result of commitments entered into by the Mexican government with the World Bank, which has imposed similar privatization plans in many countries of Latin America.

In order to smash this, class-conscious electrical workers must undertake a *proletarian* and *internationalist* struggle instead of following a bourgeois nationalist course. Against the management sabotage of the state-owned Luz y Fuerza del Centro (Central Region Light and Power), which has special deals with big companies and government offices to not cut off energy supplies even when they own millions in unpaid bills, it is necessary to impose *workers control of the production and distribution of electrical energy*. And above all it is



Carlos Mamahua

**Student demonstration against "fee" hike, 4 March 1999. Sign says "UNAM-SME (electrical workers union) will win!"**

urgent to go out now in a *joint strike with the UNAM students*.

Similarly in the case of STUNAM, although many university workers have participated in guard duty in defense of the strike, and even though the University Workers have made financial donations of tens of thousands of pesos, the fact is that the union, as such, has sunk into an appalling inactivity. To cover this up one way or another, STUNAM leader Agustín Rodríguez keeps repeating that the union stands with the student *compañeros* on strike, and at the same time he pretends that making the fees imposed by Barnés "voluntary" is somehow a step toward solution of the conflict. While the STUNAM secretary general has come out against police repression of the strike, at the same time he calls on the CGH to accept the proposal of some retired professors which does not resolve a single one of the strike demands.

For the bourgeoisie, keeping the UNAM workers from uniting with the students is a fundamental question. *Reforma* (14 June) summarizes a document leaked from the Cisen, the federal government's intelligence service, evaluating the course of the student strike:

"...the conflict risks taking on proportions of national security, in the face of a growing radicalization which which could unleash uncontrollable instability.... "...[the Cisen document] proposes orchestrating a strategy of immediate discussions, fragmenting [the strikers] and intending to fragment them, aimed at those groups inside the CGH who are increasingly distant from the dominant radical groups within it.... "At the same time, it proposes early negotiations with the STUNAM in order to keep it on the sidelines of the conflict, giving it some sinecures in the next contract negotiations."

The decision of the union to cancel vacations and form brigades to defend the strike is a step of fundamental importance. But to win this battle it is necessary to *mobilize the 28,000 members of STUNAM in a joint strike with the students*.

The Independent Union of Workers of the Metropolitan



Reforma

**New paramilitary Federal Preventive Police. In the face of the power of the capitalist state, student strike had to seek to mobilize an even greater power, the organized proletariat.**

Autonomous University (SITUAM) laid out what is at stake in this strike. On July 1, its General Delegates Assembly decided to carry out the eleven-hour strike in solidarity with UNAM, showing its organizing capacity and strength by shutting down the three campuses in a matter of hours. In the motions passed by this meeting, SITUAM denounced “the exclusionary logic which introduces the social Darwinism of the dictates of the World Bank and the OECD,” and noted that the purpose of the UNAM reforms was to “prevent access to the sons and daughters of the working people in order to preserve the liberal professions for the sons and daughters of the governing class.” They also decided to consider making a second donation to the strike, which was subsequently done, and to consider “the formation of brigades to support the strike guards” at UNAM, in which they are participating. But here as well, it is urgent that SITUAM not only support but join the strike.

### **V. Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

The big obstacle to extending the UNAM strike is the Cárdenas popular front. The popular front is a class-collaborationist coalition which the bourgeoisie resorts to in moments of social crisis to tie working-class organizations (parties, unions) to an alliance with the political representatives of capital. Thus it serves to hold back the waves of rebelliousness and to keep the workers, peasants, rebellious youth and poor people under the domination of the class enemy. During the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, in Indonesia in 1965, in Chile under Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular at the beginning of the 1970s, the popular front constituted a giant brake to prevent a revolutionary uprising by the working masses, thereby opening the gates to the victory of reaction. As Leon Trotsky wrote in July 1939 about the Spanish experience, “There is no greater crime than coalition with the bourgeoisie in a period of socialist revolution.”

The Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters pretend that the “danger” of revolution no longer exists; according to them, communism is dead. The present leadership of the “independent” unions and the left-wing currents inside the CGH assure the ruling class that they don’t even think of obstructing capitalism. But those who watch over the interests of Mexican capitalism, when they are speaking among themselves, admit that the UNAM strike affects their “national security” and they worry that radicalization could produce “uncontrollable instability.” After 70 years of semibonapartist PRI rule, today the PRI as well as the PAN and PRD speak of a “democratic transition” in order to avoid such “instability” at all costs. At the same time, Stalinist groups with their stagist policies as well as various pseudo-Trotskyists have taken up the banner of a “democratic revolution.” But today, as Trotsky wrote about Spain in the ’30s:

“The ‘democratic’ revolution and the socialist revolution are on opposite sides of the barricades... The socialist revolution is yet to be made in uncompromising struggle against the ‘democratic’ revolution and its Popular Front.”  
– L.D. Trotsky, “Tasks of the Fourth International in Spain” (April 1936)

While bourgeois and reformist ideologues maintain that communism is dead, the class struggle continues. In Mexico, class polarization is increasingly accentuated. In this country, according to official figures, the personal fortunes of seven billionaires (totaling US\$20.4 billion) on the Forbes list of the richest capitalists on earth approximates the annual income of the entire population (US\$22 million). This is a country where 40 million live in desperate poverty; where workers have suffered a continual fall in their real wages for more than two decades, to the point where today the minimum wage is below the level of the late 1930s; where there have been large-scale closures of basic industry, throwing tens of thousands of steel workers, railroad workers and many others into unemployment;

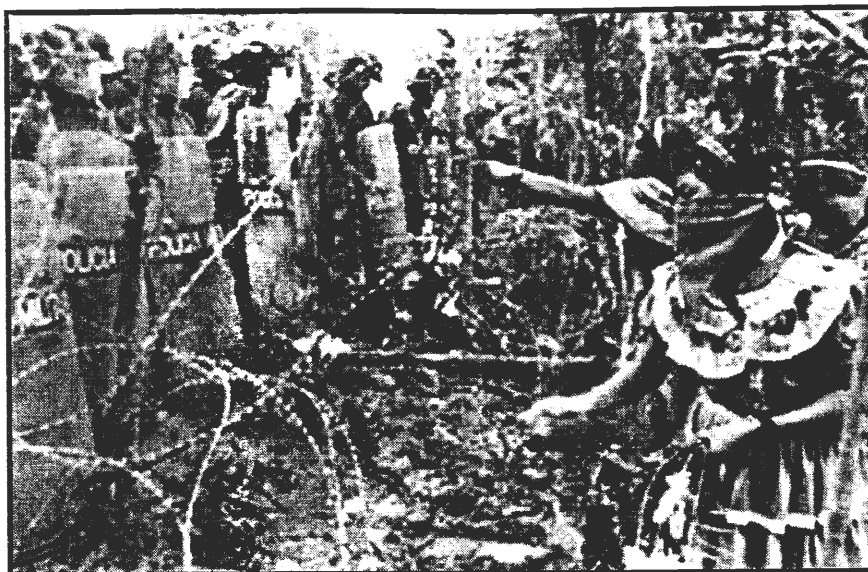
where agriculture is in ruins, while millions of former peasants migrate to the cities in search of work, without any possibility of finding it. One-tenth of the entire population of Mexico, some ten million people, has left for the United States desperately trying to make a living.

The need for a socialist revolution and the raw materials for it are more than evident. Under the tremendous pressure of U.S. (and to a lesser degree Canadian) imperialism, now intensified in the framework of the disastrous Free Trade Agreement, Mexico's public and private foreign debt exceeds US\$160 billion. In addition to debts to the imperialist bankers, some US\$80 billion has been spent to "rescue" banks which were denationalized at the beginning of the decade by the Salinas government, while another US\$20 billion has been handed over to "rescue" the owners of bankrupt toll roads.

And in the midst of this sumptuous banquet for the bankers, they are seeking to smash a students strike protesting the imposition of fees that wouldn't even total 1/100th of 1 percent of the fabulous sums bestowed on the financiers.

In Mexico on the eve of the year 2000, an Indian rebellion has arisen in Chiapas, led by the EZLN, and there are at least 15 different guerrilla or armed groups operating in the southern, western and eastern states. In order to hold off a social explosion in the countryside and to maintain control of the large cities, the Mexican Army has increased its ranks by more than 40 percent since 1994, while in the last two years it has increased its arms purchases from the Pentagon by 600 percent. Currently the army has blockaded the state of Chiapas with military checkpoints, supposedly for "ecological reasons" to protect the biosphere of the Montes Azules against lumber cutters and in the name of the "war on drugs." In reality they are out to annihilate the EZLN. It is quite evident that the government has adopted the same tactic of wearing down the UNAM strike as it has used against the Zapatistas. Thus the workers mobilizations necessary to win the UNAM strike must also raise the call for *withdrawal of the army from Chiapas* and an end to the repression in Oaxaca and Guerrero.

The national-reformist leftists who inveigh against "neoliberalism" call on the rich to pay for the economic crisis and for there to be a moratorium, or at most that the foreign debt be repudiated. It is a vain illusion to think that there can be an equitable capitalism, or that it would be possible to escape from imperialist domination through reformist measures. Even during the long period of development of state-owned companies in Mexico under the PRI, such as the oil company PEMEX, or the CFE and LFC state electrical companies, this only served to accumulate capital for a weak bourgeoisie, which now wants to carve up the spoils among itself and its masters on Wall Street in order to compete internationally. Communists insist that it is necessary to fight for *expropriation of industry, commerce and finance by a workers and peasants government* resulting from an



Frida Hartz/La Jornada

**EZLN supporters face off against Military Police, August 18. Mexican army out of Chiapas and Guerrero!**

internationalist socialist revolution. Only this will make it possible to *cancel the imperialist debt*. Any attempt to build "socialism in one country," as in the case of the Castro-Stalinist regime in Cuba, cannot escape from the imperialist stranglehold which will eventually lead to its defeat, as in the case of the USSR and East Europe, if the revolution is not extended to the strongest imperialist countries.

The revolutionary struggle in Mexico must be guided by the program of permanent revolution. This perspective developed by Leon Trotsky was realized in the Russian Revolution of October 1917. It determined that in the semicolonial and late developing capitalist countries the tasks historically associated with the bourgeois revolution cannot be resolved without the taking of power by the working class, supported by the poor peasants, in order to begin the socialist revolution. This revolution by its very nature will be international in scope, extending to the countries of Central and South America and to the imperialist fortress of the United States. The millions of immigrant workers in the North constitute a human bridge of fundamental importance in the coming proletarian revolution, both in Mexico and the United States and the entire world. The fundamental requirement for this is the construction of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

The Grupo Internacionalista and our comrades of the other sections of the League for the Fourth International (LFI) struggle to forge the nucleus of this party, both in Mexico and internationally. With their tenacious struggle, the UNAM students and thousands of workers who support them have resisted the constant attempts to isolate and divide them. It is possible to win this battle, on the condition that it goes beyond the limits of a strictly student struggle on a national-reformist program and that the strike becomes part of an escalating working-class offensive. Students and intellectuals who break with their class origins to dedicate themselves to the proletarian cause can play a key role in the construction of the Bolshevik party necessary to lead this revolutionary fight. This is how the most conscious young strikers can make their best contribution to fight for the emancipation of all the oppressed. ■

**Police Out of the National University! Army Out of Chiapas! Stop Privatization of Electrical Industry!**

**3 September 1999**

## **Mexico: For Workers Offensive to Smash the Capitalist Assault!**

Since the beginning of the year, Mexico has been wracked by a series of sharp battles in a broader class struggle. The government of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) of President Ernesto Zedillo began on New Year's Day by doubling the price of tortillas, the basis of working people's diet, and arresting five teachers union leaders. Next the regime announced plans to privatize the state-owned electrical industry. A couple of weeks later officials of Mexico's National University (UNAM) announced the imposition of tuition in the guise of hefty student "fees" that would eliminate tens of thousands of students. This capitalist assault provoked mass marches of tens of thousands of electrical workers, teachers and students, joined by Indian peasant insurgents of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the southern state of Chiapas. In the last couple of weeks the government has sharply escalated its military pressure on the Zapatistas.

Since late April, through more than four and one-half months, the frontal conflict between the decaying semi-bonapartist PRI-government, which has held power uninterrupted for more than seven decades, and the millions of Mexican working people has focused on the strike by UNAM students. The strike of the huge university, with 270,000 students in 36 facilities in Mexico City, has thrown Mexican politics into turmoil. The campuses have been occupied by thousands of students, who have driven the cops out, barricaded the entrances and withstood repression by paid thugs (*porros*) of the PRI. Most recently on August 23, a crowd of scabs and thugs launched explosive devices at the strike lines. Earlier, on August 4, a strike demonstration trying to shut down a scab "registration" center was brutally assaulted by riot police (*granaderos*) of the Federal District government headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, presidential of the bourgeois nationalist "opposition" party, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution.)

In the face of the virtual press blackout in the United States about the student strike, a worker-student protest demonstration has been called in New York City's garment district on Friday, September 3 by the Internationalist Group and a number of other organizations around the demands, "Mexico: Victory to the UNAM Strike – Government Hands Off! Army Out of Chiapas!"

We have stressed that the struggle in Mexico is not nationally limited, that the fight for free public higher education also affects City University students in New York, and that the Mexican government's of wholesale privatization and military counterinsurgency was ordered straight from Washington. In

particular, the World Bank has insisted on the introduction of tuition at Mexico's universities and on "opening" the electrical industry to the imperialist monopolies. While the government is demanding millions in fees from the impoverished students, it has handed over more than \$100 billion to "rescue" the bankers who snapped up Mexico's banks when they were privatized at the beginning of the decade. From UNAM to CUNY, we fight for open admissions and free tuition now!

Mexican militarization in Chiapas and privatization in the capital are *made in the U.S.A.* And it is the urgent duty of U.S. workers, students and all opponents of imperialism to mobilize in defense of their class brothers and sisters in Mexico. We call on the workers movement to lead a fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants and against racist police repression* against blacks, Latinos, Asians and other minorities and the working class.

Contrary to the Mexico government's expectations, its drive to eliminate any remnants of free public higher education was sharply opposed not only by students but also by key workers labor unions. In early July, as a government ultimatum to the student strikers ran out and there were reports of troop movements to take over the main campus in Mexico City, the university workers union STUNAM formed *workers defense brigades*. Days later the powerful electrical workers union SME joined in, dispatching several hundred workers around the clock to defend key UNAM installations from the threat of repression by the PRI's paid thugs (*porros*), police, or army attack. Our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista/México played a key role not only in calling for but also initiating these worker-student defense guards.

But defense of the UNAM strike is fundamentally a *political* task. As the university occupation continued, *all* of Mexico's bourgeois parties have demanded that the strike be ended. Cárdenas' PRD *in particular* has vituperated against student "ultras" who refuse to buckle to the administration's privatization drive. The Grupo Internacionalista has warned of the *popular front*, a class-collaborationist coalition tying the leadership of workers organizations to a section of the bourgeoisie, that has formed around Cárdenas in order to derail struggles against the decaying PRI-government. This *cardenista* popular front has undercut the UNAM strike, as several so-called "moderate" student groups that openly support Cárdenas have called for "flexibilizing" the strike's six-point list of demands. Yet even the supposed "ultras" have repeatedly sown illusions in the PRD leader, claiming that he

Frída Hartz/La Jornada



**Mexican army has been staging provocative maneuvers against Zapatista Indians in Chiapas. Mobilize workers to demand army out!**

would have a hard time sending cops against student strikers. These illusions were shattered under the riot sticks of Cárdenas' *granaderos* on August 4.

While the PRI's corporatist labor fronts openly act as labor *cops* and contractors for the bosses, a number of self-proclaimed "independent" unions have arisen whose leaders, however, are politically tied to the *cardenista* popular front. Responding to pressure from Cárdenas, a number of these leaders, notably of the electrical and UNAM workers unions, have cut back their backing of the strike in recent days. Meanwhile, student *cardenistas* have adopted the tactics of the PRI, attempting to break up the UNAM Strike General Council (CGH) with their own thugs, drawn from the American football team of the Engineering School. On two occasions, strike defenders have mobilized to defend the CGH against disruption by these *porros* of the popular front. The lying bourgeois media portrays this as "fighting among different student factions," when what is at stake is defense of the strike against those who would bury it.

Hanging over the strike is the spectre of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, in which the army slaughtered hundreds of student protesters. In '68 one of the demands of the student protesters was for the dissolution of the *granadero* riot cops. Today the *granaderos* receive their orders from Cárdenas. In '68, and in protests against attempts to introduce tuition in 1987 and 1990, students have had to face PRI *porros*. Today, strikers face PRI and PRD *porros*. The potential consequences are ominous. In '68, in justifying the brutal army massacre, Defense Minister Marcelino García Barragán claimed "the army intervened in Tlatelolco at the request of the police to put out a shootout between two groups of students." Today the same claims are put out by the bourgeois politicians and media desperate to liquidate the UNAM strike.

In the last several weeks, the government has adopted a policy of provocation against UNAM strikers, Zapatista in-

surgents and electrical workers. While goons were attacking the students, in Chiapas hundreds of paratroopers descended on an Indian community in the rear of the EZLN base area. The clear intent was to cut off possibility of a retreat in the face of a new army offensive as in 1995, this time with more than 70,000 troops in 265 army posts in this one state. As the vise tightens around the Zapatistas, President Zedillo has demanded an end to hesitations about privatizing the electrical energy industry. On August 28, tens of thousands of electrical workers along with student strikers and Zapatista supporters flooded into Mexico City's main square, the Zócalo to express their opposition to the regime's attacks. But this protest was carried out under the program of *nationalism*, of "defense of the *patria* (fatherland)." This *bourgeois* program ties the workers and students

to their capitalist class enemy through the agency of the popular front.

The Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, has insisted on the urgent need to *break with the Cárdenas popular front* and to *forge a revolutionary workers party* in Mexico. From indigenous peasants in Chiapas to students and workers in Mexico City, the struggles of the oppressed cannot succeed against the capitalist oppressor unless they are led by the working class fighting to achieve a *workers and peasants government* and socialist revolution. The struggle must be guided by the Trotskyist program of *permanent revolution*, which explains that in colonial and neo-colonial countries of belated capitalist development such as Mexico, even "democratic" tasks of the bourgeois revolution can only be achieved by the taking of power by the working class, which must then pass over to socialist tasks and extend the revolution to the imperialist heartland.

The connection between Mexican and U.S.' workers struggles is underscored by the capitalists' North American Free Trade Agreement, which has been used to smash labor gains in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. Millions of Mexican, Central American and other immigrant workers in the U.S. can form a vital human bridge between workers' struggles here and throughout the hemisphere. In the U.S. as well, it is necessary to mobilize the working class against both capitalist parties, Democrats Republicans alike, and to build a revolutionary workers party to lead the fight for socialist revolution against the sweatshop bosses, bankers, industrialists who oppress and exploit working people on both sides of the border. Above all, the struggle must be part and parcel of the worldwide fight to build genuine Bolshevik vanguard parties, to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

Internationalist Group,  
section of the League for the Fourth International

## Kidnappings and Thug Assaults Against Student Strikers, Leftists

7 October 1999

# Mobilize Working-Class Action to Smash Terror Attacks on UNAM Strike!

*The following urgent alert was issued on October 7 by the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International.*

The Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International is issuing this urgent protest to alert the working class and left internationally about the ominous escalation of state repression against the strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

The strike against the attempt to drive poor and working-class students out of Latin America's largest university is still solid well into its sixth month. Having failed to wear down the strike, the capitalist state, its university authorities and their mouthpieces in the mass media are seeking to intimidate students into ending the UNAM occupation. On October 5, Alejandro Echevarría ("El Mosh"), the best-known leader of the wing of the strike movement denounced as "ultras" in the bourgeois press, was seized by 15 goons, held for several hours, beaten and threatened with rape; a contact lens was broken in one of his eyes as a result. The same day, Humberto Herrera, a long-time trade-union member who is a supporter of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (section of the International Communist League), was seized by six men, held for several hours, beaten, threatened with death and had a gun put at the back of his head. The day before, armed men beat two strikers from UNAM's School of Science, while students from the School of Philosophy were shot at by a roving band of thugs.

These outrages are a vicious attack on the entire workers movement! They are part of a pattern of provocations launched by the authorities in recent weeks against students, electrical workers threatened with privatization of the electrical industry, and Zapatista Indian insurgents facing massive military forces in southern Mexico. As we stressed in a leaflet calling a September 3 solidarity demonstration with the UNAM strike in New York City's garment district, "it is the urgent duty of U.S. workers, students and all opponents of imperialism to mobilize in defense of their class brothers and sisters in Mexico."

Already in the early weeks of the strike, 17-year-old activist Juan Carlos Zárate was repeatedly kidnapped and slashed with a knife; a young woman activist from a UNAM-affiliated



Carlos Cisneros/La Jomada

**UNAM strikers retake Acatlán campus from scabs and thugs.**

high school was raped. Repeated instances of police violence have included the August 4 attack by the *granaderos* (riot police), who beat and arrested over a hundred strikers. This brutal assault was ordered by the head of Mexico City's municipal government, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who is the candidate of the bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) for next year's presidential elections. A couple of weeks later, squads of *porros* (professional goons) connected with President Ernesto Zedillo's PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has governed Mexico for the last seven decades, attacked UNAM strike lines with explosive devices.

As Mexico's capitalist rulers grow increasingly impatient to end the strike, the repression and terror attacks are coming to a head. On October 6 a herd of *porros*, scabs and high-level university administrators seized the Acatlán campus of a UNAM-affiliated professional school while many strikers were away at a meeting of the Strike General Council (CGH) on the main campus. The assault was ostentatiously supported by the police, with patrol cars cruising the perimeter and police helicopters circling overhead. Upon learning of this provocation, hundreds of student strikers mobilized and streamed out of University City on buses heading to Acatlán where they defeated and dislodged the strikebreakers.

*continued on page 48*

13 October 1999

# Mexican Student Strikers Demand Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Early today, October 13, hundreds of striking students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) voted a motion calling for working-class action to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned black radical journalist sitting on Pennsylvania's death row. The 5 a.m. vote came only hours before Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge signed a death warrant setting the date for the execution of Jamal for December 2. The fight to stop the execution of this courageous fighter for the oppressed has become the focus of the worldwide struggle against the barbaric and racist death penalty. UNAM strikers urge all fighters for the oppressed to take up the struggle to save Mumia.

The motion, presented by the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, had been previously adopted by the UNAM School of Sciences. It then went to the Strike General Council (CGH), which met on the campus of the ENEP professional school in Acatlán, one of the outlying facilities of the National University. This is the same campus that was briefly seized a week ago by university authorities and their paid thugs (porros), amid a heavy police deployment, and then reoccupied by hundreds of strikers a few hours later. In today's CGH meeting, as the motion calling for Mumia's freedom was being presented before a podium with a portrait of Karl Marx, supporters of the popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (the former head of government of Mexico City and now presidential candidate of the bourgeois nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD]) tried unsuccessfully to disrupt and shut down the strike assembly. However, hundreds of students repudiated the would-be strike-breakers and loudly applauded the motion for Jamal.

Meanwhile, the National University workers union, STUNAM, may go on strike November 1, joining with the striking students as the administration has refused to negotiate with the union. UNAM strikers recently mobilized as well in defense of Iranian students who are threatened with the death penalty by the clericalist regime for allegedly insulting Islam.

As the threat of imminent execution hangs over Mumia Abu-Jamal, it is the duty of all those who fight for the exploited and oppressed to seek to *mobilize working-class power to win his freedom*. The last time Ridge signed a death warrant for Mumia, unions representing millions of workers around the world took a stand in his defense, demanding that the execution be stopped. Today, it is more urgent than ever stop the relentless machinery of state murder with an even greater power, that of the workers who make the wheels of the capitalist economy move, from Phila-



© Lou Jones

Mumia Abu-Jamal

delphia to Mexico City, Rio, Hamburg and Johannesburg, and who can also bring them to a screeching halt.

The struggle to mobilize the working class to free Mumia and do away with the racist death penalty poses the urgent need to break with all the parties of the capitalist class, from Cárdenas' PRD in Mexico to Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. and to forge a revolutionary workers party to lead the fight for all the oppressed. Just as workers internationally mobilized in defense of Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s and saved the "Scottsboro Boys," nine black youth facing execution in Alabama in the 30s, today work stoppages, strike action and mass labor-centered demonstrations are urgently needed to demand: ***Stop the Execution! Smash the Racist Death Penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!***

## Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!

*The following motion was approved by over 500 striking students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) at a meeting of the strike general council early on October 13, hours before Pennsylvania governor Ridge signed a death warrant ordering the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal.*

On 4 October 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it refused to hear an appeal submitted by the lawyers of Mumia

Abu-Jamal. The attorneys demanded a new trial on the basis of the innumerable and flagrant judicial atrocities that took place during the trial in 1982 which sentenced him to death. While the defense team is preparing new legal steps, this rejection by the highest court of the United States makes it all the more urgent to massively mobilize the working class to demand freedom now for Mumia. This is the social force which has the power to defeat this capitalist onslaught against the oppressed.

The capitalist state wants to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned black journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless," by executing him. His "crime" was to defy the racist American bourgeoisie and to denounce a system based on the most unbearable oppression of racial minorities. The racist death penalty in the United States is nothing less than legal lynching, an official version of the terror of the Ku Klux Klan which is directly derived from slavery. Today there are thousands on death row, most of them blacks and Latinos, including dozens of Mexicans.

By murdering Abu-Jamal, the ruling class wants to send a warning to all those who dare to raise their heads against oppression and poverty, hunger and war. To do this, they trample on the rights of the oppressed. Jamal was not allowed to present his own legal defense, and was even expelled from the court room during much of his 1982 trial. Blacks were systematically eliminated from the jury. This goes to show that there can be no justice for the exploited and oppressed in the bourgeois courts. In the capitalist judicial system the only voice is that of the bosses, their politicians and judges, who always seek to suppress the protests of those who fight against the starvation measures which they impose on the working people.

Those who have ordered that Mumia must die are the same ones who have ordered the increase of student "fees" at UNAM, as well as the wave of privatizations that threatens to throw thousands of workers out of their jobs around the world. They are the same ones who have deployed an enormous military force in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero in order to crush the Indians and peasants rebelling against their relentless oppression. From the largest university in Latin America, currently on strike, we join our voice with the international protests for Mumia. At the same time, we fight for immediate freedom for all the class-war prisoners in this country, victims of bourgeois justice in Mexico.

We UNAM students on strike who have resisted the blows of the Mexican bourgeoisie, junior partner of those who today seek to silence Mumia, emphasize that in order to prevent this new crime of the capitalist state, it is necessary to mobilize the enormous power of the working class around the world. This past April, teachers in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and longshoremen on the West Coast of the United States stopped work demanding freedom for Jamal. Today we address ourselves to the unions and militant workers in Mexico, in particular to those who have organized and participated in defense guards in the UNAM strike, to call on them to join with us in protest actions demanding: *Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty!*

## Smash Terror Attacks...

*continued from page 46*

Meanwhile, Congressional spokesmen of the rightist National Action Party (PAN) have demanded that the government seize the struck campus. Zedillo's hand-picked PRI presidential candidate, Horacio Labastida, brazenly alleged that a guerrilla group active in the western state of Guerrero had stockpiled arms on campus. This absurd claim (which was then parroted by Labastida's protégé, UNAM rector Francisco Barnés) is a transparent ploy to send in troops and riot police to break the strike, as many ruling-class hardliners are pushing for. The spectre of a new 1968 massacre, when the army slaughtered hundreds of students, is ever present in Mexico today. But also present and willing to fight are tens of thousands of workers, students and slum dwellers who have repeatedly taken to the streets to demonstrate their solidarity. Last weekend a huge demonstration of over 50,000 marched to Mexico City's main square, the Zócalo, to commemorate the 2 October 1968 massacre and support the UNAM strike for free public higher education. The vital factor is the need for revolutionary proletarian leadership.

*The workers movement must mobilize its power now in strike action and mass defense guards against this repression.* Our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista/México have played a key role in initiating workers defense guards for the UNAM strike as well as helping spark walkouts by workers at the Metropolitan University (UAM). Yesterday (October 6) students and workers at the UAM's Xochimilco campus struck in solidarity with UNAM, along with students at the National Pedagogical University. Yet these are only first steps: it is urgently necessary that the STUNAM university workers union (whose contract expires at the end of October), together with the SME electrical workers union (which is facing the threat of mass layoffs through privatization), teachers and other major sectors of the labor movement *join the UNAM students in a joint strike now.*

This must be part of an overall workers offensive to smash the capitalist assault on working people and the oppressed in Mexico and internationally. Our comrades have stressed the urgent need for a proletarian-internationalist program in fighting for the student strikers to take up the defense of black American death row prisoner and radical journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal. Key to this is to break from all forms of bourgeois politics, from the PRD and the popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Mexico (which includes the leaders both of the students and of the "independent" unions) to the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S., and to fight for the program of international socialist revolution, to build revolutionary workers parties as part of the reforging of Trotsky's Fourth International.

*We call on all opponents of capitalist repression to protest the vicious state violence against UNAM strike and left activists in Mexico and to demonstrate active solidarity for the victory of the UNAM strike!*

Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International  
7 October 1999



13 December 1999

DEMONSTRATION

# PROTEST BLOODY POLICE ATTACK AGAINST STUDENT STRIKERS IN MEXICO! FREE THE ARRESTED STUDENTS NOW!

*Demonstration, Monday, December 13, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 pm, at the Mexican Consulate, 27 East 39<sup>th</sup> Street.*

In protest against yesterday's savage police attack and mass arrest of 98 student demonstrators in Mexico City, a demonstration initiated by the Internationalist Group will be held in New York on Monday, December 13, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. demanding: "Protest Bloody Police Attack Against Student Strikers in Mexico! Free the Arrested Students Now!" The Mexican students were protesting at the U.S. Embassy for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned black journalist on Pennsylvania's death row, and against police repression in Seattle.

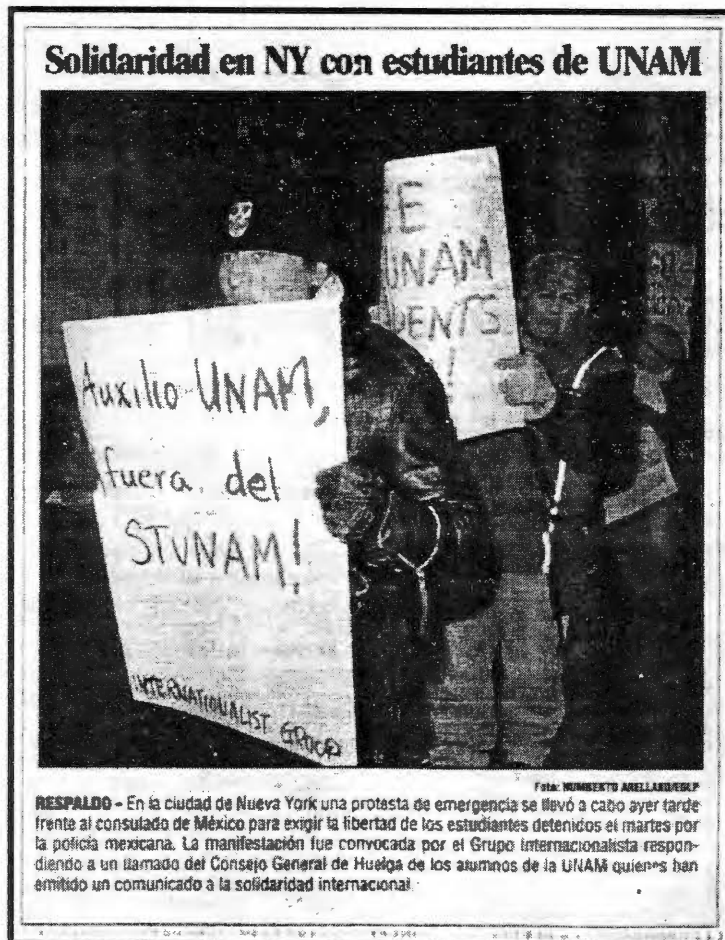
Monday's emergency demonstration will demand freedom for the 98 students, 30 of them minors. They are being held in

Mexico City jails in the wake of Saturday's police rampage against a rally called by the Strike General Council of the National University of Mexico, Latin America's largest university, which has been on strike for over 7 months. As reported in the local daily *El Universal* (12 December), the rally of several hundred students was held at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City "to protest against the U.S. government because of the death sentence against black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, against the establishment of a death penalty in Mexico and against repression of demonstrators at the World Trade Organization in Seattle."

The police attack was launched as if on cue after the student rally had ended and the participants were dispersing. As noted in the Mexico City press, riot police (*granaderos*) and undercover agents pursued students through the streets, pulled them out of stores where they sought refuge, surrounded them and beat them savagely, as well as beating passers-by and press photographers. As reported in the pro-government daily *Excelsior* (12 December), the U.S. Embassy threatened that if the Mexican authorities did not launch the attack, "the U.S. Marine Corps would intervene." The students are still being held in Mexico City jails on charges demanded by the U.S. embassy. Six students were hospitalized.

The graphic photos of the police assault published in the Mexico City press recall the scenes of demonstrators being gassed and beaten in Seattle. The sinister state repression by the government of the ruling PRI and the Mexico City administration of the "opposition" PRD also inevitably brings to mind the 1968 massacre of student strikers in Mexico City, as well as government repression against the Zapatista Indians in Chiapas and the campaigns of "counterinsurgency" and privatization throughout Latin America ordered straight from Washington and Wall Street. We call for Victory to the Mexican Student Strike—Government Hands Off! Army Out of Chiapas!

The defense of the arrested students is crucial for all those who fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and oppose the racist death penalty and police attacks on minorities and working people in the U.S. Demonstration organizers also noted that the potential NYC transit strike has been threatened with heavy repression by mayor Giuliani. We call on workers, students and others to demonstrate on Monday, December 13 at the Mexican Consulate to demand: Protest Bloody Police Attack Against Student Strikers in Mexico! Free the Arrested Students Now!



**RESPALDO** - En la ciudad de Nueva York una protesta de emergencia se llevó a cabo ayer tarde frente al consulado de México para exigir la libertad de los estudiantes detenidos el martes por la policía mexicana. La manifestación fue convocada por el Grupo Internacionalista respondiendo a un llamado del Consejo General de Huelga de los alumnos de la UNAM quienes han emitido un comunicado a la solidaridad internacional.

**UNAM Strikers Demand Freedom for  
Mumia Abu-Jamal, Protest Seattle Repression**

**21 December 1999**

## **Mexico City Cops Assault Student Protest at U.S. Embassy: 98 Arrested**

In the streets of the Mexican capital, the official forces of repression have dealt out a bloody demonstration of the nature of the capitalist state, whether under President Ernesto Zedillo's PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has governed Mexico uninterruptedly for the last seven decades, or the supposedly "democratic opposition" of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). While the red-and-black flag that traditionally signifies "on strike" in Mexico flies over University City and 37 other installations of the National University (UNAM), barricaded and occupied by student strikers for the last eight months, the downtown streets of Mexico City have been tinged red with the blood of students brutally beaten by black-uniformed paramilitary police. This cop terror was unleashed by the PRD government of the Federal District, which is now headed by a former Maoist and union leader and filled with top officials who are former student leaders and ex-leftists of every variety. The reformist activists of yesteryear are today enforcing "law and order" with a vengeance, explicitly at the behest of the U.S. government.

On Saturday, December 11, hundreds of striking students marched on the United States embassy to demand freedom for U.S. death row prisoner and black radical journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal and protest police-state repression at the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle. At the end of the demonstration, as the marchers were leaving they were subjected to a massive, well-orchestrated cop assault. Riot police (*granaderos*) suddenly appeared and began slamming demonstrators with their heavy shields. Cops struck potentially lethal blows to the neck and brutally kicked downed protesters in the head. Students were chased for blocks, and then cut off by another police detachment. Many were dragged out of stores, arrested at phone booths and seized at gunpoint on the metro (subway). The purpose was not to disperse the protest rally, which had already ended, but to arrest as many as possible of those identified as "hardline" student strikers. Al-

**Cárdenas Popular Front: Goons for Washington**



**Mexico City riot police arrest students after protest at U.S. embassy, December 11.**

together, 98 demonstrators were arrested, 19 of them minors, and six badly hurt protesters were hospitalized under police guard. Now 73 of them have been charged with "mutiny," facing six months to six years in prison.

The December 11 march on the U.S. embassy not only sent the Mexican bourgeoisie into a rage, it also produced a frenzy among the dominant tendencies in the Strike General Council (CGH). The day before, CGH delegates had signed a series of ten procedural "points of agreement" with representatives of the UNAM rector, and both the openly pro-PRD elements and reputed "ultras" among the student strike leadership were congratulating themselves on the progress of "dialogue." Then suddenly the illusion of polite discussion was shattered by the blows and guns of the PRD-commanded cops. PRD "moderates" like Fernando Belaunzarán joined the pro-PRD daily *La Jornada* in vituperating against the march itself as a "provocation." But the reputed "ultras" of the En Lucha (In Struggle) current who are now the main architects of the phony "dialogue" in the Palacio de Minería, desperate to ne-

**From the U.S. to Chiapas and Mexico City:  
For Class Struggle Against Capitalist Repression!**

gotiate an end to the strike, consciously boycotted the December 11 march and have repeatedly sought to undercut efforts to defend those arrested.

Behind this backstabbing is not just a sellout by ambitious student bureaucrats who want to demonstrate that they “know how to end a strike” (thus making their services to the bourgeoisie more valuable). As shown by the former student leaders known as the “Three Magi” (Imaz, Santos y Ordorika), whose secret deal that sunk the 1987 UNAM strike was their ticket to becoming PRD bigwigs, selling out a UNAM strike is a classic “career move” for ambitious petty bourgeois in Mexico. The “moderate ultras” of the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS) tried to pull off this maneuver in July, but failed miserably because the previous rector (Barnés) was not interested. Now the “neo-moderates” of En Lucha are attempting the same sleazy operation with the new rector De la Fuente, hand-picked by Zedillo. More fundamentally, the blow-up over the December 11 march revealed the bankruptcy of all the (bourgeois) “democratic” programs for “consensual reforms,” underscoring the urgent need for *revolutionary leadership* of what is at bottom a class battle that has lasted more than 240 days.

Centrally, in order to win, the UNAM strike must be extended to the working class – to university workers throughout the country, whose contracts are all due or expired; to electrical workers facing a privatization drive by Zedillo; to dissident teachers facing anti-labor attacks by the government in league with “charro” leaders of the corporatist PRI machine that masquerades as a union; and other key working-class sectors. The UNAM strike is already an issue between the bourgeois candidates in the year 2000 presidential election campaign. The student struggle cannot be separated from Indian peasant resistance to the Mexican army’s occupation of the southern state of Chiapas, where UNAM strikers have joined Zapatista protesters. To win against the concentrated power of the capitalist state, as shown on December 11, the student strike must become part of a proletarian offensive that breaks with the Cárdenas popular front. What’s needed is to forge a *revolutionary workers party* that fights for socialist revolution, from semicolonies like Mexico to the imperialist heartland.

### Cardenistas and Granaderos: “Armoring” the PRD Administration

The pro-government Mexico City daily *Excelsior* (12 December) wrote: “What began as a ‘peaceful’ march to the United States embassy to demand freedom for the black leader Mumia Abu-Jamal, condemned to death in a prison of that country, ended in a confrontation between strikers and granaderos....” In fact, the same paper admitted that “the march had proceeded



Students marching in December 11 Mexico City demonstration before cop assault. Banner says: Stop the Execution! Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

without major incidents.” Several faculties and college preparatory schools carried banners for Mumia. The 600 participants chanted, “*Libertad, Libertad para Mumia Abu-Jamal.*” At the embassy, a spokesman of the Grupo Internacionalista (GI) led off the speeches emphasizing the need to mobilize the working class to free Mumia and the need for proletarian internationalist struggle by working people in the United States and Mexico. He pointed to the history of protest in Latin America against the death penalty in the U.S. A second speaker, from the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS), began talking about the protests in Seattle.

Protesters had already noticed the presence of a dozen dubious types who had infiltrated the march. Now these professional provocateurs began breaking off pieces of concrete from flower boxes and throwing them at the embassy. Due to the increasing tension caused by the presence of provocateurs, an attempt was made by march organizers to isolate them and the protest meeting was declared over. As demonstrators were leaving the area, the last of several fireworks rockets exploded. Suddenly, several Suburban vans and buses full of riot police pulled up. Squads of granaderos piled out and began chasing and beating anyone they came across. Among their targets were several photographers, including an American woman and one from the newspaper *La Jornada*. When demonstrators regrouped on the other side of the wide Paseo de la Reforma, the shock troops struck again to disperse them. They continued to hunt down students in the nearby Zona Rosa district of restaurants and shops.

But as the protesters headed toward the Insurgentes metro station, their path of retreat was cut off by a squad of the GERI (Special Immediate Reaction Group), an elite paramilitary police force trained by the U.S. military in combatting “urban insurgency.” Plainclothes police infiltrators pulled out pistols and began fingering students to the machine-gun-toting paramilitary

forces. Police surrounded the metro station, then stormed in past the turnstiles and onto the platform with drawn guns, causing panic. One student reported (*La Jornada*, 12 December): "We piled into a subway car, but before leaving, the car doors opened again and police with their revolvers and Uzi submachine guns entered," dragging off a protester dressed in black. Several of those who had been breaking car windshields and store windows were later seen talking amiably with *granaderos* outside the subway station. Subsequently, as student protesters began converging on Police Station 50 where those arrested were being held, more arrests were made, bringing the total to almost 100.

The detainees were kept there for up to five days, in flagrant violation of the legal requirement that suspects be charged within 48 hours. The students were caged in groups of 36 in tiny 12 foot by 12 foot cells. When they were transferred from police holding pens to prison, police threatened them with execution. Upon arrival at the *Reclusorio Norte*, they were stripped and bathed in cold water when the temperature was below 40°. But the courageous fighting spirit with which the demonstrators faced their torment is remarkable. After 24 hours of being held incommunicado, jailed students were able to smuggle out messages calling for freedom for Mumia. In Police Station 57, where those under 18 were held, the prisoners chanted "Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" as a way of defying their jailers and showing their determination to go forward.

Outside, hundreds of student strikers surrounded the station, running the red-and-black strike banner up the flagpole. The Strike General Council held its weekly meeting in the street outside the station, voting to refuse to return to the "dialogue" with the rector's commission until all those in jail were freed. Militants of the *Grupo Internacionalista* spoke on the need to mobilize labor support to demand the release and dropping of the charges against the arrested students, and to reinforce the worker-student defense guards of the strike. Students and relatives of those arrested slept overnight outside the station, fending off the biting cold with numerous bonfires. During the next days, repeated demonstrations and sit-downs demanding release of the 98 detainees were held in downtown Mexico City. Later students collected tens of thousands of pesos to pay the enormous bail costs (US\$3,900 per person) to free their jailed comrades. The largest contributions came from the unions of workers of the National University (STUNAM) and the Metropolitan University (SITUAM), which have made several financial donations to the student strike and participated in worker-student defense brigades on the UNAM campuses.

In New York City, an emergency protest was called by the Internationalist Group outside the Mexican consulate on Monday, December 13. Demonstrators carried signs declaring: "Free the UNAM 98, Drop the Charges Now!" "No New '68 Massacre, Victory to the Strike!" "Mexican Army Out of Chiapas!" "Seattle: For International Labor Solidarity, Not National Protectionism," " Militarization Made in U.S.A.," "PRI, PAN, PRD, Bloody Parties of the Bourgeoisie," "From Seattle to Chiapas, Down with Capitalist Repression!" "Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants" and "Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front, Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" In addition to IG supporters, a number

of groups participated in the picket, including the League for the Revolutionary Party, Spartacist League, International Action Center, Coalition for Mumia Abu-Jamal and Chiapas Committee. Several spoke from the megaphone. That night, the Spanish-language Channel 41 TV news ran a substantial report on the demonstration, including interviews with participants and dramatic video footage of the police repression in Mexico City.

Now 73 of those arrested have been criminally indicted. Originally the PRD prosecutor planned to charge them with damage to the embassy and to cars whose windshields were broken in the melee. But none of the car owners filed a complaint, and embassy spokesmen later admitted there was only "light damage" to "18 windows." Finally, today the capital authorities withdrew the charges of "damage to the property of others." Moreover, a police videotape of the fracas didn't show any of those arrested. So instead the 73 were hit with a catch-all charge of "mutiny," taken from the repertory of Latin American military dictatorships. What's next? Will the Federal District government court martial student strikers for "rebellion" and resuscitate the infamous charge of "social dissolution" which students protested against in 1968?

### Lessons of December 11

The recent dramatic events from Seattle to Mexico City and New York City throw a sharp light on the political situation in Mexico and the United States. In the campaign for next July's presidential election in Mexico, which is already running full-blast, the PRD's Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is running as the candidate of a coalition, the "Alliance for Mexico" with several minor bourgeois parties and the backing of a number of "independent" (of the PRI) unions and labor groups. The other major candidates are Vicente Fox of the right-wing PAN (National Action Party), who has been ostentatiously waving the clericalist banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the PRI's Francisco Labastida, who is running on a "law and order" platform. The PRI has run Mexico for the last seven decades in a semi-bonapartist regime where party and state machinery are intricately meshed, and the working class has been straitjacketed by corporatist "unions" which are in reality police apparatuses to control labor.

The reality of the "PRI-government" was shown last week when a military truck of the Presidential General Staff drove up to PRI headquarters and unloaded quantities of large-caliber guns and ammunition, which were then taken into the building!

Cárdenas' PRD is a bourgeois-nationalist party which wraps itself in the Mexican flag as it profusely claims to defend "national sovereignty." But on December 11, the supposedly "democratic" Federal District government unleashed police-state repression acting as semicolonial cops for imperialism. *Excélsior* (12 December) reported that at the height of the protest, the U.S. embassy demanded that Mexico City authorities drive away the demonstrators or else "the U.S. Marine Corps would intervene." In the face of this outrageous threat to deploy American troops in the Mexican capital for the first time since the U.S. intervened during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17, the PRD saluted its imperialist overlords and sent in the *granaderos*.

Since his first presidential campaign in 1988, Cárdenas has been the focal point of a “popular front” whose purpose is to divert and contain potentially explosive social unrest by chaining sectors of the working class breaking from PRI control – along with peasants, Indians, students and the rural and urban poor – to the PRD, a bourgeois-nationalist party, many of whose leaders are former leftists. The Grupo Internacionalista has since its inception repeated the warnings of the communist internationalist Leon Trotsky (co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 Russian October Revolution) against the role of popular fronts as a roadblock to revolutionary workers mobilization. From the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s to Indonesia in 1965 to Allende’s Chile in the early ’70s, popular fronts have paved the way for the victory of right-wing reaction by shackling and repressing the workers and oppressed.

This was not the first time the PRD Mexico City authorities sent the police against demonstrators. Last May, Cárdenas’ riot police attacked striking teachers of the CNTE, which has been a main support of the Cárdenas popular front. In June they arrested squatters associated with the Frente Popular Francisco Villa, another cardenista mainstay. On August 4, top city officials ordered granaderos to assault student strikers who had shut down a scab center for off-campus classes, arresting 117. Cárdenas himself resigned as head of the Federal District in September in order to pursue his presidential campaign. He was replaced by Rosario Robles, a former official of STUNAM and one-time Maoist in the Organización de Izquierda Revolucionaria – Línea de Masas. On October 14, the new Federal District chief dispatched granaderos who attacked student demonstrators as they were leaving the beltline (periférico) highway after protesting biased TV coverage of the strike by the PRI-connected Televisa network. Dramatic photos showed a young woman student lying in a pool of blood together with her brother, who tried to come to her aid as she was being brutalized by the cops.

As a student in the 1970s, Robles protested in the streets against the PRI-government, demanding dissolution of the notoriously brutal granaderos. Today she and her patron Cárdenas send the riot cops against student strikers, teachers and squatters. Cárdenas has repeatedly sought to reassure U.S. investors, most recently in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City. But a far more effective demonstration of his “reliability” in enforcing bourgeois “law and order” is sending

the cops to beat up protesters, many of whom were only a few months ago among his most fervent supporters. On December 16, student demonstrators marched first on the U.S. embassy and then on Mexico City government offices in the Zócalo, the capital’s main plaza, to underscore the PRD’s responsibility for the criminal police repression. A GI banner in the December 11 march carried the message we have hammered home throughout the UNAM strike, calling to “Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front, Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!”

The Mexican ruling class has grown increasingly frustrated with the UNAM strike. For months, the PRI regime and its rector, Francisco Barnés de Castro, who had been in charge of the state-owned petrochemical industry, counted on wearing the strikers down. When that didn’t work, following the selection of Labastida

(whose wife is head of the UNAM’s “Institute of Es-thetic Studies”) as the PRI presidential candidate in early November, Zedillo dumped his flunkey Barnés with an early morning phone call and put in Juan Ramón de la Fuente, until then cabinet secretary in charge of health. Meanwhile, the weekly Proceso (long the voice of PRI “progressives,” now sympathetic to the PRD, with good sources in the security agencies) put out a glossy 72-page special edition (1 December) on “The Strike Without End.” Two UNAM academics published a book titled *La huelga del fin del mundo*

(The Strike of the End of the World), comparing it to the millenarian uprising of the Canudos in Brazil at the end of the last century, which was brutally put down by the Brazilian military.

Intimidation didn’t work either: following days of media frenzy denouncing students for daring to block traffic on October 14 and amid a massive mobilization of thousands of police, the CGH was able to bring out 30,000 or more on November 5 to march on the beltline highway. Students were joined by unionists and residents of poor communities in this act of defiance. At the beginning of December they again brought over 20,000 to demonstrate in the Zócalo in front of the presidential palace and Mexico City government offices. In the face of the strikers’ tenacious resistance, the government and Zedillo’s handpicked rector De la Fuente finally agreed to “dialogue” with the strikers. After much haggling about meeting places and the agenda, on December 10 the rector’s commission agreed to discuss the CGH’s agenda, in the order demanded by the CGH. Then came December 11.

The vicious police beating of student protesters exposed the brutal reality behind the curtain of “dialogue” in the Palacio



El Internacionalista

**Banner of the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International. Banner reads: “Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front—Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!”**

de Minería. A symptomatic fact: all those students not on the commission of 120 (who had to show UNAM identification to enter) were kept out of the building by Protección Universitaria campus cops, even though dissolving the university's repressive apparatus was the first on the strikers' list of demands, and though the police (along with their auxiliaries, the porro thugs) had been run off campus and their offices occupied early in the strike. The cops must be thrown out of the STUNAM as well! Nevertheless, the strike leadership core around the En Lucha tendency centered on the Faculty of Sciences insisted on resuming "dialogue" as soon as possible. En Lucha even floated returning to the talks while the strikers were in jail. A couple of days later, at a meeting in Ciudad Universitaria on December 14, the Sciences representatives insisted for a long time that they wouldn't turn over 60,000 pesos (raised by raffling off a Volkswagen) to raise bail for the jailed students because it was supposed to buy paper. They lost the vote.

In fact, these one-time alleged "ultras" who are now ironically referred to in the bourgeois press as "neo-moderates," tried to sabotage the march from the beginning. On December 11, they insisted on holding a Sciences strike assembly at the same time as the march. En Lucha leader Javier Fernández even opposed sending a delegation to the march. A group of a dozen or more students who had been putting up posters calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal protested that the march had been formally voted for by the CGH, and left the meeting to join the demo. The next day, En Lucha leader Mario Benítez pointedly refused to defend the march, saying that the government wanted to portray the students as "vandals." Then, at a meeting with En Lucha sympathizers (informally called Los Brigadistas after the name of their strike paper) on Monday, December 13, in a discussion of whether it was right to go to the march Fernández argued that the marchers had "created the problems we are now facing," and that it ultimately had no direct relevance to the strike. Several brigadistas expressed their anger over this treachery.

And to top this off, in *Los Brigadistas* (16 December), En Lucha has the gall to complain about "supporting this or that person in a march" – an unmistakable reference to the march for the liberation of death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. They are expressing here in the crudest manner their eagerness to isolate the strike from the international class struggle, in order to negotiate a rotten deal "among university members," as is demanded by De la Fuente and his deputy José Narro. Moreover, this statement was made in an issue dedicated to regurgitating its fantasy that the strike will be won by demonstrating superiority and expertise in the "arguments" in the discussions at the Palacio de Minería, as if it were a program of *Jeopardy* on TV Azteca.

As the spokesman for the Grupo Internacionalista said at the December 11 protest in front of the U.S. embassy: "Today the papers are full of praise of the supposed 'dialogue' while we are here protesting against repression – not only in Philadelphia and Seattle, but also in Chiapas ... and here in Mexico City. The enemy is imperialism and its neocolonial puppets and underlings like Salinas, Zedillo, etc. And Cárdenas, who

has repeatedly promised his masters on Wall Street that he will protect their interests. And he fulfilled this promise, sending granaderos against student strikers. To win this strike which has lasted almost 240 days, it is necessary to extend it to the university workers (SITUAM, STUNAM), to key sectors of the industrial proletariat such as the electrical workers. This is what the bourgeoisie fears most."

### Forge a Trotskyist World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Another group which boycotted the march was the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), affiliated with the Spartacist League/U.S. in the International Communist League. After the mass arrests, the GEM put out a leaflet claiming that the December 11 Mexico City demonstration "was called in solidarity with recent mobilizations in Seattle against the WTO meeting" which were "a circus spectacle of nationalism and chauvinist protectionism in solidarity with their own bourgeoisie." The Seattle mobilizations called by the AFL-CIO labor fakers and liberal/reformist organizations orbiting around the Democratic Party were indeed built on a chauvinist program of protectionism, and proletarian internationalists would not participate in them. *But the December 11 march was called to protest against the police-state repression of the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization meeting.* Moreover, the lying GEM leaflet never mentions that the December 11 march was called to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!

To demonstrate for those two demands – down with the repression in Seattle and freedom for Mumia – is what was voted by the CGH meeting on December 4 and 5. That was what the CGH leaflet for the protest called for. Even the truncated statement posted on the Internet by the CGH Press and Propaganda Commission (controlled by En Lucha), which GEM members cite as the proof for their claim, says: "March Saturday at 2 p.m. from the Tianguis del Chopo to the United States Embassy, to protest repression in Seattle and for freeing those arrested." The GEM's self-serving lie is both absurd and disgusting. Absurd, because why would Mexican students be solidarizing with *U.S.-chauvinist* protectionism, which is often directed against Mexico (for example, Teamster attempts to keep out Mexican truck drivers, Steelworkers court suits claiming that Mexican steel is sold at "dumping" prices)? Disgusting, because here there was the first major demonstration in Mexico of hundreds of student strikers demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and protesting police-state repression in Seattle ... and the GEM/ICL denounces this as "nationalist."

In fact, the genuinely nationalist position was that of En Lucha, which joined with the GEM in boycotting the December 11 march on the U.S. embassy, in its case claiming that freedom for Mumia and opposition to police violence in Seattle had *no direct relevance to the UNAM strike!* In another important respect, the GEM/ICL position was even worse than that of En Lucha: during the several days of mobilizations outside the police station and in the streets to demand freedom for the jailed UNAM students, in which the Grupo Internacionalista participated, the GEM was nowhere to be

seen. Nor did the GI comrades see the GEM as we went to key unions to gain support for the arrested students. Not until the students had been freed did they dare distribute their leaflet to the December 16 march. These charlatans, who resort to absurd distortions, vile smears and outright lies to justify their centrist degeneration, have become a parody of the former ICL, making a mockery of the name Spartacist, which stood for intransigent opposition to the bourgeoisie.

There was a group at the December 11 march that did hail the Seattle protests, namely the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS), affiliated with the Argentine PTS, a split-off from the pseudo-Trotskyist current led by the late Nahuel Moreno. In keeping with its Morenoite tradition of unprincipled maneuverism, the LTS operates through numerous front groups, from ContraCorriente to a "Committee Against Repression of the CGH." A leaflet (11 December) signed by ContraCorriente and "independent students" and titled "Long Live the Battle of Seattle!" presents a classic example of petty-bourgeois Latin American nationalism masquerading as anti-imperialism. The flyer has only the most fleeting criticism of the AFL-CIO tops in Seattle and presents a purely "democratic," i.e., bourgeois, program ranging from a "democratic decision-making congress" as the crowning demand for the UNAM strike, to demilitarization, down with repression, support the masses' struggles against "imperialist exploitation and oppression"—and what about the exploitation and oppression by the Mexican bourgeoisie?

Of course, in typical Morenoite fashion, the LTS had another leaflet on "The Battle of Seattle," this one in its own name, which denounces the "protectionist and nationalist policies" of the AFL-CIO leadership. It even notes the anti-Chinese character of the labor fakers' protest, but doesn't mention that these arch-anti-communists are bent on *counterrevolution*, nor that the only way to defend the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution is through workers political revolution, led by a Trotskyist party, to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy which is preparing the way for capitalist restoration. Indeed, in its two-line leaflets the LTS does not call for the formation of Bolshevik workers parties either in the U.S. or Mexico. Instead, its crowning demands are for "a national coordinating committee against repression" and for a "revolutionary constituent assembly." (Cárdenas himself is calling in his election campaign for a constituent assembly.)

The LTS' method is typical reformist front-groupism, with a low-level popular-frontist, "anti-imperialist," "anti-fascist," etc. *mass line* and a more "advanced" party line for the initiated. More particularly, it reflects a variety of opportunism characteristic of ostensible Trotskyist groups, namely Pabloism. Michel Pablo was the head of the Fourth International in the late 1940s and early '50s when, under the pressure of the mass Stalinist parties and the Cold War, he adopted a liquidationist policy of tailing after the West European pro-Moscow Communist parties, as well as social democrats, and bourgeois na-



Poster for CGH march for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and against repression from Seattle to Chiapas.

tionalists in the semicolonies. Ever since then, a panoply of pseudo-Trotskyists have developed Pabloist tailism into an elaborate program of tailing after any mass movement, from Cuban Castro/Guevarist guerrillas to Chinese Red Guards, Portuguese military officers, Mandela's ANC in South Africa, and even outright reactionary forces like the Iranian mullahs.

Moreover, behind the LTS' line of "Long Live the Battle of Seattle," as well as its particular criticisms of the AFL-CIO, is the program of Latin American nationalism which they share with a host of petty-bourgeois left groups in Mexico and throughout the region. The LTS along with its parent PTS routinely refers to "Yankee workers." In contrast, Marxist internationalists denounce "Yankee imperialism" which oppresses not only semicolonial countries but also the working class in the U.S. At the December 16 march that returned to the U.S. embassy, a poster put out by the En Lucha-controlled Press and Propaganda Commission referred to the "gringo embassy," another chauvinist term. Some Stalinists showed up with a Mexican flag bearing a hammer and sickle, and at the end of the march a number of demonstrators sang the national anthem. And the GEM, in flagrant contradiction with its Trotskyist pretensions, has come out as defenders of Mexico's "national sovereignty."

The Mexican tricolor flag and the national anthem belong to the bourgeoisie, those who exploit the proletariat and repress the UNAM strike. Our banner is the red flag of the world proletariat; our anthem is the *Internationale*, which goes back to the Paris Commune. Marxists fight imperialist oppression as part of an *internationalist* working-class struggle to smash capitalism. Trotskyists fight for the program of *permanent revolution* in semi-colonial countries like Mexico, insisting that even fundamental democratic tasks — national emancipation, agrarian revolution and the liberation of indigenous peoples— can only be accomplished by smashing capitalism and establishing proletarian rule, through a workers and peasants government under the leadership of a communist party, and the extension of workers revolution around the globe. Tying the struggle to sectors of the "national" bourgeoisie — as do all variants of Stalinism, including

Maoism and Castroism – spells defeat. In Mexico, this was the policy of Lombardo Toledano, who spearheaded the slander campaign against Trotsky that prepared the way for his assassination, and of the PCM (Mexican Communist Party), whose remnants ended up liquidating into Cárdenas' PRD.

Those who present anti-imperialism as vulgar anti-Americanism hoodwink the workers. The Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky underscored that revolutionary struggle in Latin America *can only triumph if it is united with the multiracial proletariat of the United States*. Likewise, the struggle against the racist death penalty in the U.S. goes hand in hand with the fight against its reintroduction in Mexico. (Various of the most rabid witchhunters against the CGH, such as the emeritus jurists Burgoa and Carrancá y Rivas who virulently denounce the "impunity" of the strikers and call for "applying the law" against UNAM students, are also calling for the death penalty in Mexico.) This fight must be part of a struggle against the racist oppression of Indians, against the persecution of Central American immigrants, against the oppression of women and homosexuals, and all the other characteristics of the rule of the "national" bourgeoisie in Mexico – which does the bloody bidding of the U.S. embassy.

In Mexico, the bourgeois parties unite in repressing the student protesters, accusing the UNAM strikers of provocation, when the provocation came directly from the police, for the purpose of justifying police-state measures. In the United States, the liberal Democratic city government of Seattle called in the National Guard and sealed off the entire downtown area to keep out not only demonstrators but anyone other than the dignitaries of the World Trade Organization. In New York where the possibility of a transit strike transfixed the city last week, Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani along with the Democratic state attorney general and Metropolitan Transit Authority bosses got the courts to issue a battery of injunctions which not only declared a strike illegal, but also proposing a strike or even discussing it! Violators were threatened with unheard-of fines of \$25,000 a day *per person*, doubling daily thereafter, while the union would be fined \$1 million the first day, \$2 million the next, \$4 million the following day, etc.

Thus, how to fight repression is a burning question on both sides of the border. In his speech to the demonstrators outside the U.S. embassy on December 11, the spokesman of the Grupo Internacionalista emphasized:

"From Seattle to Chiapas and Mexico City, the struggle against capitalist repression has been undercut over and over by popular frontism, which ties the organized working class to sectors of the bourgeoisie. The struggle to save Mumia, just as was the case earlier in the struggle to save the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti and the Scottsboro youths, must be part of a revolutionary, proletarian, internationalist class struggle, a struggle to forge the revolutionary workers party we so badly need."

While the LTS spoke uncritically of the "Battle of Seattle" as some kind of anti-capitalist revolt, the Internationalist Group speaker warned that in the demonstrations in Seattle the program of Clinton's opponents was that of *protectionism*:

"Many of them wanted to dump Chinese steel into the ocean. This is a counterrevolutionary program, conceived as a means of pressuring the Clinton regime. The Mexican government also opposed Washington's plans, in order to 'defend' starvation wages. As for the European powers, what happened in Seattle was the beginning of future trade wars, which could lead to a third world war."

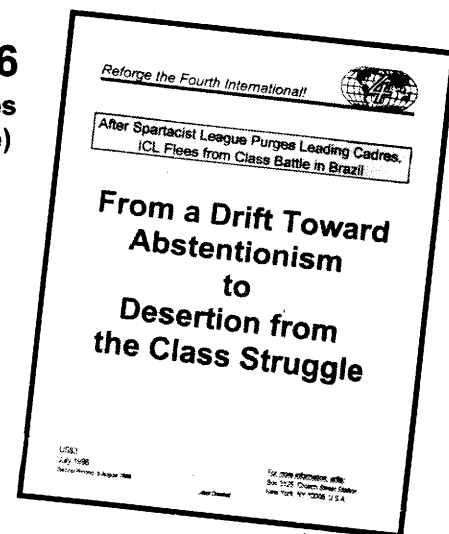
The GI speaker ended on the history of international working-class defense:

"During the struggle to save Sacco and Vanzetti from the executioner, a young Central American was working in the New York office of the International Labor Defense, affiliated with the International Red Aid. It is reported that this young man wore a button with the image of Trotsky. He later went to Nicaragua to talk with the insurgent leader Sandino. But disagreeing with the nationalist policy of the latter, he later decided to form the Communist Party of El Salvador. The youth was named Farabundo Martí, and he was brutally assassinated along with 30,000 peasants and workers in 1932. His example shows how the struggle for democratic rights and against repression goes hand in hand with the struggle for socialist revolution around the world."

*continued on page 58*

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31 December 1999

# Workers Vanguard's "Virtual Reality"

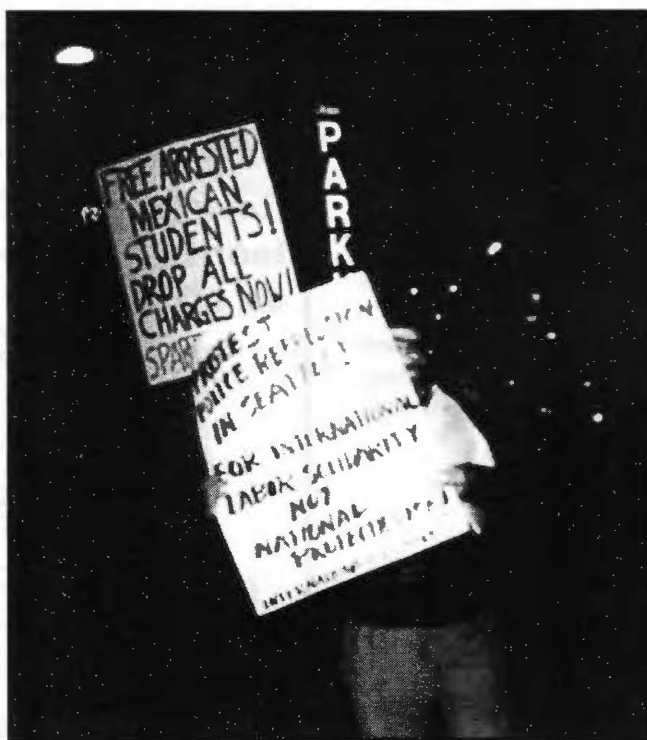
## Who Are You Going to Believe, WV or Your Lying Eyes?

They're evidently addicted to it. Cooking up lies about the Internationalist Group, that is, with an odd predilection for patent falsehoods that are easily proven to be false. Workers Vanguard, newspaper of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, keeps churning out smears, fabrications, willful distortions and outright inventions against the IG and the League for the Fourth International in order to mask its own abstentionism and opportunist degeneration. The SL/ICL clearly believe that they can say anything about us and to hell with the facts.

The latest issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 726, 31 December 1999) includes an article reprinting a leaflet by the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) about the brutal cop attack on the December 11 demonstration outside the U.S. embassy. The striking UNAM students were demanding freedom for Mumia

Abu-Jamal and denouncing cop repression of protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle. Trying to cover up the fact that their Mexican comrades boycotted the December 11 demonstration and didn't participate in days of protests against the arrests, an introduction by WV notes that on December 13 the SL "participated in a demonstration in front of the Mexican consulate in New York City initiated by the Internationalist Group," but raises two charges against the IG:

- We are supposedly "tailing bourgeois-nationalist forces in Mexico represented by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas"; and
- "While correctly defending the student demonstrators against the brutal cop assault, the IG says not a word of criticism about the anti-WTO protests in Seattle, which in the main were filled with protectionist 'Buy American' poison and anti-Communism directed against China." Hello?!



**No Internationalist Group criticism of protectionism in Seattle? See for yourself. Demonstrators at IG-called December 13 NYC picket against Mexico City cop attack on student protesters.**

WV's first charge is a smokescreen to cover up the ICL's own abandonment of its decade-long warning against a popular front around Cárdenas and the bourgeois-nationalist PRD. In fact, at the December 11 demonstration in Mexico City the Grupo Internacionalista carried signs and a banner calling to break with the Cárdenas popular front and forge a revolutionary workers party. Today the GEM's line of "no illusions in the PRD" hardly differs from that of various leftists at UNAM, the so-called "ultras," who criticize the PRD but do not call on workers and students to break from class collaboration with the nationalist bourgeois "opposition" coalition. The call for "no illusions" is something revolutionaries would say when giving critical support to a reformist workers party, not in drawing the class line against a capitalist party.

Point 2 really takes the cake. "Not a word of criticism" from the Internationalist Group about the protectionism of the anti-WTO protests? Anyone can see from the photo reproduced here that the IG carried a sign at our December 13 NYC protest saying, "Protest Police Repression in Seattle! For International Labor Solidarity, Not National Protectionism!" An SLer was right behind. Moreover, the Internationalist Group speaker said over the megaphone:

"The struggle of the working class is international, and while we protest against the police repression in Seattle, we warn against the program of protectionism and anti-communism of the AFL-CIO leaders, who seek to set workers in the U.S. against their brothers and sisters around the world and to foment a capitalist counterrevolution in China."

He called for defense of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialism, and for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy that is preparing the road for capitalist restoration. In an interview with Spanish-language



# ICL/GEM Pull Their Hands Out of the Boiling Water

One organization which has played no role in the UNAM strike—which takes some doing, given the scope and duration of the strike—is the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), section of the International Communist League (ICL). The GEM's main activity during the strike at the University, which is its only arena of activity, has been the publication from time to time of leaflets with passive commentary from afar...and mountains of lies against the Grupo Internacionalista. A recent *Espartaco* supplement (1 March) on the "Lessons of the UNAM Strike" fully conforms to this pattern. It says very little about the strike—a couple of random comments about En Lucha, for example—and consists primarily of a litany of the ICL's general positions together with its latest "discoveries" about Mexico, the most outstanding of which are:

1. that there is no Cárdenas popular front (supposedly because the Mexican workers are tied to the bourgeoisie by nationalist ideology); and
2. that there also is no important difference between the corporatist fake unions of the CTM and unions dominated by pro-PRD bureaucrats.

The founders of the Grupo Internacionalista and the League for the Fourth International were leading cadres and youth leaders of the ICL and the GEM until they were expelled in 1996 as the international leadership deserted from a crucial battle to throw *guardas municipais* (local police) out of a union of municipal workers in Brazil. At the hottest point of the struggle, one day before courts and cops dissolved a union meeting and launched a series of judicial attacks against the Trotskyist workers of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil for leading this fight, the ICL broke off relations with the LQB, alleging "unacceptable risks to the vanguard." In a disgusting attempt to convince the Brazilian comrades to abandon this crucial battle, which the ICL had at first encouraged, a Spartacist spokesman told them that they should "pull our hands out of the boiling water." The LQB refused to abandon its battle posts, and the ICL took a powder. Ever since, the ICL has tried to alibi its *desertion* by trafficking in lies of the popular-front government and pro-police provocateurs in Volta Redonda against our comrades, refusing to defend them in the face of repression by the capitalist state, and vilely attempting to sabotage our international campaign in their defense. What the ICL did in Brazil has a name: it's called *betrayal* of the proletariat.

We pointed out at that time that the new line of the ICL which was spelled out in its desertion from the class struggle in Brazil was abstentionism and passive propagandism in the face of the hard blows of the class struggle. Its new motto is: when the class struggle gets hot, the ICL gets out. And here, too: as the government's hounding of the UNAM strike intensified, the ICL demonstrated in Mexico the treacherous policy it first displayed

in Brazil. When hundreds of students marched on the United States Embassy on December 11, the GEM was intentionally absent, even though it was the first big demonstration in Mexico for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. After the demonstration was violently broken up and 98 protesters arrested, the GEM also did not participate in the protests in front of Agency 50 of the prosecutor's office, where hundreds of students and parents remained on alert around the clock to prevent a transfer of the arrested strikers, and where the CGH even held its assembly. And not by accident, the GEM once again was absent from the CGH...at the session of February 6 when the police burst in, arresting a thousand students. For this *rearguard*, the water was boiling and it was time to pull their hands out.

Nevertheless, in an article that read like a police report that appeared in *Proceso* (19 December 1999), the magazine unjustly linked "los Espartacos" to the December 11 demonstration. The GEM sent a letter to *Proceso* (2 January) in which they said they had nothing to do with it: they distanced themselves from the demonstration, scoffing at "the nationalist rituals of burning 'Yankee' flags in front of embassies," and *they did not call to defend those arrested and booked on charges of mutiny for participating in the demonstration*. In loud discussions in the auditorium of Prepa 2 on December 26, GEM members went even further and maintained that the December 11 demonstration wasn't really for the liberation of Mumia at all, because some bourgeois journalist said one of the demonstrators didn't know who Jamal was.

As if that weren't enough, the GEM supporters added that the provocation came from the demonstrators themselves, pointing to a photo in a newspaper showing a "student" throwing stones. Disgusting! Once again, the GEM is repeating the lies of the popular front, this time of the PRD government of Mexico City, which uses these lies to justify its repression. Since then, it has been proven that those who were throwing hunks of cement were thugs hired by the campus cops of Auxilio UNAM, and not the students that the GEM wants to throw the blame on. Does the GEM want to duck its responsibility for having made these infamous statements? Unfortunately for it, their slanders weren't shouted into the void; they were engraved in the memory of several students present that night in Prepa 2, and who today are in jail.

The GEM's absences and slanders are not accidental. *The key aspect of its politics is that it does not fight for revolutionary leadership in the struggles of the working people and the oppressed*. True to this line, at the UNAM the GEM did not fight for a class-struggle program in the assemblies of the strike committees and the Strike General Council. At most some of its members would occasionally drop by to read a communiqué, make a sale, and then leave. However, in its U.S. newspaper, the ICL has the gall to write:

"In strike meetings and in our propaganda, our comrades have insisted on the need to extend the strike beyond the walls of the university, so that the struggle for free education is taken up by the industrial working class which has the social power to win this battle."

—*Workers Vanguard*, 11 February

The GEM tried to extend the strike? Anyone in the UNAM who knows anything about the GEM would ask upon hearing this, "When? Where?" Even the 1 March *Espartaco* supplement does not say a word about this. The reason is simple: they never did.

The GEM tries to bamboozle its readers with the fairy tale that they were the ones who defended against wind and tide the revolutionary program of mobilizing the working class independently of the bourgeoisie, when these Sunday socialists wouldn't go beyond empty verbiage even by mistake. We read in the *Espartaco* supplement: "The UNAM strike has considerable support in the working class, which is reflected in the workers guards of the SME and other unions in Ciudad Universitaria last summer, and various joint mobilizations of workers and students. It was precisely this working-class support to the strike that held off, for almost ten months, the repressive hand of the bourgeoisie." Correct. The only thing is that the GEM didn't undertake any action whatsoever to achieve this. In contrast, the Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista not only called in our press for workers defense of the strike, but also initiated the formation of worker-student defense guards, both in resolutions in the CGH and by sending brigades (in many cases with large delegations of student strikers) to the unions to get them to participate in these defense guards.

After three decades of fighting for authentic Trotskyism, the ICL has degenerated into left centrism; as is the case with all centrists, there are huge contradictions between what they say and what they do. This has led them to the extreme of giving a theoretical justification for their abstentionism. In its new declaration of principles, the ICL distances itself from the key thesis of the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, that "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." This thesis, says the ICL, "predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness." So it used to be, according to the "old Trotskyism," that the struggle was to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership; today, according to the ICL, the problem is the low consciousness of the proletariat itself, and not so much the leadership. As common revisionists, the ICL and the GEM blame the workers for the crimes of their leaderships, and for the ICL's own capitulations. Today in Mexico one can see what the ICL's new "theory" means in the concrete.

Last July 22, during the discussion period following a talk by the GEM at the School of Social Work, a member of the STUNAM referred to the role the Grupo Internacionalista played in mobilizing the worker-student defense brigades and then asked the GEM: "What is it that you do to mobilize the proletariat to defend the strike?" After beating around the bush

about the amount of paper that they have handed out, and under the unionist's insistent questioning, the response of the GEM's official spokesman was clear and conclusive: "*We do not mobilize the proletariat. We talk with the workers.*" This statement alone gives the lie to the fiction published in *Workers Vanguard*. And behind this declaration there lies a whole program. Recently, at a march by the Electrical Workers Union on March 2, a youth spokesman of the GEM justified its meager participation in the strike, saying that "the validity of a program is not measured by the number of man-hours spent in the strike." How lucky for them! But you can measure the *bankruptcy* of a party by registering that its words do not correspond to its actions, as is the case with the GEM. A genuine Trotskyist fighting propaganda group would have to present a revolutionary program in the struggle, in order to give it direction and so that militants can determine its superiority as a guide to necessary action.

For example, the Grupo Internacionalista has warned and documented how the *Cárdenas popular front* has played a key role in repressing the UNAM strike and sabotaging it from within. *Workers Vanguard* lies when it pretends that the GI borrowed this position from the LTS (Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo, an ex-Morenoite group in Mexico), which, so says *WV*, "invoked" the existence of such a popular front "for many years." *Espartaco*, on the other hand, would have us believe that the "mythical" popular front around the PRD is an invention of the GI. The two versions have a common aim, to cover up the fact that the ICL—when it still defended revolutionary politics—was *the organization which for a whole decade warned the proletariat and oppressed against the Cárdenas popular front*. This was, in fact, the ICL's most distinctive position on Mexico, for which it was known among the entire Mexican left; and if at one point during the early '90s the LTS criticized the popular front, it was because it was imitating the GEM. The truth is that the ICL denounced the Cárdenas popular front from the time of Cárdenas' first presidential candidacy in the 1988 elections until May of 1997, just before his election as head of government of the Federal District, when the ICL decided that the popular front did not exist. Ever since, it has dishonestly tried to hide its own past. This is called *opportunism*.

But let's take a look at the ICL's current explanation as to why there can't be a popular front around Cárdenas' PRD. The *Espartaco* supplement says "there is no mass reformist workers party in Mexico; the bourgeoisie has not needed the instrument of a popular front to control the proletariat, nationalist ideology and its corporate control of the unions was sufficient." *Workers Vanguard* (3 September 1999) was even more succinct: "the Mexican proletariat has been tied historically to the bourgeoisie by means of bourgeois nationalism, pure and simple." As proof that the proletariat is totally blinded by nationalism, the ICL says that one can see Mexican flags and images of the Virgin of Guadalupe in marches of the SME. And in marches of unions with popular-frontist leaderships in Germany or France or Spain or Italy, there are no national flags? In Chile, where the ICL (still) admits that there was a popular front under Salvador Allende, the emblem of the Unidad Popular

was the Chilean flag. *Point one:* nationalism and popular frontism are not counterposed programs, they accompany each other. We Trotskyists fight against both at the same time; the conjurers of the ICL use the former as a dodge to pretend the latter doesn't exist.

*Point two:* at the theoretical level, every Marxist will recognize that the explanation that the Mexican proletariat is tied to the bourgeoisie "by means of bourgeois nationalism, pure and simple" is pure *liberal idealism*. The workers movement exists in its organizations, both trade-union and party, and the bourgeoisie needs to chain them organizationally. In the United States, it does so through a pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy (the vast majority of which is tied to the Democratic Party) that was installed through a purge of popular-frontist "reds" at the onset of the Cold War. In Mexico for many years the proletariat was straitjacketed by the corporatist "unions" of the CTM, which are not workers unions but organizations of the state party, formally part of the PRI, which supply a labor force to the bosses and exercise police control over the workers. When labor discontent boiled over in the late 1980s and the traditional machinery of corporatist control began to break down, the bourgeoisie needed a new mechanism to maintain its rule. This mechanism is the Cárdenas popular front, through which the "independent" unions (as well as peasants, slum residents, Indians and students) are subordinated to the PRD, a bourgeois-nationalist party.

*Point three:* whoever hides this helps maintain the political submission of the workers to the dictates of capital. This is the practical effect of the ICL's theoretical obfuscation. The GEM stopped fighting against the Cárdenas popular front precisely at the moment when it was more urgent than ever to fight to break it and to form a revolutionary workers party. The ICL wants to insist there is no popular front so it will not be obligated to fight to break the workers from this class-collaborationist coalition. With its line of "no confidence in the PRD," which doesn't differ at all from what most of the "ultras" in the CGH are saying (who today are very annoyed with Cárdenas), the ICL once again poses the question as if it were simply a matter of ideas. By abstracting the struggle against bourgeois nationalism from the struggle against the material mechanisms for the political subordination of the proletariat, the GEM avoids clashing with the present leaderships of the workers movement.

With all its casuistic contortions, the GEM cannot hide that its new rightist line is a political capitulation. This is quite concrete: throughout the UNAM strike, *the GEM never once called on the STUNAM to join the strike*. Moreover, a speech by a GEM spokesman in the United States criticized the Grupo Internacionalista for "scold[ing] the top union bureaucrats for not being more militant and for not calling a strike" (*Workers Vanguard*, 15 October 1999). What cynicism! Despite their pretensions of fighting to extend the strike, here they give excuses for the leadership of the university workers union not having joined with the UNAM strike.

They also offer a nauseating apology for the corporatist "unions" of the CTM. In particular, they have made it clear with their many positive references that the SUTERM is their favorite

"union." This is the electrical "union" of the top *charro* in the country, the president of the CTM himself, Leonardo Rodríguez Alcaine. The *Espartaco* supplement says the SME's struggle against privatization "inspired electrical workers of the SUTERM throughout the country to raise their heads." What it *doesn't* say is that these thousands of workers demonstrated *against* their "union," that they threatened to break from the SUTERM, and that they were threatened with expulsion by the *charro* leadership which fully supports privatization. The GEM's line consists, quite simply, of erasing the class line which separates the organizations of the working class from the labor contractors and labor cops who make up the CTM and other *charro* "labor" federations. Whoever denies the difference between a workers union (with a sellout leadership) and an arm of the bourgeois state is openly capitulating before that state.

If anyone took the ICL's line seriously, it would be a grave danger to the workers' struggles. One only need recall the murder of Cleto Nigno in the Ford factory at Cuautitlán, just outside Mexico City, by CTM pistoleros, one of whom, Guadalupe Uribe, is now Rodríguez Alcaine's right-hand man. Any militant worker knows that the CTM, a pillar of the PRI-government, is an apparatus of murderers and thugs in the service of the bosses and their state against the workers. Almost all the strikes by workers in the *maquiladoras* (free trade zone plants) are organized *against* the corporatist "unions" and the sweetheart contracts they sell to the companies. Let the GEM present its line before the women workers of the Sony plants in Nuevo Laredo, who were beaten by the scabherders of the CTM! Let them explain it to the workers at the Han Young plant in Tijuana, who are fighting against the corporatist "union" of the CROC! The charlatans of the GEM can equate organizations of police control over the workers with unions run by pro-capitalist bureaucrats *only because they have no intention of fighting within the mass organizations of the working class for a revolutionary leadership*.

The UNAM strike has been a hard test for any organization claiming to represent revolutionary Marxism. At the same time, for thousands of student strikers, for thousands of workers who participated in demonstrations supporting the strike and the hundreds who participated in the worker-student defense guards, the burning need for a revolutionary leadership should today be clearer than ever. Throughout the strike, the Grupo Internacionalista has presented a Marxist analysis of the struggle and a Trotskyist program for action. As a minority opposition it fought the dangerous illusions peddled by the dominant petty-bourgeois currents in the CGH. At the same time, on a series of occasions the GI put into practice elements of the revolutionary program to defend and win the strike and to express proletarian internationalism. No less important is the polemical struggle against the misleaders and pseudo-revolutionary tendencies who in reality divert the proletariat, the student strikers and all the oppressed from the road to liberation.

Today, when it is more urgent than ever to draw the lessons of the struggle in order to carry it forward, we call on the most conscious and committed fighters to adopt, together with

*continued on page 64*

# Lies By the Bushel

Due to its inability to sustain its arguments and the flagrant contradiction between its new revisionist line and its own Marxist past, the International Communist League (ICL) and the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) are resorting to lies with wild abandon. We have already noted their strange predilection for patent falsehoods that are easily proven to be false. They also suffer from a curious kind of generosity, in which they insist on giving us all sorts of positions which are not ours at all—naturally, in order to then polemicize against their own inventions. The ICL needs help. Is there some kind of organization like “Liars Anonymous” that they could join? But meanwhile, their lies keep spewing out. Below we respond to their latest line of goods.

- In the recent *Espartaco* supplement (1 March) they write that our position on the PRD “approximates that of the Stalinist group *Vanguardia Proletaria*, which says that the PRD is a ‘social-democratic’ party, thus suggesting that the PRD is like the mass bourgeois workers parties of European social democracy.” Wrong. We have always insisted that the PRD is “a bourgeois-nationalist party,” as anyone can see by reading the quote from *El Internacionalista* (21 December 1999) which the GEM cites one paragraph earlier!

- In the same publication, the GEM says the GI “prettifies” the “PRD leadership” of the “independent” unions as if they were some kind of “reformist socialists.” Wrong again. We call on the union ranks to *break* from the Cárdenas popular front, to fight to oust the pro-capitalist, pro-PRD bureaucracy and forge a class-struggle leadership that fights for a revolutionary workers party. The GEM, in contrast, has never criticized the STUNAM (National University workers union), nor its leadership, for not joining the UNAM strike.

- Last summer, the GEM (in a 22 July leaflet) tried to claim that while in its propaganda, the Internationalist Group “has a very pretty line about ‘police out of the unions’,” we supposedly “avoid the subject” when we speak with workers “in the midst of the struggle.” They refer to a July 6 meeting of the Grupo Internacionalista with STUNAM workers in the Che Guevara auditorium. What they don’t say is that the meeting the GEM stumbled into was called to organize worker-student guards to defend the campus as the rector’s ultimatum ran out the next day; that the GEM raised no proposal for defense of the strike at that meeting; that it instead tried to sabotage the organizing effort by slandering us, retailing lies against our Brazilian comrades taken from the popular-front and pro-police provocateurs; that the GI has constantly raised the question of “Auxilio UNAM [campus cops] out of STUNAM” with STUNAM workers, in our leaflets even before the strike (see *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999) and in motions put before strike assemblies; and that not only had we raised the issue with the workers who were at that meeting, but on July 7, at a meeting of the STUNAM’s council of representatives, the spokesman of the Grupo Internacionalista urged them “to join the strike, form worker-student defense guards and

remove campus cops from the union.” The GEM knows this is true, because one of their members was present at that union meeting, which after our intervention voted to form defense brigades, declaring that campus workers would give up their vacations and “call[ing] on all workers and union delegates to organize solidarity guards with the strike movement.”

- Moreover, at a STUNAM council of representatives meeting on August 16, the GI spokesman read to the body a resolution that had been passed by the student strike council of the School of Philosophy and Literature urging the union to expel Auxilio UNAM from its ranks. A member of the GEM witnessed that as well. And on February 1, at an emergency meeting of the Strike General Council called after the mass arrests at Prepa 3, following a provocation against the strikers by Auxilio UNAM, the CGH passed a motion introduced by the GI urging the STUNAM to expel these cops from the union. That time the GEM was not present, because things were getting hot.

- But the GEM are only apprentices when it comes to dreaming up absurd lies. For the real humdingers, go to the source. Last fall *Workers Vanguard* (3 September 1999) published an article on repression in Mexico in which, in the course of trying to explain why there supposedly is not and cannot be a popular front in Mexico, they claim of our 3 August *El Internacionalista* supplement: “It is telling that the only examples of violent state repression they list in this article are those perpetrated by the PRI!” What is telling is that the *El Internacionalista* supplement contained a whole argument against so-called “ultras” who thought Cárdenas would not repress the strike, noting for example that “When they came to realize that the head of the Federal District government was ready to send the *granaderos* against student strikers, as it had earlier done against CNTE teachers, the POS leaders decided that the moment had come to ‘determine the right moment to call off the strike’” (see “The Battle for UNAM: Student Strike Under Siege,” starting on page 33 of this pamphlet).

- Moreover, the previous *El Internacionalista* supplement (23 June) reproduced the GI motion denouncing the PRD city administration for sending the cops against slum dwellers in Iztapalapa (see page 26 of this pamphlet). Does *WV* even have fact-checkers any more? Once, when it was still an organ of authentic Trotskyism, *Workers Vanguard* took pride in getting its facts straight. Now they don’t even care, or maybe they take perverse delight in throwing out patent untruths to see if they will get caught.

- But the booby prize goes to the Alice in Wonderland tale the ICL/GEM has conjured up over Seattle. The *Espartaco* supplement accuses us of “uncritically embracing the protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, whose core was the chauvinist, anti-Communist bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO.” The supposed proof? That the Internationalist Group put out “a call for a demonstration on December 13 in

Internationalist photo



**IG supporters at December 2 Boston demonstration protesting police repression in Seattle.**

defense of the students arrested in Mexico in which they managed to say nothing about the protests in Seattle. It was only when we exposed their revealing omission that they made a pathetic placard against protectionism. And it was only weeks later that they finally recognized the chauvinist nature of the protests in Seattle."

The only thing true in this smorgasboard of falsehoods is that the IG organized a protest on December 13 against the arrests in Mexico and put out a press release to announce it (see page 49 of this pamphlet). The IG statement did mention that the demonstration in front of the U.S. embassy in Mexico City was called in part to protest "against police repression in Seattle." It did not say that the Mexico City demonstration was called in political solidarity with the protests against the WTO, as the ICL pretends, because it wasn't. As the CGH resolution of December 5 which called the march clearly stated, it was to protest against the repression.

The notion that the IG hurriedly scribbled a sign on the spot due to the ICL's criticisms is a clumsy invention. We in fact had several signs with the slogan, "Protest Police Repression in Seattle! For International Labor Solidarity, Not National Protectionism!" Moreover, we could not have made a sign there because it was raining cats and dogs. What's going on here is that *Workers*

*Vanguard* (31 December 1999) published an article claiming that "the IG says not a word of criticism about the anti-WTO protests in Seattle." We then published on the Internet a photo of the demonstration with that slogan, proving that this was false ("see "Workers Vanguard's Virtual Reality: Who Are You Going to Believe, *WV* or Your Lying Eyes?" on page 57 of this pamphlet). So now the ICL, caught in the act of fabricating another lie, is trying to cover it up with a new invention. It is a vicious circle, and the vice has a name: slandering others to cover up the bankruptcy of your own politics.

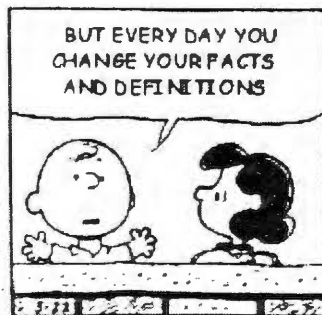
Nor is it true that only "weeks later" did the IG criticize the reactionary protectionism in the Seattle protests. Our comrades in Boston participated in a protest on December 2 against the Seattle repression with a sign defending China against protectionism (see photo); and on December 11, *two days before* the New York protest, the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico carried the same sign as the Internationalist Group in the United States. Our comrade José Alberto Fonseca, the main speaker in the protest meeting in front of the U.S. embassy, in addition to speaking about Mumia Abu-Jamal also included an attack on protectionism, denouncing its counterrevolutionary character (see "Mexico City Cops Assault Student Protest at U.S. Embassy: 98 Arrested," on page 50 of this issue). Of course, the GEM wasn't even there, so what would they know; but the speech was even shown on television. (Fonseca was one of several members and sympathizers of the Grupo Internacionalista arrested on February 6.)

And if that wasn't enough, there is one more piece of evidence that makes fools of the ICL. When the Spartacus Youth Club in New York announced a protest on February 3 against the arrests of Mexican students in Prepa 3, the day after the GI held a demonstration outside the Mexican consulate on the same issue, it put out a leaflet in which it mentioned the Seattle protests, *but not one word against protectionism!* But then, consistency is not a virtue of centrists.

As far as conscious falsification goes, the ICL, the SL and the GEM are repeat offenders. When they are caught *in flagrante*, they invent many different lies for the same event, and end up stumbling over their own creations. They act according to the principle that if you throw enough mud, some of it will stick. But once they're caught out, they are the ones who are stuck in the mire. ■

**The GEM Puts Lucy's Method to Work**

with our respects to Charles Schultz



# The GEM Tries to Censure Trotskyism ...in the Trotsky Museum

Excluding revolutionary opponents from “public” events is a hallmark of opportunist organizations, because they are incapable of defending themselves politically in the face of Marxist criticism. This is a nefarious tradition not only of the Stalinists and self-professed social democrats, but also of a potpourri of groups abusing the name of Trotskyism. In Mexico this includes the Morenoites (POS), Lambertistes (El Trabajo)...and now the Grupo Espartaquista de México as well.

On March 10 the GEM announced a “forum” on the lessons of the UNAM strike at the Leon Trotsky Museum in Mexico City. The presentation consisted of their now habitual melange of boastful pomposity, platitudes of half-digested “Marxism” and open negation of key points of revolutionary politics; for example, after a decade of saying the opposite they now insist there is no Cárdenas popular front in Mexico. There was also a hefty dose of braggadocio on the role they pretend to have played in the strike, although it is common knowledge that the GEM never fought to change the course of this struggle, much less undertaking a serious fight against the existing leaderships. And as usual, the GEM devoted a large portion of its comments to slanders and absurd inventions directed against the Grupo Internacionalista.

During the discussion period, a GI spokesman put forward the line of our revolutionary intervention in the UNAM strike and explained the GEM’s betrayal of the Trotskyist program it once defended. We were only permitted one speaker. Later some GI members began to place Marxist literature on the floor in another part of the museum, outside the auditorium, in order to sell it to people when they came out. The GEM immediately decreed that it was *prohibited* to sell literature other than its own in the museum before, during or after its event.

But the Trotsky Museum—to whose maintenance comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista have devoted hundreds of hours over the course of many years—is *not the GEM’s!* It is outrageous that they seek to convert it into a place for bureaucratic interdictions against genuine Trotskyism. But they didn’t stop there. When one of our comrades announced, dur-

ing a pause between speakers, that the GEM had prohibited the sale of our materials, the GEM proceeded to *prohibit the very presence of our comrades*, throwing four members and sympathizers of the GI out of the auditorium.

The fact that this was a classic political exclusion was underlined immediately. Another of our comrades remained in the auditorium with the intention of trying to get called on in order to protest this outrage. Soon enough, she too was thrown out by the GEM. Her “crime”? *Raising her hand*. By its own actions of censorship and exclusion, the GEM shows its fear of the revolutionary word, be it written or spoken, which puts forward the communist program and unmasks the inconsistency, incoherence and open betrayals of these falsifiers.

Outdoing themselves in involuntary irony, while a GEM goon stood behind our comrade to “escort” her out of the auditorium because she had dared to raise her hand, a young fellow from the GEM stood up and began a speech about “women’s rights.”

Many of those who had come to the event were indignant and began saying “Let her speak!”, “You can’t throw her out!”, “If you won’t let your opponents speak you shouldn’t have called this a forum!” Some walked out in protest. The GEM only succeeded in displaying its own political weakness and the hollowness of its pretensions.

What will be the next step for the GEM? To some it will seem ironic that today it resorts to methods recalling past attempts by reformist organizations to censor the Spartacists. But political degeneration has its own inexorable logic; this is one more milestone on the traditional path of revisionism.

In 1988, one of the first public interventions by the GEM was made at the Trotsky Museum, when at an event called by the now-difunct PRT (section of Ernest Mandel’s “United Secretariat”) a Spartacist spokesman, today a member of the Internationalist Group, intervened to warn that “today in Mexico a new popular front has been formed,” and that “Trotsky defined the popular front as a class-collaborationist alliance subordinating the proletariat to a sector of the exploiters” (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 461, 23 September 1988).

For almost a decade the GEM, as part of the International Communist League, defended the positions of Leon Trotsky. But with the centrist degeneratiron of the ICL, the GEM renounces the correct positions and hard-fought struggles which were the basis on which it was originally founded, among them the fight against the popular front. By resorting to political exclusionism, the GEM demonstrates its increasing adoption of methods appropriate to those who trample on their own revolutionary past. ■

## ICL/GEM Pull Their Hands...

*continued from page 61*

the GI, the basic principles of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism as a guide to action. Only in this way can the struggle help forge for revolutionary cadres to build the genuine world party of socialist revolution, the reformed Fourth International, indispensable tool to lead the coming class struggles.



