

Mexico: For Workers Revolution!



Andrés Garay



Daniel Aguilar

As polarization of Mexican society increases, bourgeois rulers step up repression. July 6 election of PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as mayor of Mexico City will change nothing for workers and peasants.

MEXICO CITY—The outcome of the July 6 elections was a measure of the fragility of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which has ruled the country with an iron fist for 70 years. Deeply corrupt and increasingly discredited, the PRI regime, currently headed by President Ernesto Zedillo, has seen its virtual monopoly of political power shattered. The party lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Congress, as the “leftist” Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) garnered 26 and 27 percent of the vote respectively. The PRI also lost control of a number of key state governments. Most significantly, PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas won a resounding victory in the first-ever election for Mexico City mayor, the second most important political post in the country and a platform from which to campaign for the next presidential elections.

Cárdenas’ victory was welcomed by millions of Mexico’s

downtrodden and dispossessed. But its occasional “populist” rhetoric notwithstanding, the PRD is a bourgeois-nationalist party which props up the system of capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. The Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), section of the International Communist League, opposed any electoral support to the PRD.

In the past couple of years, particularly since the financial collapse which came in the wake of the imposition of the North American

Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexican workers have seen their real wages plummet by 50 percent. The official minimum wage currently amounts to barely \$3 a day, and millions of workers can’t even count on that. The NAFTA “free trade” rape of Mexico has devastated much of the country’s medium and small industry, leading to skyrocketing unemployment in the cities and ever more desperate poverty

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Down with NAFTA Rape of Mexico!

From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal



The System vs. Geronimo: Why?

Much of the national media made much of the recent reversal of the murder conviction of former Black Panther official Geronimo ji Jaga (né E. G. Pratt), after almost three decades in California hellholes.

Few accounts explained *why* Geronimo was caged, and why the state fought so long and hard to keep him there, even using foul and unfair means to do so.

This writer, who knew Geronimo in his youth, will attempt to do so.

Why would the state of California and the FBI knowingly convict a man of a murder that they knew he didn't commit?

The answer to this conundrum lies less in the realm of the "law" than in the area of politics.

Geronimo's "offense" had nothing to do with murder and everything to do with his political beliefs *and activities*; he was a Black Panther, and a revolutionary, and therefore, he was a target to be "neutralized," in FBI terms.

In December 1969, the Southern California chapter of the Black Panther Party was attacked by the heavily armed LAPD. Geronimo, as the office's Defense Minister, heavily insulated the office against government attack, and a gun-battle ensued, lasting up to ten hours of urban war.

When the smoke cleared, every Panther emerged alive, thanks to Geronimo's skilled defense work, and military expertise.

Although several Panthers were later beaten by cops (the chapter's Culture Minister had his right hand, his drawing—as in art—hand, broken) none suffered life-threatening wounds, despite hours of being under heavy police automatic fire and bombing by grenades.

Geronimo, who learned the art of war in the rice paddies of Vietnam, had brought the war—this time *for Black liberation*—home, and the state marked him from that day forward.

For his armed defense of the Black Nation (through the Black Panther Party) Geronimo would be hunted, framed and caged in a cruel succession of state gulags for almost 30

years, while an FBI/LAPD/L.A. D.A. (District Attorney) snitch would be massaged into positions of power, prominence and influence over the Black community of L.A.

As a Black ex-sheriff, Julius "Julio" Butler knew people in the region's cop community, and used that knowledge to his advantage, as a smart snitch would. Despite felony convictions, the D.A.'s office armed him, and by treating old cases as misdemeanors, opened the doors to law school where Butler won a law degree. Thus equipped, this paid FBI/LAPD/L.A. D.A. informant, standing on the caged back of Geronimo, ascended the leadership of the L.A. African-American community as he was named a deacon of one of the city's most respected Black churches.

As he rose, the state's judiciary and political establishment stomped on Geronimo again and again and again and again—denying him parole, denying post-conviction petitions, denying his *habeas* writs, setting him up on bogus prison charges, time and time again.

By caging this revolutionary, the state killed *three* birds with one stone: 1) the government deprived the Black community of one of its most militant (and militarily skilled) fighters; 2) the government put in place of Black prominence a paid informant; and, 3) the government fractured and dissipated emerging white, progressive support by falsely tying the murder of a Santa Monica schoolteacher to a known Black Panther, like Geronimo.

It also used the growing paranoia of the late Dr. Huey P. Newton to prevent crucial support from coming to Geronimo's aid in his darkest hour of need.

In a demonstration of admirable, albeit misguided, discipline, almost a dozen Panthers stood by silently while Geronimo was railroaded, as they were under orders from the Supreme Commander to not assist a man who, Huey feared, had defected to the more militant East Coast wing of the Black Panther Party. It would take decades for them to realize that the East Coast-West Coast split was itself

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B.C. NDP Jails Native Militants

We print below an August 9 Partisan Defense Committee protest letter to B.C. NDP Attorney-General Ujjal Dosanjh.

* * *

Sir,

The convictions of 13 Native militants and their supporters, two years after they survived the infamous 1995 RCMP/army siege of their camp at Gustafsen Lake, are an outrage. In particular, the eight years (including pre-trial custody) imposed on William Jones Ignace, a pensioner, is brutally vindictive and may prove effectively a death sentence. In sharp contrast, we note that Ontario Provincial Police sergeant Kenneth Deane, convicted of manslaughter for the murder of Chippewa protester Dudley George at Ipperwash, Ontario, has been set free.

Not content with locking away Native militants and their supporters for years, the state has felt compelled to bury them under a mountain of slander. Thus, sentencing judge Bruce Josephson writes that it was the "violence" of the Gustafsen Lake defenders that "required a massive response by police." Moreover, Josephson sneers, "a failure to adequately deter and express society's denunciation of this serious breach of our democratic society's most basic values can only serve to foster a move in the direction of anarchy."

Such sinister and malevolent lies are intended to demonize the victims of state violence as terrorists to whom anything can be done. In fact, Gustafsen Lake was the largest military operation in RCMP history. It was the RCMP who fired an estimated 77,000 rounds of ammunition. And it was the RCMP, 400 strong, with armor and air support, who were preparing a massacre at Gustafsen Lake, with the full support of the NDP government. This bloodbath did not take place only because the last occupants of the camp left their redoubt voluntarily, rightly fearing they would be killed. The



Dave Buston/CP

RCMP advance with armored car at Gustafsen Lake.

RCMP has always been an instrument of violent state repression against workers and the oppressed; in 1992 they carried out a massive strikebreaking operation against Yellowknife gold miners. It is in the interest of all the working people to denounce the state persecution of the Gustafsen Lake protesters.

Canada was built on terror against Native peoples. The vendetta waged by the B.C. NDP government against the Gustafsen Lake protesters is one more instance of the arrogant abuse suffered by aboriginal peoples at the hands of Canada's deeply racist ruling class. The PDC demands that their convictions be quashed and that they be freed immediately!

Sincerely,

Peter Stevens for the PDC

fomented by agents and operatives of the FBI, and finally, like ripe plums, they fell into line, and testified, decades later, to knowing Geronimo was innocent of the Santa Monica murder, as he was some 400 miles away, in Oakland, at the time.

It is easy for us to now celebrate Geronimo's return as a signal victory, and it is. But, we must not stop there.

We must also acknowledge it was a victory for the state which unjustly stole 27 years—half the life—of a man who rightly defended his people from unjust attack. For 30 years the government created a Black "leader" it could work with (a snitch and a lawyer!).

For almost three decades the state wiped the field clear of revolutionaries, and allowed gangsters (like Freeway Ricky Ross) to thrive, thus lobotomizing an entire Black generation with a cruel, new form of chemical warfare (until they got tired of them and set them up!).

Because of their efforts, the Black Panther Party is no more. So who won, who lost?

Because of their unprincipled, foul methods, most Black folks hear the word "revolutionary" and think it's a new kind of fabric softener.

Because of their utilization of the law as a tool of white supremacy and as an instrument of crime countless revolutionaries, like Ruchell Magee ("Cinque"), Hugo "Yogi" Pinell, E. Mondo Langa, Delbert, Merle, Phil, Janine, Ed,

Janet, Mike, Deb and Chuck Africa, Russell "Maroon" Shoats, Leonard Peltier, Dr. Mutulu Shakur...and on and on, languish in American gulags.

For many of them, their trials were about as "fair" as Geronimo's, with "witnesses" just as tainted, and "evidence" just as twisted.

So, it is true that Geronimo won a powerful victory.

It is also true that Black America (and, as in Bro. Leonard's case, Native America) suffered, and continues to suffer, a grievous loss, until all political prisoners, and prisoners of war, are free.

28 June 1997

© 1997 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Philadelphia black journalist, is on death row at Pennsylvania's Greene state prison. Framed up because of his political views, Jamal faces death for his defiance of the racist capitalist order. His columns appear periodically in *Spartacist Canada*, *Workers Vanguard* and other newspapers.

To join the fight to free Mumia and for the latest updates on his case, contact the Partisan Defense Committee, Box 314, Station B, Toronto ON, M5T 2W1. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370, USA.

Hands Off Roma Refugees!

Racist Furor Targets Desperate Gypsies

The bourgeois press is once again raising a racist hue and cry over refugees, this time Roma (Gypsies) fleeing poverty and fascist violence in the Czech Republic. While the *Globe and Mail* (14 August) worried about "Heading off a Gypsy influx," the *Toronto Sun* (19 August) warned of "Criminal Gypsies slipping in." Two days later, in a front-page story, the *Globe* declared that a "flood" of Gypsy refugees had indeed arrived in Toronto, where they had "grabbed" all available spaces in homeless shelters.

The spark for this new round of refugee-bashing was a Czech TV news documentary recording a Gypsy family's emigration to Canada. The program reportedly portrayed this country as a "promised land" which welcomes the persecuted, where the daily racist violence suffered by Roma people in Europe does not exist, and where people have access to housing and jobs. When immigration inquiries at the Canadian embassy in Prague skyrocketed, Ottawa dispatched a senior official to Prague to "correct the impression that refugee status in Canada is almost automatic and that the standard of living on welfare is high." On August 14, when a group of Roma refugees arrived at Toronto's Pearson Airport, immigration officials harassed and stonewalled them until they "decided" to return to the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, several hundred Roma have managed to get into the country and apply for refugee status.

Canada's immigration laws have always been racist to the core: from the Chinese Exclusion Act, to barring Jews fleeing Hitlerite Fascism, to the more recent targeting of refugees from Somalia and elsewhere in Africa. Now it is the Roma who are being scapegoated and hounded. We Trotskyists say: Stop the witchhunt against Roma refugees! Let them into Canada! Everyone who has made it here has the right to stay—Full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees!

Capitalism, Counterrevolution and Anti-Roma Terror

The Roma people number about ten million internationally, of whom as many as 300,000 live in the Czech Republic. They speak Romani, an Indo-European language, and probably originated as a group of nomadic tribes in northern India. From there, they migrated west, arriving in Europe late in the Middle Ages. Like European Jewry historically, the stateless Roma have constituted a minority in countries where they have settled. And like the Jews, they have been persecuted everywhere, especially in Central Europe.

Under Hitler's Third Reich, the Gypsies shared the fate of the Jews. Six months after the Nazis formally adopted the policy to annihilate the Jews in January 1942, the "Final Solution" was extended to the Gypsies. Nazi "race theory" denigrated the Roma, and other Gypsy groups like the Sinti, as racially "prone to crime," giving a "scientific" cast to the ancient slander of Gypsies as incorrigible beggars and thieves. As many as 500,000 perished in the death camps, many the victims of vivisection and horrific "experiments" by Nazi "doctors" like Josef Mengele, Auschwitz's "Angel of Death."

The destruction of the postwar bureaucratically deformed



Austria, 1995: ambulance workers remove bodies of four Roma killed by a fascist pipe bomb.

workers states of East Europe, fatally undermined by Stalinism, has once again exposed the Roma to the blows of murderous prejudice. For decades, imperialism sought to destabilize these states by fomenting revanchist communalism and nationalism. In this they were abetted by the Stalinists themselves, whose narrow nationalist outlook subverted the socialist, internationalist consciousness of the working people. With the collapse of Stalinism, these mutual chauvinist hatreds became state policy, exploding into fratricidal war in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. At the same time, in Central Europe, resurgent fascist gangs drawn from the dregs of the dominant peoples have terrorized "dark skinned" immigrants and minorities like the Roma.

In contrast, although the Stalinist regimes of the East European deformed workers states generally refused to recognize the Roma as a people, and often used coercion to force them to "settle down," Gypsies were protected from open, violent racism. In Yugoslavia, efforts were made to educate Roma children in the Romani language. In East Germany, all Roma survivors of the Holocaust were accorded citizenship in 1949 and, like all recognized victims of fascism, were granted generous pensions. One Czech Roma leader commented: "At least during the totalitarian regime, I knew that I would work eight hours, come home, and go wherever I wanted. But not now. Now I'm afraid that someone will beat me up" (*Globe and Mail*, 15 August).

In Germany today, the bourgeoisie has again targeted the Roma people for racist round-ups, cop terror and mass deportations. In 1993, Helmut Kohl's Fourth Reich signed a treaty with Poland under which Bonn would pay for Polish troops to seal the border against Roma trying to enter Germany. In return, Gypsies are to be deported from Germany

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B.C. Salmon Wars: Workers Lose as New Democrats Spawn Chauvinist Frenzy

When Alaskan fishermen bagged a few hundred thousand Pacific salmon before they reached "Canadian waters" in mid-July, B.C. NDP premier Glen Clark unleashed a torrent of chauvinism. "We are not going to allow those Americans, those pirates to catch our fish, steal our fish and take food out of the mouths of our families," he raved. Clark also vowed to close down a U.S. naval torpedo testing range at Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island unless the tattered 1985 Pacific Salmon Treaty is renegotiated. On cue, B.C. fishermen blockaded two U.S. ships and held an Alaskan passenger ferry hostage for three days at Prince Rupert. While the Alaskan press denounced "B.C. fish pirates" and "Canadian cry-babies," the U.S. Senate threatened to send in the Navy to protect the ferry's right of passage.

Responding to the Alaska catch, in late July Ottawa and Victoria launched a "Canada First" fishing plan. This massive seine-netting operation off the tip of Vancouver Island, intended to prevent salmon from reaching fishermen in Washington state, has so far netted nearly five million fish, *ten times* the catch of the Alaskan "pirates."

Workers have no side in this squalid nationalist furor over fish. The "salmon wars" have nothing to do with defending jobs or conserving fish stocks. Clark's "anti-American" grandstanding is a populist ploy aimed at deflecting growing disgruntlement over NDP-imposed capitalist austerity, job losses and deep cuts to social programs. Moreover, the corporate giants who control the \$400-million-a-year North American fishing industry are laughing all the way to the bank. The whole point is to catch as many fish as possible before the other guys do—and if setting Canadian and American fishermen at each other's throats helps to bring in a bigger catch faster, then all the better.

While joining with B.C. in the "Canada First" salmon grab, the federal Liberal government has taken the province to court to stop Clark's threatened closure of the U.S. testing range. Indeed, just about every bourgeois politician outside B.C. wants Clark to shut his flapping mouth lest he provoke U.S. economic retaliation against Canadian capitalist interests.

The tiff over West Coast salmon won't change the "special relationship" between U.S. and Canadian imperialism one iota. Nobody expects a U.S. Navy task force to drop anchor in Prince Rupert harbor to protect Alaskan ferries and fish boats. In fact, U.S. and Canadian vessels took time off from the "salmon war" this summer to jointly pursue a Taiwanese driftnetter all the way to the South China Sea!

The Canadian ruling class is a loyal junior partner of U.S. imperialism. Over the years, Canada's carefully cultivated image as a "peacekeeping" mediator has been very useful to Washington, helping give "democratic" cover to such imperialist adventures as the "humanitarian" rape of Somalia and the ongoing occupations of Bosnia and Haiti. Ottawa has just dispatched six combat-ready CF-18s to the Balkans to help police the imperialist "peace" accord. And for all of



Nick Procajlo/CP

Chauvinist protesters surround Alaskan attorney-general in Vancouver, 28 July.

Clark's bombast, the NDP social democrats have fully supported every one of these U.S.-led imperialist invasions.

Chauvinist "National Unionism" Is Poison to Class Struggle

There are those who do support the B.C. premier's "Yankee bashing" over salmon—chiefly the social-democratic nationalists who run the union movement. Referring to the 1995 East Coast "turbot war" against Spain, Canadian Labour Congress president Bob White told delegates at a CAW union convention in Vancouver: "It wasn't settled by quiet diplomacy. It was settled by direct confrontation" (*Vancouver Sun*, 14 August). The kind of "confrontation" praised by White included Canadian gunboats firing on and seizing a Spanish vessel in international waters.

Like Clark's salmon wars today, Ottawa's "turbot war" was designed to whip up patriotic fervor in order to divert popular anger over the federal Liberals' austerity cutbacks. With Washington giving Ottawa its full support, Canada's fish fight with Spain also reflected interimperialist rivalries, which have increased sharply since the counterrevolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union. The very existence of the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers state, led the imperialists to suppress their mutual rivalries in order to pursue a shared anti-Communist crusade. But now the capitalist thieves are falling out with each other, intensifying competition for markets and creating regional trade blocs like

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Salmon...

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NAFTA and the European Union.

From turbot wars to salmon wars, the labor tops have subordinated the working class to the national interests of their own capitalists, because they accept those interests as legitimate. Such "national unionism" is directly counterposed to labor's own interests, which are necessarily international in scope. This is being brought home with increased urgency in today's post-Soviet world, where the drive is on to destroy social programs, decimate the unions and drive down wages. The commonality of interest of the working class internationally must be translated into common class struggle against the imperialist rulers. Yet the patriotic labor bureaucrats keep the workers chained to their class enemy, in the name of defending the competitiveness of their "own" capitalists against foreign rivals.

CLC chief White is the epitome of this reactionary "national unionism." In 1984 he led the nationalist split from the United Auto Workers union which produced the CAW. Ever since, the "progressive" CAW bureaucrats have allowed the auto bosses to whipsaw Canadian and U.S. auto workers, refusing to engage in co-ordinated strike action. In the West Coast fishery, what's needed, for starters, is a fight to organize the largely unorganized U.S. fish workers, uniting with them in struggle against the fisheries conglomerates. Instead, the leaders of the UFAWU fishermen's union (now affiliated to the CAW) wave the flag for "Canadian industry" and wage a "struggle" *against* U.S. workers. During the CAW convention, the CAW brass joined with the UFAWU tops to lead a chauvinist "Yankee Go Home" protest outside the U.S. consulate.

Nationalism, Racism and Social Democracy

The labor bureaucrats' appeal to "save Canadian jobs," by pitting "their" members against "foreigners," scapegoats foreign workers for the economic problems of Canadian capitalism. It is a short step from complaining that workers in

Asia or Latin America (or Alaska, for that matter) are "stealing jobs" to demonizing immigrants, Native people and other minorities as the enemy. And this is precisely the line of the labor tops and the NDP.

Echoing the rhetoric of the Reform Party, Glen Clark directly fuels racist reaction and anti-Québécois chauvinism, denouncing even the meaningless sop of "distinct society" for Quebec. Native people in particular have found themselves in the New Democrats' crosshairs. For example, the NDP government staged a massive show trial of aboriginal protesters arrested in the 1995 RCMP assault at Gustafsen Lake (see "B.C. NDP Jails Native Militants," page 3).

In like manner, for years leaders of the UFAWU have played a leading role in a dirty, racist campaign against Native fishing rights. Aboriginal B.C. salmon fishermen are allowed to set their nets a couple of days before the big commercial fleets, and to sell a portion of their modest catch. As this year's Native fishery began in early August, UFAWU fishermen took their boats out to harass Native fishermen in a reactionary protest.

This is not the first time the fishermen's union bureaucracy has manipulated fishery workers in the service of racist reaction. During World War II, as the Canadian rulers rounded up 22,000 Japanese Canadians and threw them in concentration camps, the fishermen's union tops demanded that Japanese Canadian fishing vessels be seized and given to "white operators." Backing the imperialist war effort to the hilt, both the Stalinist Communist Party (CP) and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF—the NDP's precursor) were rabid supporters of the internment of Japanese Canadians. Not surprisingly, today the Stalinist leftovers of the CP are busy hailing Glen Clark's salmon wars.

Capitalist Greed=Environmental Devastation

When Ottawa closed the Atlantic cod fishery in 1992, putting some 50,000 people out of work, they accused Spanish and Portuguese fishermen of destroying the stocks. In fact, it was chiefly overfishing by *Canadian* fishery conglomerates which led to the near disappearance of cod

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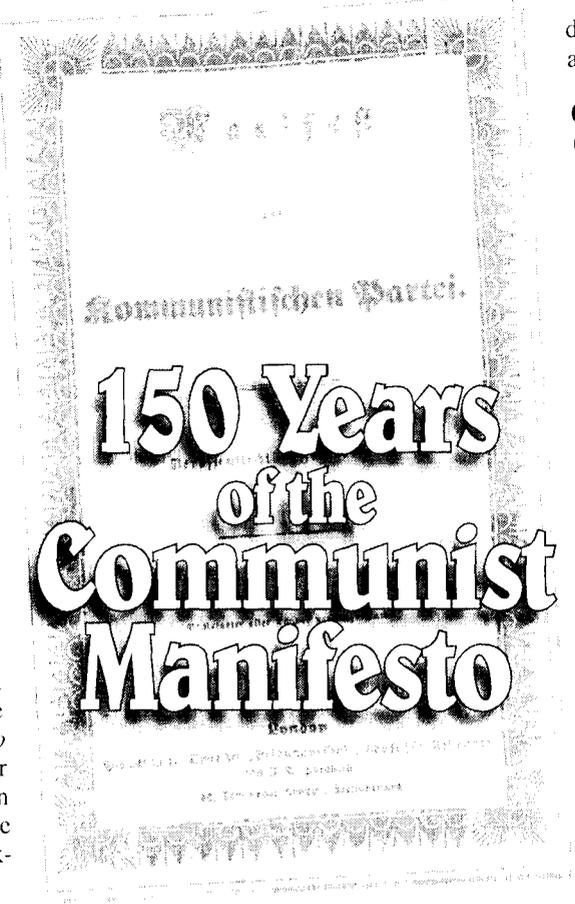
We publish below an edited transcript of a presentation by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member George Foster at an SL/U.S. regional educational in New York City earlier this year.

The *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 opens with the statement that a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism. Today the world's bourgeoisies, particularly the American, would have you believe that communism is dead and that mankind is at the "end of history." The imperialists of course are still celebrating the recent destruction of the Soviet Union, ignominiously served up to them by Stalinism. But if you strip away their ideological hype and examine their deeds, we see the capitalist rulers are still haunted by the October Revolution of 1917, by that same old spectre of 1848. For the greatest confirmation of the *Manifesto* was precisely the Russian October Revolution of 1917, a revolution which inscribed on its banner the *Manifesto's* concluding slogan: "Workers of the World, Unite!"

Communism is far from dead. One need only examine the pathology of contemporary capitalism through the prism of the *Communist Manifesto* to see the great prescience of this document, which marked the programmatic founding of modern communism.

Thus in this supposed period of the "death of communism," the Chicago police are actively campaigning to reconstitute their Red Squad, a unit that was formally disbanded some years ago. The example is trivial, but nonetheless characteristic of the current period. Since the destruction of the Soviet Union, the capitalists everywhere have been running amok, feeling there is nothing to restrain them. In an expression of intensified interimperialist rivalry and competition, the bourgeoisies have been ratcheting up the rate of exploitation of the working class across Europe, North America, Asia and Latin America. This has led to accelerating impoverishment of working people around the world, as the few grow even richer.

Hand in hand with this accumulating social tension, we see another feature of present-day capitalism—a massive increase in the forces of state repression. In the United States, this vastly augmented police apparatus has become a patently parasitic and self-conscious layer, part of an immense system of capitalist injustice which has consigned a whole generation of minority and immigrant youth to the hellholes of prison. More and more, the bourgeoisie cultivates chauvinism and racism to divide and weaken the working class and to sap its revolutionary will. And commensurately, there is a sinister resurgence of extreme reaction in the form of fascist bands, capitalism's last line of defense. The bourgeoisie's real motto is not that "communism is



dead"; it's "October 1917—never again!"

Origins of the Communist Manifesto

The *Communist Manifesto* is one of the first two mature works of Marxism and the founding document of the communist movement. It was commissioned in November 1847 by the Communist League, a small international organization of proletarian-artisan communists, as its statement of principles. The most famous account of the genesis of the *Manifesto* is one written in 1885 by Marx's lifelong collaborator and comrade-in-arms, Friedrich Engels. The Bolshevik David Ryazanov, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, gave an amusing synopsis of this account in his short 1927 book, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:*

"Engels' story can be summarised as follows: Once there lived Marx and Engels, two German philosophers and politicians, who were forced to abandon their native land. They lived in France and they

lived in Belgium. They wrote learned books, which first attracted the attention of the intelligentsia, and then fell into the hands of the workers. One fine morning the workers turned to these two savants who had been sitting in their cloisters remote from the loathsome business of practical activity and, as was proper for the guardians of scientific thought, had been proudly awaiting the coming of the workers. And the day arrived; the workers came and invited Marx and Engels to enter their League. But Marx and Engels declared that they would join the League only on condition that the League accept their programme. The workers agreed, they organised the Communist League and forthwith proceeded to authorise Marx and Engels to prepare the *Communist Manifesto*."

What Ryazanov objects to in Engels' account is that it overlooks the very persistent organizational efforts from 1845 onwards, especially by Marx, to win proletarian communists to his and Engels' views. In addition to being very far-sighted thinkers, both Marx and Engels were active revolutionists who early on had links to the forebear of the Communist League, the League of the Just. Engels had also sought links with militant workers gathered in the Chartist movement in Britain, where he had done ground-breaking work on the conditions of life of the proletariat under modern capitalism.

Particularly as their ideas began to solidify in 1845-46, Marx and Engels sought out working-class communists with the aim of forging an organization around those ideas, an organization that from its outset was to be built upon an international foundation. One should understand that at the time there was a clear distinction drawn between communism

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Communist Manifesto...

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and socialism. Socialism was considered a bourgeois doctrine, identified with the various experimental/utopian and reformist schemes of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologues. The communists clearly defined themselves as those who were for the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order and for the establishment of an egalitarian society. The communism of that era originated in a far-left split from French Jacobinism, exemplified by Gracchus Babeuf and Filippo Buonarroti.

The League of the Just consisted of workers, mainly exiled German artisans, located in London, Brussels, Paris and a few outposts in Germany. These were not mainly modern proletarians working in large-scale mechanized factories. But nonetheless, and to their credit, they were won over to Marx and Engels' conceptions of the nature of modern capi-



Beard

Dietz Verlag Berlin

Communist revolutionaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, founders of scientific socialism.

talist society. The League of the Just had inscribed on its banner the slogan, "All Men Are Brothers!" When it embraced Marx's standpoint and transformed itself into the Communist League, it adopted the *Manifesto's* ringing call, "Workers of the World, Unite!"

When the *Manifesto* was commissioned in November 1847, everyone was expecting that Europe was about to erupt in revolution. Yet despite this widely felt sense of urgency Marx, as was apparently his wont, took some time to write this document. He was then living in exile in Brussels, while the leadership of the Communist League resided in London. In late January, they sent Marx a testy and impatient letter which read:

"The Central Committee hereby directs the District Committee of Brussels to notify Citizen Marx that if the *Manifesto* of the Communist Party, which he consented, at the last Congress, to draw up, does not reach London before Tuesday, February 1, further measures will be taken against him. In case Citizen Marx does not write the *Manifesto*, the central committee requests the immediate return of the documents which were turned over to him by the congress."

The letter and the *Manifesto* crossed in the mail, the latter arriving literally just in time for the outbreak of the expected revolution. It first erupted in Switzerland, spreading rapidly to Italy and Paris, and from there to the Rhineland, then

Prussia, thence to Austria and Hungary.

The *Manifesto* was worth the wait. It really is the first systematic explication of scientific socialism, of what modern communism stands for. As Engels explained in 1883, the year Marx died, the basic thought in the *Manifesto*—which "belongs solely and exclusively to Marx"—was the understanding that the

"economic production and structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of the epoch; that consequently (ever since the dissolution of primeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression and class struggles."

The previous systems of egalitarianism, of primitive communism based on distribution, of the sundry utopian and reform schemes of various ideologues earlier in the 19th century, were superseded. The whole understanding of society was placed by Marx on a materialist basis.

The Rise of Modern Industrial Capitalism

Marx's views did not spring from his brow ready made, but were the result of study, struggle and historical experience. Russian revolutionary leader V. I. Lenin noted that the three constituent parts of Marxism were classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French socialism as it was up to that time, including its organizational doctrines. That is to say, Marxism could not have arisen as a set of ideas at some earlier juncture of history, but rather grew both out of its historical antecedents and the real material conditions and struggles of the time, including those of the very new industrial working class.

Capitalism had been around in its mercantile form for well over two centuries before the *Manifesto* was written, but it was just then beginning to extend and transform itself outside of Britain into modern large-scale industrial manufacture ("machinofacture"), using instruments such as steam power to mass-produce goods in the factory system. In 1847, Britain had 850 miles of railroad. That was to increase by several orders of magnitude over the next 25 years.

The *Manifesto* makes the point that the history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggle. The recognition of the role of class struggle was not a discovery of Marx. Bourgeois historians of the Great French Revolution had begun to view the class struggle as important in history. In a letter to his comrade Joseph Weydemeyer in 1852, Marx explained what his specific contribution had been:

"What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production*, 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to *the dictatorship of the proletariat*. 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*."

This is a very succinct summing up of the *Manifesto*. Commenting on this statement, Lenin observed that the theory of the class struggle is in fact acceptable to the bourgeoisie, that those who only recognize the class struggle are not Marxists

but still operate within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. What is unacceptable to the bourgeoisie is Marx's recognition that this class struggle must lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and from there to the abolition of class society. This is the main distinction between the doctrines of Marx and those of the reformists and the various schools of bourgeois historiography.

Dialectical Materialism vs. Idealism

Following publication of the *Manifesto*, Marx spent the rest of his years elaborating and refining and, where necessary, correcting the conceptions he had developed in the light of his subsequent experiences, struggles and study. Materialism is at the core of Marxism. Marx rejected all forms of idealism, the doctrine that thought is primary and the world is simply a reflection of thought. Religion, metaphysical idealism, social Darwinism, etc., are all in different ways expressions of the false consciousness of the ruling class and its various strata.

Engels succinctly summarized the anti-metaphysical, dialectical materialist outlook of Marxism:

"The world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of *processes* in which things, apparently stable no less than their mind image in our heads, the concepts, go through uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away."

Engels goes on to say, "But to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation are two different things." Lenin put it a little more pithily when he observed that a formal knowledge of dialectics will help you to think about the world as much as a knowledge of physiology will aid your digestion of food.

To understand phenomena they must be examined in their concrete mediations, in their interrelationships, in their contradictions and development, in their totality. Thus the dialectical philosophy that Marx and Engels took from Hegel and firmly anchored in materialism accepts nothing as final, absolute or sacred. As Engels noted, in commenting on the revolutionary kernel contained in Hegel's philosophy, dialectics "reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything and nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain."

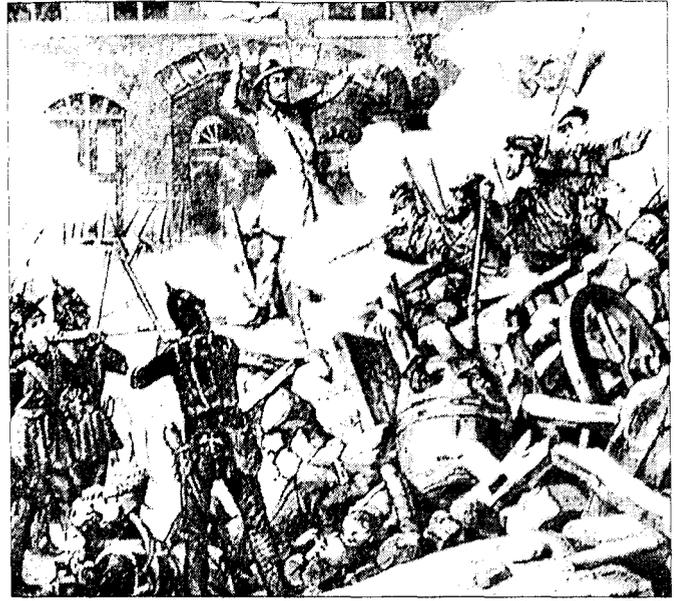
What Marx set out to do—and accomplished—was to bring the science of society into harmony with its materialist foundations. The bourgeoisie, particularly in its current state of decay and despair, does everything to obfuscate the point.

It is inconceivable that one could have Marxism without certain key developments in modern science and production. The proletariat is a historically determined class, one unknown in its modern form in previous historical periods. As Marx noted:

"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces."

Marx stated that the sum total of the relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society. On this foundation arises a legal and political superstructure and corresponding forms of social consciousness.

This is the fundamental discovery of Marx. You cannot really understand modern society or any society without



Dietz Verlag Berlin

The *Manifesto* was published as the revolutions of 1848 erupted across Europe. Workers defend barricades in Frankfurt, Germany.

adopting such a viewpoint. Marxism represents an enormous leap in human understanding. Previously the study of history had concentrated on the role of individuals or ideologies or religions. But such study really did not lay bare the dynamics and processes. For the first time, Marxism gave the working class the tools to understand society and to change it.

Thus in the *Manifesto* Marx cogently explains what capitalism is, how this new system came into being, and why and how it was revolutionizing the relations of production, revolutionizing the relations between people, revolutionizing the planet. The *Manifesto* focuses on the capitalist organization of production in which labor power is treated as a commodity on the market. The workers have nothing to sell but their labor power, the capitalists have capital. Marx shows that the source of surplus value (profit) is really an appropriation of part of that labor power by the capitalists.

Commodity exchange per se does not generate surplus value. A commodity is exchanged for money, which is really concentrated labor power. But the profit made from the sale of that commodity does not come from the exchange itself but from the value of the labor invested in its production. A worker who works 12 hours a day has to work maybe six hours producing goods that when exchanged on the market will cover the cost of reproducing his labor. The other six hours of his work is solely for the benefit of the capitalist, who appropriates this surplus.

The Revolutions of 1848

As I noted, the *Manifesto* appeared coincident with the onset of the great European-wide wave of revolutions in 1848, but nevertheless too late to have much of an impact on the actual course of events. When revolution erupted in Paris in late February, a frightened Belgian government expelled the communist exiles living in Brussels. Marx and his comrades moved to Paris and began actively preparing for intervention into the revolutionary events that had quickly spilled over into Germany.

German workers had congregated in Paris in large numbers,

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and there were intense debates about how to intervene in the unfolding German revolution. One group, led by Georg Herwegh and the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, organized a revolutionary legion to invade Germany. Marx instead argued for revolutionaries to enter Germany individually in order to participate in the upheaval. Herwegh and Bakunin pressed ahead with their legion, which was soundly defeated at the border by Prussian troops. Meanwhile Marx, Engels and their comrades proceeded as planned, with Marx and Engels ending up in Cologne, in the Rhineland.

Cologne was chosen for a number of reasons. The revolutionary upsurge was tolerated by the local bourgeoisie, who in fact petitioned the Prussian autocracy in Berlin to grant concessions. Cologne was the most developed part of Germany. It was also the site of the first radical political organ of the German bourgeoisie, the 1842 *Rheinische Zeitung* edited by Marx. All in all, it was the place which promised more freedom of action and a greater latitude for propaganda and agitation.

Rather than attempt the immediate organization of a communist party, Marx and Engels planned to utilize the radical bourgeois-democratic organizations as a means of cohering workingmen's circles. Thus during the initial period of the 1848 German Revolution, Marx and Engels blocked with and entered the extreme left wing of the bourgeois democracy. Acting as open communists, they managed to capture the central organ of the radical bourgeoisie, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, transforming it into an organ of the German proletariat—a point that did not escape the notice of the bourgeois democrats. Within a few months, all of the paper's original stockholders had abandoned them.

Marx and Engels' orientation put them at organizational cross-purposes with the Cologne Workingmen's Union, which embraced most of the city's workers. It was led by a physician named Gottschalk, who, though not a communist, opposed any cooperation with the bourgeoisie. At the same time, Marx's supporters were also an active faction within this formation.

Marx and Engels expected the German bourgeois revolution to be the immediate precursor of a proletarian revolution. Their perspective, as outlined in the *Manifesto*, was to join hands in the first instance with the revolutionary wing of the German bourgeoisie "against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie."

The revolutionaries of the time, including Marx, based themselves on the experience of the Great French Revolution of 1789. The French Revolution was a protracted affair. From 1789, when the Parisian masses stormed the Bastille,

the revolution moved through a series of increasingly radical stages. In 1792, the threat of an invasion by a counter-revolutionary coalition of European powers galvanized the population, leading to the proclamation of the Republic. The following year, the king was executed and the left-wing Jacobins came to power under conditions of revolutionary war. Marx and Engels believed that a democratic revolution and universal suffrage in the circumstances of 1848 would lead quickly to the rule of the proletariat and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The course of the 1848 Revolutions was in fact quite different. In France, the peasantry voted in a reactionary government that provoked and then crushed the Parisian proletariat in the so-called "June days." Several thousand workers were killed, and more were imprisoned or exiled to distant penal colonies. Fear of the proletariat would in short order drive the French bourgeoisie into the arms of Louis Napoleon, who established a right-wing dictatorial regime in the aftermath of the revolution.

In Germany, as Marx noted in his December 1848 article "The Bourgeoisie and the Counterrevolution," the same fear led the weak bourgeoisie—which appeared late on the scene and mainly had its origins in the old aristocratic classes—into a compromise with monarchical reaction. Henceforward, the German bourgeoisie operated within the monarchical framework, seeking to introduce from above the reforms necessary to remove fetters on capitalist development.

Russia, which at the time was the great reactionary power on the continent, offered the Prussian kaiser money and troops to suppress revolution in Berlin. The kaiser turned down the troops—he had plenty of those—but did accept the money, and suppressed the revolution. In Hungary, Russian troops were accepted, and the revolution there was also suppressed.

Throughout 1848, Marx was using the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* to advocate a war against tsarist Russia. It was his hope that such a war would have the same effect as the war of revolutionary France in 1793 against the European counterrevolutionary coalition—that it would galvanize and save the revolution. But 1848 was not 1793—everywhere in Europe the bourgeoisie feared the revolutionary wave, because in it they saw the proletariat.

While not rejecting the support of bourgeois democrats or severing ties with democratic organizations, in the fall of 1848 Marx and Engels shifted their focus and began to concentrate their energies on organizing the proletariat directly and independently. Still, as late as February 1849 Marx was arguing that the workers should vote for bourgeois democrats where they had no chance of electing their own representatives. But two months later, Marx and his supporters resigned from the District Committee of the Democratic Societies. Marx's subsequent efforts to organize a workers party were cut short by the victorious counterrevolution and he was forced to flee Germany.

Drawing the Lessons of the Defeats of 1848

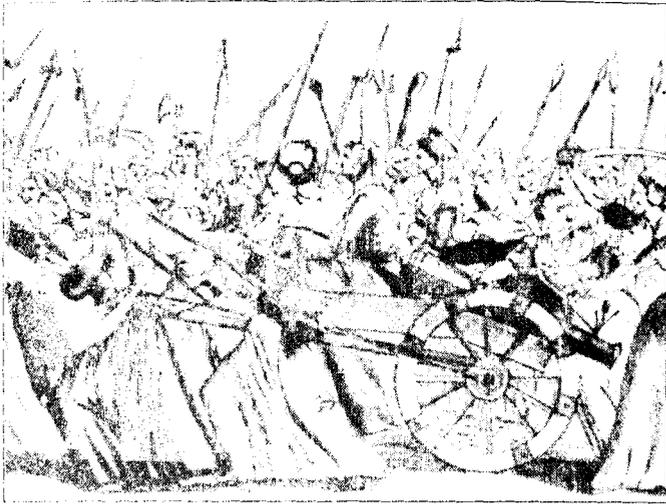
At the beginning of 1850 the central leadership of the Communist League—Marx, Engels, Schapper, Willich and Wolff—reassembled in exile in London. Despite the triumph of the counterrevolution, they still believed that the revolutionary wave had not subsided and hoped for a new outburst of revolutionary struggle. In preparation for this, attempts were made to reorganize and reinvigorate the Communist League, particularly in Germany.

Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste

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Bulloz

The Great French Revolution of 1789: working women of Paris lead march on Versailles.

A balance sheet of the activities of the Communist League during the German Revolution of 1848 was drawn up in London in March 1850, in two circulars by Marx and Engels, both titled "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League." These are extremely important and interesting documents in the history of communism. According to Ryazanov, Lenin was very fond of these documents, knew them by heart and used, to delight in quoting from them.

The first, dated 5 March 1850, raised the idea of permanent revolution. The term "revolution in permanence" had originated in French Blanquist circles in the 1840s—signifying the successive radicalization of the revolution from the overthrow of the monarchical regime to the establishment of communism—though the underlying concept went back to Buonarroti. It was the 1850 circular, however, which later inspired Trotsky to extend and develop the theory of permanent revolution. Clearly critical of errors made by Marx and Engels during 1848, the circular noted:

"A large part of the members who directly participated in the revolutionary movement believed the time for secret societies to have gone by and public activities alone sufficient. The individual circles and communities allowed their connections with the Central Committee to become loose and gradually dormant. Consequently, while the democratic party, the party of the petty bourgeoisie, organised itself more and more in Germany, the workers' party lost its only firm foothold, remained organised at the most in separate localities for local purposes and in the general movement thus came completely under the domination and leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats. An end must be put to this state of affairs, the independence of the workers must be restored."

The document emphasized that the "treacherous role which the German liberal bourgeoisie played in 1848 against the people, will in the impending revolution be taken over by the democratic petty bourgeois, who at present occupy the same position in the opposition as the liberal bourgeoisie before 1848." It concluded from this that "the relation of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty bourgeois democrats is this: it marches together with them against the faction which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes them in everything whereby they seek to consolidate their position in their own interests."

Referring to the democratic petty bourgeoisie's calls to improve the lot of the workers through welfare measures and

by extending state employment, Marx and Engels wrote:

"While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in this country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians."

Marx and Engels denounced the "unity-mongering" of the petty-bourgeois democrats, who "strive to entangle the workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases predominate, behind which their special interests are concealed and in which the particular demands of the proletariat may not be brought for the sake of beloved peace." More than 80 years later, in the 1930s, the Stalinists employed the same artifices under the rubric of the "popular front" to fend off workers revolutions in Spain and France. What Marx and Engels said of unity with the petty-bourgeois democrats of their day applied with equal force to the Stalinists' later popular-front betrayals:

"Such a union would turn out solely to their advantage and altogether to the disadvantage of the proletariat. The proletariat would lose its whole independent, laboriously achieved position and once more sink down to being an appendage of official bourgeois democracy."

Marx and Engels instead called for the creation of independent workers organizations—both secret and open—alongside the official democrats, adding: "In the case of a struggle against a common adversary no special union is required. As soon as such an adversary has to be fought directly, the interests of both parties, for the moment, coincide and, as previously, so also in the future, this connection, calculated to last only for the moment, will arise of itself."

This is a seminal document. And Lenin's fondness for the 1850 circulars is not surprising, permeated as they are with revolutionary spirit and intransigence. In that regard, they remind me of Lenin's own writings on the lessons of the 1905 Moscow uprising, which are too little known. There he makes the point that the culmination of the Russian Revolution of 1905 was not the soviets nor the general strikes, but the Moscow workers going over to an insurrection against the tsarist autocracy. That was the real dress rehearsal for 1917.

In their 5 March 1850 document, Marx and Engels pointed to the necessity of arming the workers. In a clear change from their position of a year earlier, they also stressed the need for the workers to put forward their own candidates in elections—even when there was no chance of winning—in order to preserve the class independence of the proletariat, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public attention. "If the German workers are not able to attain power and achieve their own class interests without completely going through a lengthy revolutionary development," Marx and Engels wrote, "they at least know for a certainty that the first act of this approaching revolutionary drama will coincide with the direct victory of their own class in France and will be very much accelerated by it." The document closes: "Their battle cry must be: the Revolution in Permanence."

Tellingly, there are two political tendencies who really
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don't like these two documents. One is the Mensheviks, who never transcended Marx's early tactics in 1848—to function as the extreme left wing of the bourgeois-democratic revolution—which accorded very well with their later schema of revolution by stages. The other tendency is the Stalinists, Mensheviks of the second mobilization, who found Marx's exposition on permanent revolution to be anathema to their anti-internationalist doctrine of "socialism in one country."

Thus, commenting on the first of the 1850 circulars, the famous Menshevik archivist Boris Nikolayevsky writes in *Karl Marx: Man and Fighter*: "Whether the document in all its details really represents Marx's ideas is difficult to decide." Basically, Nikolayevsky views the document as an aberration flowing from an unrealistic assessment of the revolutionary possibilities in Germany in 1850, noting that Marx's optimistic projections of a resurgence of revolution led him into a political bloc with "left" communists such as August Willich. To buttress his argument, Nikolayevsky remarks that Marx at the same time founded the Société Universelle des Communistes Révolutionnaires, which included not only the Communist League and the British Chartists, but also the followers of French insurrectionary Auguste Blanqui. According to Nikolayevsky, for whom Blanquism was nearly synonymous with Bolshevism:

"The fact that Marx accepted this kind of revolutionism, which he had condemned so violently both before and afterwards, and was so utterly foreign in every way to the essential nature of proletarian revolution, the fact that he formed an alliance with the Blanquists, proves better than anything else the extent to which his judgement had been affected by the breakdown of his immeasurable hopes."

In fact, what this comment graphically demonstrates is the chasm between Marx the revolutionary and Nikolayevsky the Menshevik reformist.

From 1848 to the Paris Commune

It is important for comrades to appreciate the historic circumstances in which the *Communist Manifesto* was written, and that its authors extended their analysis based on the subsequent experiences and development of the class struggle. Thus, in grappling with the events which followed the 1848 French Revolution, Marx came to a more precise understanding of the bourgeois state than that contained in the *Manifesto*. In *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, completed in 1852, Marx wrote:

"This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its ingenious state machinery, embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten.... The first French Revolution, with its task of breaking all separate local, territorial, urban and provincial powers in order to create the civil unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun: centralisation.... Finally, in its struggle against the revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralisation of governmental power. All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it."



March 1871 uprising which ushered in the Paris Commune, hailed by Marx as the first "working-class government."

Referring to this passage, Lenin wrote: "In this remarkable argument Marxism takes a tremendous step forward compared with the *Communist Manifesto*. In the latter the question of the state is still treated in an extremely abstract manner, in the most general terms and expressions. In the above-quoted passage, the question is treated in a concrete manner, and the conclusion is extremely precise, definite, practical and palpable: all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed." Marx had made the same point in 1871: ♣

"If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another but to smash it, and this is the preliminary condition for every real people's revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting."

But even then, Marx did not have a clear idea of what would replace the bourgeois state which had to be smashed. That question was answered by the experience of the 1871 Paris Commune.

In 1870, the French bourgeoisie, led by the Louis Bonaparte of the *18th Brumaire*, was provoked into a war with Prussia. The rather attenuated calls of liberty, equality and fraternity by the French Bonapartists of the second mobilization were answered by the Prussians' artillery, cavalry and infantry. Following the decisive French defeat at the Battle of Sedan, a weak Republican government negotiated with the Prussians. Marx cautioned against a revolutionary uprising by the Parisian masses in reaction to this defeat, warning that it could only be a foolhardy adventure.

But the Parisian proletariat, with the German armies at the gates of the city and the government surrendering, rose up in a heroic act, threw out the very weak remnants of the bourgeoisie and instituted the first workers government in history. The Paris Commune lasted only a couple of months, but sufficiently long to establish that the workers cannot lay their hands on the ready-made machinery of the state to turn it to their purpose, but must instead smash it and replace it

with a new type of government, a government of the working people organized collectively.

Thus the *Manifesto* gives us a general summary of history, which teaches us to regard the state as an organ of class rule and leads to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first winning political power. But a lot of the blanks had to be filled in by the concrete experiences of proletarian struggle.

Marxism: A Guide to Action

In his "Ninety Years of the *Communist Manifesto*" (October 1937), Trotsky observed that "this pamphlet astounds us even today by its freshness." He enumerated a number of key points "which retain their full force today": the materialist conception of history, the theory of the class struggle, the understanding of capitalism as a specific stage in the economic development of society, the tendency toward immiseration of the proletariat, the crises of capital (which include not only cyclical economic dislocations but also political crises and interimperialist wars).

It is the *Manifesto* which first taught the workers that the capitalist state is nothing but "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." It taught that every class struggle is a political struggle, as against the conceptions of the anarchists and syndicalists. It asserted, against the arguments of reformism, that the proletariat can't conquer power within the legal framework established by the bourgeoisie. It boldly proclaimed that the workers have no fatherland and that communists stand for the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions, for the socialist transformation of society, for internationalism, and for the withering away of the state. The contrast between the *Manifesto*'s ringing call, "Workers of the World, Unite!" and the Stalinist doctrine of "socialism in one country" could not be starker.

For revolutionaries, Marxism is a living science and a guide to action, not a set of ossified dogmas to be repeated by rote. Thus Trotsky also spoke of what had to be modified in the *Manifesto* in light of experience, and also pointed to certain omissions. Contrary to Marx's prediction at the time, there was only a *relative* retardation of the productive forces of capitalist development. The Revolutions of 1848 ultimately consolidated the economic rule of the bourgeoisie, although in a combined and uneven way. But there was an enormous expansion of productive forces up to the period before World War I. So there was a telescoping of the historical development of capitalism in the *Manifesto*.

What was also made clear by the experience of the Paris Commune was that without the leadership of a revolutionary party the working class can't ultimately wrest power from the bourgeoisie. (One of Marx's criticisms of the Commune was that it did not immediately take energetic measures for the breaking and suppression of bourgeois power.)

The *Manifesto* also did not deal with the interlinked questions of capitalist development and the degeneration of sections of the working class into a labor aristocracy. Marx certainly later became aware of this phenomenon in the case of the English working class, but hammering out the revolutionary party's relation to the trade unions, and their place in the struggle for revolution, required the experience of the workers movement ranging through the October Revolution.

The *Manifesto* assumes a capitalism of free competition. Later, when Marx wrote *Capital*, he delineated the tendency of capitalist free competition to turn into its opposite,



"Workers of the world, unite!" Communists fight to forge world party of socialist revolution. From top: Founding of First International, 1864; congress of Second International's German section, 1875; publication of Third International, 1919; Leon Trotsky, depicted in Diego Rivera mural, founded Fourth International in 1938.

namely monopoly capital, which finds its current expression in imperialist finance capital.

Trotsky further notes that the liquidation of the intermediate classes projected in the *Manifesto* did not happen. He points out that capitalism ruined more of the petty bourgeoisie than could be absorbed into the proletariat. And the capitalist state, itself a parasitic excrescence, self-consciously and artificially maintained a considerable petty-bourgeois layer. Aside from the vast layers of petty state functionaries and technicians, other examples are noteworthy. The Japanese bourgeoisie has for decades artificially maintained a large peasantry. In the U.S., the great Western water programs were undertaken by the bourgeoisie with the aim of drawing farmers to the region as a conscious alternative to building up an urban proletarian population.

Trotsky makes the point that legions of technicians, administrators, commercial employees—a whole new middle

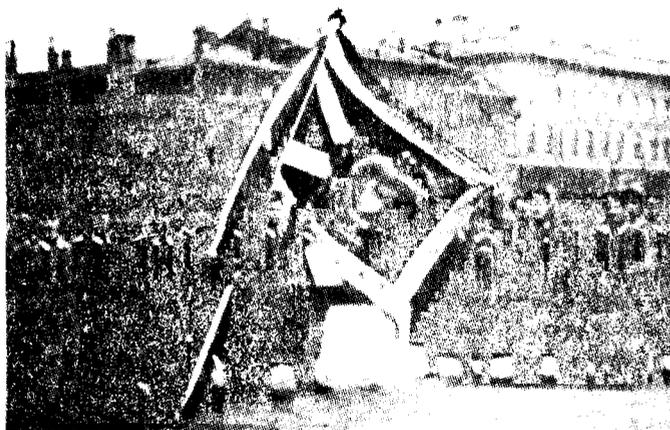
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class—has grown up in a situation where capitalism's existence has been prolonged. He warns that this creates profound social contradictions, most sharply when this layer, facing ruin because of the economic impasse of capital, becomes a ready base for fascism.

Those of you who have read the *Manifesto* know that it contains a section with ten demands, demands that a quarter of a century later Marx and Engels were to criticize as "dated" and in need of revision. But as Trotsky points out, these demands constitute a revolutionary "transitional program" for their time, counterposed to the subsequent social-democratic conception of a "minimum program." As with Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Program, the aim was to advance a series of demands based on the objective needs of the proletariat, to mobilize them in struggle and to teach



VAAP

Workers and soldiers exchange banners in Petrograd on eve of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

them the only conclusion: that the successful realization of these demands and of any hope for a real life for the working class depends on a workers revolution.

Trotsky also speaks of permanent revolution. Since 1848 the bourgeoisie has proven itself incapable of repeating the experience of the French Revolution of 1789. The complete sweeping away of all the feudal rubbish and the accomplishment of the historic tasks of the bourgeois revolution in the colonial and semicolonial countries is today the task of the working class. This was the conclusion Trotsky came to in tsarist Russia, with its weak and servile bourgeoisie and its preponderant peasant population. While the Mensheviks argued for subordinating the working class to the bourgeoisie, Trotsky recognized that the vast peasantry had to be mobilized behind the small but socially concentrated and cohesive proletariat, which was the only social force capable of carrying out even the agrarian revolution. Marx came to a similar conclusion in Germany in the mid-19th century, at a time when the proletariat was a minority of the population, arguing that a socialist revolution would have to be backed by some second edition of the Peasant War.

Another weakness in the *Manifesto*, noteworthy by its omission, is the national question, particularly as it applies to the backward colonial and semicolonial countries. Early on Marx and Engels thought, incorrectly it turned out, that

the more advanced capitalist countries could play a progressive role in places such as Mexico or Algeria. They began to change their views over the issue of Ireland, recognizing that workers revolution in Britain could not occur as long as Ireland is kept in bondage.

Section Three of the *Manifesto*, under the heading "Socialist and Communist Literature," is undoubtedly exotic to the contemporary reader, as it refers to organizations that have long, long since passed from the stage of history. But it's useful to go back and review this material. With the final unraveling of the October Revolution, we are currently in a period of a big setback for the world proletariat. As a consequence, there is a tendency for the proletariat to be thrown back to more primitive conceptions of social struggle. And certainly some layers of youth, while disaffected by the more gross excrescences of capitalist society, have no understanding of Marxism and tend toward vague utopian anarchoid sentiments not fundamentally different from those advanced by the precursors and early opponents of Marxism.

Fight for New October Revolutions!

The finishing touches, in a way, on many of the conceptions of the *Communist Manifesto* and their implementation was really the October Revolution of 1917. And there's a reason for that. Lenin's Bolshevik Party grew up in a very unusual set of circumstances. Here was a party that had to confront a very wide-ranging and rapidly shifting series of challenges, from trade-union struggle to struggle against autocracy, that had to confront the national question in a large multinational empire. Periods of open revolutionary struggle, periods of exile, of underground work, of parliamentary work gave to the Bolshevik Party a set of experiences that were far richer than those in West Europe.

Just as Marx was not born a Marxist, Lenin did not become a Leninist overnight, nor did the Bolshevik Party suddenly appear on the scene fully fledged and tested. If you study the history of the Bolshevik Party, you can see a development. Lenin worked his way through conceptions inherited from Karl Kautsky and the German Social Democracy to the conception of the Leninist combat party. And at every stage this was accompanied by sharp struggle, internal and external, in defense of the program of Marxism.

This process found its culmination in the 1917 October Revolution, which occurred at the weakest link in the chain of world imperialism, toward the end of World War I. And the lessons of this revolution were codified in the early congresses of the Communist International. We very much are the party of the Russian Revolution, but we are also much more than that, because comrade Trotsky and the forces around him actually went on to struggle against a new phenomenon, the degeneration of the October Revolution. The Left Opposition was forged in struggle against the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which itself was a direct consequence of the economic backwardness of Russia and the failure of the October Revolution to spread internationally.

So we are both the party of the Russian Revolution and the party of those who struggled to defend it against its Stalinist degeneration. The subsequent struggles of Trotsky—his generalization of the theory of permanent revolution based on the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in the 1920s, his elucidation of the tactic of the united front in the struggle against fascism in Germany, his struggles against the betrayals of the popular front in France and Spain in the 1930s—these all represent extremely valuable theoretical and programmatic

otions. Marxism is a living science. What is so remarkable about the *Manifesto* is that it retains so much of its vital value today. That is truly remarkable since it was written in the dawn of the age of modern industrial capitalism.

Today the Soviet Union is no more, and I think China is on its skids. The question posed there is who will prevail: the proletariat throwing off the Stalinist bureaucracy that is increasingly moving toward capitalist restoration, or imperialist-led counterrevolution. Trotsky, in *The Third International After Lenin*, addressed what he thought was an unlikely theoretical possibility, but unfortunately one that we confront in significant aspects today. He wrote: "Theoretically, to be sure, even a new chapter of a general capitalist progress in the most powerful, ruling, and leading countries is not excluded. But for this, capitalism would first have to overcome enormous barriers of a class as well as an interstate character. It would have to strangle the proletarian revolution for a long time; it would have to enslave China completely, overthrow the Soviet republic, and so forth. We are still a long way removed from all this." Not any more. And it is even more acutely the dangers of inter-imperialist war.

But as much as the bourgeoisie whistle in the dark about the death of communism, don't believe them for a moment, because the more farsighted of them don't believe it for a moment. If their line is, "October 1917—never again!" our line is, "Again and again and again—one, two, many October revolutions." As revolutionary Marxists our object is not simply to understand the world, but to change it. But to be able to change it requires that we have an actual lever to effect a revolution, to rip up this rotten social system, which more and more threatens grave destruction if not extinction for mankind. That lever is a revolutionary workers party of the Leninist type, organized in a democratic-centralist Fourth International. Such parties cannot be simply proclaimed but must be forged in struggle.

And that requires a struggle as well against those who call themselves Marxists or Trotskyists while renouncing in practice the fundamental principles of the Marxist movement. Take, for example, the British Militant group, which now calls itself the Socialist Party. Their international resolution of a couple of years ago had three little propositions which showed a touching faith in the bourgeois order. The first was that a revolutionary party is not necessary because the workers will one way or another, through trial and error, find their own way. They go on to say that there'll be no nuclear war because the bourgeoisie is rational. And they also say there won't be any fascism, because the bourgeoisie experienced Hitler. All of this is presented within a very "orthodox" framework, yet it is a complete revision of everything Marxists understand about the state, imperialism and fascism.

Then there is David North's outfit, which currently styles itself the Socialist Equality Party. The Northites have taken to dismissing the unions as absolutely corrupt agencies of the bosses, in no way organizations of the working class. Yet the American bourgeoisie spends

over one billion dollars a year in busting unions, breaking up organizing drives, breaking strikes, decertifying unions. They have a rather different appreciation of the question.

While promoting their scabberding, economist version of "class struggle," the Northites also spit on the struggle against black oppression. It is precisely because of the black question that the U.S., uniquely among advanced capitalist countries, does not have an independent class party of the proletariat, even of a labor-reformist type. In general, America's capitalist rulers have been very successful in playing the race card; it's the legacy of the unfinished Civil War for black freedom that contributes mightily to the political backwardness, if you will, of this country. We understand that the fight for black liberation is a strategic question for proletarian revolution in this country.

A century and a half has passed since the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto*, a period marked by many proletarian struggles. Our purpose in discussing the *Manifesto* today is the same as the purpose of its authors. Like Marx and Engels, our aim is to overthrow the old society and replace it with one that will open the road to the abolition of all class oppression.

Capitalism will not fall of its own accord—that's been clear since the 1917 October Revolution. If the Mensheviks and Bolshevik conciliators like Stalin had prevailed against Lenin in 1917, there would have been no Russian Revolution. And very educated pundits would be standing before you in halls of academia explaining how a revolution in Russia in 1917 was impossible. That really is the question of the subjective factor. There is no terminal crisis for the bourgeoisie—aside from nuclear war, perhaps—barren revolution. Comrades, they have to be thrown out. That's our job.

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard No. 672, 8 August*

TL/SYC Events

Toronto

Trotskyist League Forum

Workers Political Revolution or Capitalist Enslavement?

China on the Brink

7:30 p.m., Saturday, October 4

St. Paul's Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. (just west of Spadina subway)

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

- ① The Principles of Marxism..... Sept. 24
- ② The State and Imperialism..... Oct. 8
- ③ The Russian Revolution..... Oct. 22
- ④ How the Soviet Workers State was Strangled..... Nov. 5
- ⑤ Marxism and the National Question..... Nov. 19

7:00 p.m., alternate Wednesdays

International Student Centre, 33 St. George St. (just north of College St.)

For more information, phone (416) 593-4138.

Vancouver

Trotskyist League Forum

Eyewitness Report:

South Africa: The Struggle for Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

7:30 p.m., Friday, October 3

Britannia Community Centre, Room L4, 1661 Napier Street (off Commercial Drive)

For more information, phone (604) 687-0353.

Mexico...

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in the countryside. Beginning with the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas when NAFTA was imposed on New Year's Day 1994, peasant guerrilla insurgencies centered in the rural southern states have shaken the country.

Since splitting from the PRI a decade ago, Cárdenas has postured as an advocate for the poor and an opponent of escalating imperialist subjugation. Yet the election outcome was greeted positively not only by Mexico's plebeian masses. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* made clear the reaction of U.S. financial circles, quoting a spokesman for Standard & Poor who said: "I don't think the PAN or the PRD will push for anything radical." The Mexican stock market soared to new highs.

In a pre-election visit to Wall Street in early May, Cárdenas impressed leading financiers by his "statesmanlike" demeanor. Said one, "He didn't say anything that would cause investors to run out frightened." On the eve of the elections Cárdenas promised that "a government of the PRD should give a lot of confidence to investors" by cleaning up corruption. Backing up his words was the PRD's record since it gained control of Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl, a huge working-class suburb of Mexico City. In his first six months in office, the PRD mayor laid off a third of the municipal workforce while buying new weapons for the cops.

Such actions are neither an accident nor a "betrayal," as the opportunist "left" which supports the Cardenistas would have it. The PRD is fundamentally no more capable than the semi-bonapartist PRI regime of resisting the demands of the U.S. imperialist masters that the Mexican government starve its "own" people for the greater profits of Wall Street. In colonial and semicolonial countries, characterized by "combined and uneven development," the most modern forms of concentrated industrial capitalist exploitation coexist with earlier forms of exploitation and oppression. In Mexico, elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage survive in the countryside—the *hacienda* (landed estates), peonage and the *tienda de raya* (stores that take scrip instead of money, to which many peasants are indebted for generations). In a country like Mexico, the national bourgeoisie is simply too weak and subordinated to imperialism to lead or support a fight to achieve basic democratic tasks, carry through an agrarian revolution, or break the yoke of imperialist subjugation.

The resolution of these tasks falls to the proletariat, through a socialist revolution which sweeps away the Mexican bourgeoisie, which has gorged itself on the blood of the plebeian masses, and through fighting to extend that revolution throughout the Americas, including to the powerful multiracial working class of the United States. This is the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. The combative Mexican proletariat must enter the stage as a "class for itself"—fighting for state power—rallying behind it the most oppressed sections of the peasantry. The indispensable instrument for victory is a revolutionary proletarian party forged through intransigent struggle to break the working class and peasant masses from illusions in bourgeois nationalism. This means as well political combat against the reformists and centrists within the workers movement who actively foster illusions in the "left" nationalist PRD. The Grupo Espartaquista de México is committed to forging an internationalist Leninist-

Trotskyist vanguard party to lead the proletariat to power.

Explosive Discontents Shake Capitalist Regime

Despite all the self-congratulation over a "democratic election," Mexico is anything but a stable bourgeois democracy. Recent mass protests in the capital by teachers reflect the growing desperation of the working class. The stranglehold over the proletariat of the corporatist Mexican Labor Federation (CTM) has been coming unstuck, with a significant growth of "independent" unions and the formation of a break-away "Forum for a New Trade Unionism" (*foristas*). The grip of the Catholic church, a feudal remnant, over Mexican society means that women are brutally oppressed, particularly in the countryside. The ban on abortion—supported by a section of the PRD leadership—leads to the deaths of thousands of women each year as a result of botched illegal operations. At the same time, women have become an increasingly significant component of the proletariat in recent years, with 35 percent of all women of working age now in the labor force. This is even more true in the foreign-owned *maquiladora* plants near the U.S. border, where young women compose as much as 90 percent of the workforce in some factories. Working women's organizations have been emerging in these areas.

Much of the countryside is under a military state of siege, as the army has massacred peasants mercilessly in its war against the Zapatista (EZLN) guerrillas in Chiapas and the EPR (Popular Revolutionary Army) concentrated in Guerrero. In Mexico City and above all in the working-class suburbs, the army has augmented the police in joint operations to intimidate the impoverished population, while private paramilitary groups mushroom. Meanwhile, Washington's militarization of the U.S. border, including demonstrative cold-blooded shootings of would-be immigrants, has narrowed that safety valve for desperate people seeking to flee the misery and hardship exacerbated by NAFTA.

There is certainly ample tinder for social conflagration in Mexico. The working class has grown explosively in recent years, from an earlier base limited largely to the extractive industries. *Maquiladora* workers in particular exemplify a layer which is characteristic of semicolonial countries generally, from Asia to Latin America: a new, young working class being subjected to intense exploitation, lacking basic union protection but also not subject to the control of any well-oiled machine of reformist co-optation.

Mexican society is highly unstable and increasingly polarized. Yet there has been no proletarian challenge to capitalist class rule. The reason for this lies in the continuing hegemony of bourgeois nationalism which, pointing to the plundering imperialists to the north, ties the masses to the illusion that they can join with some "anti-imperialist" section of the bourgeois class enemy in a fight for "democracy." While the radical peasant forces during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17 were defeated, the victorious bourgeois forces found it necessary to co-opt the mantle and rhetoric of the Revolution to legitimize their regime. The nationalists seek to convince the workers that only "Yankee imperialism"—and not the Mexican bourgeoisie as well—is their enemy, cutting against the crucial need to ally with workers in the U.S. and elsewhere in order to defeat capitalism. In particular, the growing Latino sector of the U.S. proletariat, can be a human bridge linking the struggles of the Mexican and North American workers.

Against the bourgeois nationalism pushed by the



AFP

Cárdenas with Zapatistas. PRD leader stood by Mexican army as it bloodily suppressed Chiapas peasant rising.

trade-union bureaucrats and self-styled “socialist” groups, the GEM fights to win the working masses to an understanding of the fundamental identity of class interests of the proletarians of all countries. The hold of nationalist ideology in Mexico is reinforced by the treachery of the North American labor bureaucracy, which suppresses class struggle and instead pushes virulently chauvinist protectionism and fans the flames of anti-immigrant racism. In fighting to build a revolutionary party of the working class, the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Trotskyist League of Canada denounce the NAFTA “free trade” rape of Mexico and seek to mobilize the multiracial proletariat in defense of the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed. We fight to reforge a Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

No Support to Bourgeois Nationalism— For Permanent Revolution!

As revolutionary Marxists, we are opposed in principle to any political support to bourgeois formations, such as the PRD in Mexico or the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. This question is fundamental to a historic split in the workers movement, between those who fight for proletarian power and those who place their hopes in a “progressive” or “anti-imperialist” wing of the capitalist class.

In the early years of this century, the great Russian revolutionist Leon Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution as a projection of the likely course of revolutionary development in tsarist Russia. Understanding that the Russian bourgeoisie was incapable of leading a democratic revolution against the reactionary autocracy, Trotsky held that the revolution would be proletarian socialist in character. This was counterposed to the Menshevik view that the revolution would occur in distinct stages, beginning with a democratic revolution which would be limited to placing the liberal bourgeoisie in power.

In the 1917 October Revolution, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the working class of Russia proved the validity of the theory of permanent revolution. The weak bourgeoisie, tied to domestic reaction and international

imperialism, was incapable of a revolutionary struggle to accomplish the tasks associated with bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the epoch of rising capitalism (e.g., national independence, agrarian revolution). The proletariat was the only class capable of taking leadership of the nation to sweep away the tsarist autocracy and surviving feudal remnants. For this, the revolution had to be at the same time and from the outset a socialist revolution, establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat—workers class rule—which expropriated the bourgeoisie and sought to promote proletarian revolutions elsewhere, especially in the advanced imperialist countries.

Drawing the lessons of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, whose bloody defeat was ensured by Stalin’s insistence that the Communist Party liquidate into the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (Kuomintang), Trotsky generalized the theory of permanent revolution as applicable to all colonial and semicolonial countries. As we will see, the common thread of reformist and centrist opportunism in such countries today is the rejection of this perspective in favor of the Menshevik/Stalinist schema which politically ties the proletariat to a section of the bourgeoisie in the name of “two-stage” revolution. History has shown what this treacherous schema means in practice: in the first stage the proletariat rallies behind the liberal bourgeoisie, and in the second stage the liberal bourgeoisie massacres the communists.

Trade Unions in Semicolonial Countries

In many countries with mass reformist workers parties, as in West Europe, a favored form of class collaboration is the popular front, an electoral coalition tying the workers organizations to bourgeois parties. In cases like Nelson Mandela’s South Africa, with its “tripartite alliance” of the ANC, the Communist Party and the COSATU trade-union federation, such cross-class coalitions can take the form of a *nationalist popular front*. However in Mexico, the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie has been particularly naked, with the trade-union movement *directly tied to bourgeois nationalism*. As in many semicolonial countries, Mexico has not seen the development of even a reformist mass party of the working class (like the British Labour Party, the French Communists or the German Social Democrats). In the 1930s the workers were organized into *corporatist* unions (directly linked to the state) and considered the “worker sector” of the PRI and its predecessors.

In his unfinished 1940 manuscript on “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” Trotsky quite precisely described the relations between the proletariat and a bourgeois-nationalist regime which claims to oppose the depredations of imperialism:

“Colonial and semicolonial countries are under the sway, not of native capitalism but of foreign imperialism. However, this does not weaken but, on the contrary, strengthens the need of direct, daily, practical ties between the magnates of capitalism and the governments which are in essence subject to them—the governments of colonial or semicolonial countries. Inasmuch as imperialist capitalism creates both in colonies and semicolonies a stratum of labour aristocracy and bureaucracy, the latter requires the support of colonial and semicolonial governments, as protectors, patrons and, sometimes, as arbitrators....

“The feebleness of the national bourgeoisie, the absence of traditions of municipal self-government, and the pressure of foreign capitalism, and the relatively rapid growth of the

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proletariat, cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime. The governments of backward, i.e., colonial and semicolonial countries by and large assume a Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist character; and differ from one another in this, that some try to orient in a democratic direction, seeking support among workers and peasants, while others install a form close to military-police dictatorship. This likewise determines the fate of the trade unions. They either stand under the special patronage of the state or they are subjected to cruel persecution."

The death of long-time CTM leader Fidel Velázquez in June brought to the surface frictions long contained at the top of this *charro* (bureaucratic) federation and in the umbrella Congress of Labor (CT). Since the early 1980s, with the so-called "debt crisis" and the beginning of brutal plans for mass layoffs and reprivatizations of nationalized industries, the old CTM unions lost much of their social base and their privileges. But their ties to the old regime were so strong that they preferred to lose part of their power rather than seek a greater distance from the regime. The implementation of NAFTA was another blow at the position of these *charros*, who in many cases became simple *pistoleros*, finks or labor contractors. The early 1990s saw a rabid bourgeois offensive against union organizations, even including the loyal CTM unions which had flourished under the shelter of state corporatism. The attacks on so-called independent or dissident unions at Cananea, Ford and Volkswagen and the SUTAU bus workers union in Mexico City were even more brutal.

The unraveling of the PRI stranglehold on Mexican political life and the emergence of the *foristas* and unions independent of the corporatist CTM (and the increasing "unreliability" of even some of the CTM unions, shown for example by their defying the ban on May Day demonstrations in recent years) will certainly arouse the hopes of the plebeian masses for some alteration of their desperate situation. But in the absence of a revolutionary party fighting for the political independence of the working class, the workers and their organizations will continue to be pawns for the parliamentary ambitions of bourgeois-nationalist politicians. As Cárdenas seeks to generate a more "populist" and "national" face for this regime of bourgeois austerity, he can count on political support from "independent" unions. While organizationally independent of the PRI-loyal CTM, these unions are no more politically independent of capitalism than the unions in the United States, which are tied to the capitalist Democratic Party.

Likewise the peasant-guerrilla movements see in Cárdenas their only hope of mitigating the brutal repression. Yet the PRD explicitly solidarized with the armed forces against the Zapatistas in 1994 and later condemned the EPR as it was being encircled by the army in Guerrero. Now Gustavo Landeros, a brigadier general on the PRD's National Executive Committee, has again declared that "the Mexican Army in Chiapas has acted in conformity with the law" (*El Fianciero*, 2 July). Thus does the PRD underline its loyalty to the capitalist state and the repressive institutions for safeguarding capitalist property (the cops, army, jails, courts)—the "special bodies of armed men," as Engels called them—which constitute the core of the state.

Meanwhile, the organizations of the Mexican "left" act as a last line of defense for bourgeois nationalism, seeking to pull back into the fold those class-conscious workers looking

for a socialist alternative to the politics of the PRI/PRD. From the inception of Cárdenas' movement, these groups have fostered the deadly illusion that the PRD is (or can be "pressured" to behave as) a friend of the workers and the leader of the fight for "democracy." Today, euphoria over the PRD's victory agitates and excites the reformist and centrist left, which prattles about the "exceptional" character and the "mass influence" of the PRD, thereby justifying their own capitulation to this bourgeois party.

Opportunist Leftists in the Shadow of the Bourgeois PRD

In Mexico, the Stalinist Communist Party, consistently applying their policy of subordination to the class enemy in the name of "democracy" and "anti-imperialism," simply liquidated outright into bourgeois nationalism without leaving any trace. And various pseudo-Trotskyist groups have for years sown illusions in the advent of a "democratic revolution" headed by the Cárdenas "opposition to the PRI." If, in this election, they did not call for a vote to the PRD it was only because Cárdenas had so openly backed away from his "anti-imperialist" rhetoric by embracing NAFTA and wooing Wall Street.

One example is the Mexican supporters of the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel. After a whole section had already simply liquidated into the Cardenistas, the Mexican USec group disintegrated after supporting the PRD in the 1994 elections, as one wing went over to the petty-bourgeois Zapatistas. Recently, the USec remnants—joined by leftovers from the defunct Stalinist organization—regrouped in the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS). The LUS signed a joint declaration for the elections with the Partido Obrero Socialista-Zapatista (POS-Z, followers of the late Argentine adventurer Nahuel Morgno) calling for "voiding the ballots." That declaration contains a long-winded, resentful discourse against Cárdenas' promises to carry out the austerity policies demanded by the U.S. imperialists.

That this alienation from Cárdenas is tactical and temporary is shown by a LUS statement upholding their political support to the PRD in 1994: "On that occasion, the democratic and revolutionary sectors, tacitly supported by the EZLN, bet on the 'useful vote' and it was given to Cárdenas" (*Umbral*, March 1997). Pretending that the PRD was ever something other than the tame bourgeois-nationalist "opposition" that it is, the LUS now laments that it "has become an integral part of the Mexican political system, rather than remaining firm as a revolutionary refuter and challenger of the same."

While the Morenoites didn't vote for the PRD in 1994, they nonetheless backed the PRD in a more indirect fashion. The POS-Z called at the time for a vote to the petty-bourgeois Zapatistas, although as was predictable the EZLN decided not to run in the elections in order not to take away votes from the PRD. Now the POS-Z shouts with joy, "22 million against the PRI" (*El Socialista*, July 1997), and proposes a program for "democratic revolution" under a Cárdenas government.

In practice, these "Trotskyists" all serve to tie the proletariat to the bourgeois "opposition" with various "leftist" rationales, backing Cárdenas either directly or through building illusions in the Zapatistas, who represent the most radical current expression of bourgeois nationalism. While defending the EZLN/EPR against murderous state repression, Marxists

give no *political* support to such peasant-based petty-bourgeois formations. These groups are in essence nothing more than petty-bourgeois liberals with guns, seeking to pressure the existing capitalist state to be more “democratic.” Relying on an atomized peasantry with no coherent class interests, the guerrillaist strategy, however courageous its supporters, is incapable of breaking the chains of capitalist and imperialist enslavement.

A somewhat more leftist version of the same fundamental politics promoted by the POS-Z and LUS is presented by a centrist split from the Morenoites, the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS). The LTS’ favored device to cozy up to the bourgeois PRD is to discover the existence of a popular front around Cárdenas, although it is unable to explain what are the components of this “popular front.” This enables the LTS to orient to Cárdenas in the guise of looking for a purported “working-class” sector of the PRD. Just as the other centrists now distance themselves somewhat from Cárdenas, the LTS complains that the PRD provides “‘democratic’ covering” for the PRI regime (*Estrategia Obrera*, May 1997). But in a joint leaflet with the LUS to striking teachers earlier this year, the LTS did not so much as mention, much less denounce, the PRD! Yet it was because the PRD did not want any mass unrest in the run-up to the elections that the mobilizations around the teachers strike were stopped.

Under certain circumstances, revolutionists can raise the demand that workers organizations in a popular front break their alliance with the bourgeoisie. But the PRD is not a popular front. The LTS sleight of hand therefore dissolves into calling upon Cárdenas to break with the big bourgeoisie and the imperialists and lead the workers in struggle! When Cárdenas raised a few tepid criticisms of the then-impending NAFTA pact four years ago, the LTS proclaimed: “If he declared himself against the Agreement, it would be necessary to demand not that he sign a paper but that he call on the mobilization of the Mexican workers” (*Alternativa Socialista*, September-October 1993). While claiming that this demand would “unmask him before the masses,” the LTS was itself fueling the masses’ illusions in Cárdenas as an “anti-imperialist” workers’ leader.

IG Discards Permanent Revolution

At bottom, these politics are a repudiation of the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution in favor of a fictitious “anti-imperialist united front” with one or another section of the nationalist bourgeoisie. At the tail end of the syphilitic chain of subordination to Mexican bourgeois nationalism is a new entrant on the political scene: the “Internationalist Group” (IG), formed a year ago by a small group of defectors in the U.S. and Mexico expelled from our international party. In earlier articles, we have characterized the fundamental politics of this outfit as “Pabloism of the second mobilization,” noting that they look “to adapt to various non-revolutionary forces” (“Potemkin Village Idiocy,” *Espartaco* No. 9, Spring-Summer 1997; translated from *Workers Vanguard* No. 663, 7 March).

Under the impact of bourgeois triumphalism over the “death of communism,” the quintessentially petty-bourgeois



Ruben R. Ramirez

Militant women strikers at RCA Thomson maquiladora plant in Ciudad Juárez, February 1995.

IG despairs of the fight for a revolutionary party to lead the proletariat in the conquest of state power. Instead, they seek to prettify the existing consciousness of the workers and to convince themselves that, somehow, revolutionary struggles are imminent and can triumph without revolutionary leadership.

In order to attack the ICL, an IG leaflet (5 May) titled “To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists” takes the same tack as the centrist LTS, insisting at great length on the existence of a vaguely defined “Cardenista popular front.” At one point they seem to imply that the National Democratic Convention—an assembly called by the Zapatistas two years ago as an overture to the PRD—proved the existence of a popular front. Elsewhere, they point to the candidacy on the PRD slate of SUTAU union lawyer Benito Mirón Lince and to the “several union speakers” who spoke alongside Cárdenas at the May Day rally of the Inter-sindical (dissident unionists). By the same logic, one could even more forcefully define the PRI as a popular front or, for that matter, the Democratic Party in the U.S. Or what about the Peronists, the main party of the Argentine bourgeoisie, which controls a majority of the unions there?

In a July 25 Web posting, the IG again denounces the GEM for “now denying there is a *popular front* around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’ Party of the Democratic Revolution.” It is self-serving in the extreme for the IG to claim that the ICL’s principled opposition to the bourgeois-nationalist PRD constitutes a “new line” in any sense of the term. But the anti-Spartacist diatribes of the IG have been a sometimes useful goad to re-examining and clarifying our past propaganda.

When Cárdenas’ grouping emerged from the PRI, it didn’t bring with it any section of the PRI unions. In contrast to the Stalinists and other reformists, who capitulated to Cárdenas and his Democratic National Front (FDN), we sharply denounced the class-collaborationist character of the FDN, and later the PRD. However, it was wrong to characterize the Cardenistas at any point as a popular front, as we did on a number of occasions over the years. The FDN had been merely the electoral vehicle for the consolidation of a new bourgeois party, the PRD. Perhaps we should thank the

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IG for its emphatic centrist refusal to call things by their right names, thereby helping us to sharpen up the analytical and terminological underpinnings of our own uncompromising revolutionary political line.

What can be the *purpose* of the IG's insistence on the supposed existence of a "popular front" around the PRD? It is perhaps instructive to consider that Stalin justified the suicidal liquidation of the Chinese Communists into the Guomintang by baptizing that bourgeois-nationalist party a "bloc of four classes." Writing of this in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928), Trotsky said:

"The celebrated idea of 'workers' and peasants' parties' seems to have been specially created to camouflage bourgeois parties which are compelled to seek support from the peasantry but who are also ready to absorb workers into their ranks. The Kuomintang has entered the annals of history for all time as a classic type of such a party."

In the process of seeking to defend its characterization of the Cardenistas as a popular front, the IG in effect liquidates any distinction between the proletariat—which Marxists understand is the only class with the social power and consistent class interest to *lead* the fight against capitalist class rule—and petty-bourgeois forces. Thus the IG lists the organized working class as just one more of an amorphous series of "rebellious sectors" as it speaks of "the subordination to the PRD of a whole range of trade-union, peasant, student, slum dwellers', women's and other organizations which do not form an organic part of that party." Where we say clearly that the PRD is a bourgeois-nationalist party and explicitly counterpose the need for a revolutionary party of the proletariat, the IG opens the door to discovering a hoped-for substitute for the revolutionary proletariat in student radicals, insurgent peasants or whatever is in motion at a given moment. Indeed, with this line the IG could define the petty-bourgeois guerrillaists of the EZLN as part of the workers movement.

Denying the centrality of the proletariat is tantamount to renouncing the program of permanent revolution. Indeed, it is notable that in its May 5 statement—its first piece of propaganda in Spanish—the IG "forgets" to say anything about the strategic importance of *permanent revolution* for countries like Mexico, which are subordinated to imperialism. They mention it at all only to complain that we denounced them for "forgetting" it in their earlier articles. As we observed in "Potemkin Village Idiocy" in reference to the IG, "Those who reject this perspective necessarily end up promoting or apologizing for cross-class blocs—popular fronts—with sections of the 'national' bourgeoisie in the name of an 'anti-imperialist united front'." To dump permanent revolution is a necessary precondition to the efforts at centrist "regroupment" with one or another denizen of the pro-PRD swamp which lie ahead for the IG in Mexico.

In an earlier polemic, the IG took exception to our having pointed to the heritage of feudal peonage in the Mexican countryside. In our response, in "Potemkin Village Idiocy," we pointed out that the only reason for the IG to bridle at this elementary Marxist observation is to shed the theory of permanent revolution. We noted that in practice this position "can only mean that the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard party cede leadership of the struggle around this [agrarian revolution] and issues such as debt peonage and

racism against the Indian peasant population to peasant-guerrilla populists like the Zapatistas."

The IG's repudiation in practice of the fight for the class independence of the proletariat in semicolonial countries was sharply expressed in the issue which prompted it to bring its centrist politics out into the open and break from the ICL. This was their passion to serve as apologists for the Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista group of Brazil (LM/LQB), with which the ICL formerly had fraternal relations. After losing a base in the steel workers union in the industrial city of Volta Redonda, the LM group turned to the municipal workers union, whose members include a large contingent of the murderous racist *cops*. Despite having no members in the union at the time, the LM/LQB became advisers to a grouping within its leadership and helped to braintrust a "leftist" slate of candidates whose (minimally distributed) electoral platform referred abstractly and in passing to the danger of cops in the unions but said nothing about the cops in *this particular union!* Moreover, the LQB went on to drag this union through the capitalist courts (see "IG's Brazil Cover-Up: Dirty Hands, Cynical Lies," *Workers Vanguard* No. 671, 11 July).

Forge a Proletarian Vanguard Party!

Revolutionary Marxists must fight for class-struggle unions, organized on the basis of industrial unionism and politically independent of the capitalist state and the capitalist political parties—not only the fairly decrepit PRI but equally the more dynamic and popular PRD. This includes as well a struggle to oust cops from the Mexican labor movement, including in "independent" unions like the Mexico City UNAM university workers and teachers union. The fight for genuine independence of the workers organizations from the bourgeois requires the forging of a revolutionary workers party.

The proletarian vanguard must lead the fight against all manifestations of social oppression, serving as a "tribune of the people." We fight for free abortion on demand as part of the struggle against the brutal oppression of women. This is integrally linked to the struggle to lift the heavy hand of the Catholic church, which foments reaction and bigotry throughout Mexican society, and to the call for full rights for homosexuals. Against the growing moves to turn the universities into elite preserves of the ruling class, we fight for open admissions and a living stipend for all students. Centrally, a revolutionary workers party must rally behind the proletariat the downtrodden rural masses, particularly including the deeply oppressed indigenous peoples. The working class must be mobilized to defend peasants against eviction by large landholders, and to lead a struggle for a thoroughgoing agrarian revolution.

The social power of the working class can be liberated only when the workers themselves, led by their revolutionary party, break the chains of subordination to bourgeois politics and the bourgeoisie's reformist lieutenants, who tie the workers' consciousness to the interests of the "national" bosses. Inculcating in the working class the need to embrace the program of permanent revolution and proletarian internationalism is the task of the communist proletarian party that Trotsky fought to build, in sharp struggle against every variety of reformist and centrist obstacles. That is the struggle of the International Communist League.

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 672, 8 August

Gypsies...

(continued from page 4)

back to Poland and the misery and persecution they sought to flee. Our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany and the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski (SGP) issued a joint statement against this racist treaty, appealing centrally to the organized working class to defend the Roma and Sinti.

In 1996, Polish police, acting at the behest of the ex-Stalinist social-democratic government, staged Gestapo-style raids of their own to deport Roma refugees. The SGP described in a protest statement how: "The bourgeois press was filled with praise for the cops and chilling calls for 'decontaminating' and 'disinfecting' the charred and subsequently bulldozed remains of the Roma settlement (recalling the systematic burning of 'Jewish beds' during the Nazi Holocaust)." Our comrades called for "urgent mass mobilizations by the workers movement to demand: *Hands off Roma/Sinti refugees! Stop the racist deportations! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!*"

Ottawa's Racist "Law and Order"

Seeking to assist Ottawa in keeping Roma refugees out of Canada, Czech premier Vaclav Klaus declared: "It is wrong for citizens of a free and democratic country to seek political asylum abroad." But what "freedom and democracy"—i.e., the restoration of capitalism—has meant for Roma in the Czech Republic is grinding poverty and fear. Following capitalist restoration in the former Czechoslovakia, unemployment among Czech Roma has soared to 60-70 percent. This impoverished minority faces murderous violence at the hands of the police and the bands of Nazi skinheads which have sprung up like mushrooms in the new, "democratic" Czech Republic. The International Helsinki Federation reported more than 20 attacks a month on Gypsies by racists and fascist gangs in 1996. And some 25,000 Roma lost their citizenship under a law passed just before the separation of the Czech and Slovak republics in 1993.

As one Roma refugee applicant said: "From a young age I have been living with racism, but since communism fell, it has been 100 percent worse." Small wonder, then, that many might see Canada as the "promised land." But imperialist Canada is no land of milk and honey for the few desperate refugees who manage to get in. Even as the anti-Roma hysteria was taking off in August, Salvadoran refugee Marfa Barahona was deported after spending 20 months in sanctuary with her five children in a Vancouver church basement.



Spartakist

June 1993: German Trotskyists demand "Full citizenship rights for immigrants!" and "Fourth Reich—Hands off Roma and Sinti!"

During the long civil war in El Salvador, Barahona and her two brothers were supporters of the leftist Popular Liberation Forces, an organization targeted for extermination by the government and right-wing death squads. Barahona's brothers were deported back to El Salvador in 1995: one disappeared, and one went into hiding until his death last year. We say: Stop the racist deportations to death!

Immigrants and refugees have been targeted by a racist "law and order" frenzy, made scapegoats for the unemployment, homelessness and poverty Canadian capitalism has created. The bourgeois rulers who live off the sweat of the workers have invented a new menace to "Canadian values": the bogey of "imported crime"—Jamaican "gangsters," Sikh "terrorists," Tamil "drug runners," and now Gypsy "thieves." This racist witchhunt whipped up by the ruling class and its yellow press serves to keep the multiracial working class divided along ethnic and national lines. In its own defense, organized labor must rise to the defense of the foreign-born. Let the Roma in! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees! ■

Salmon...

(continued from page 6)

from the Grand Banks. A recently released 1993 report by federal researchers revealed that Ottawa routinely manipulated scientific evidence to disguise this fact.

Yet even as Canadian and other capitalist fishery conglomerates rake the oceans for food fish, millions upon millions of people on the planet starve. Food is left to rot to drive up prices, while natural resources are plundered to maximize profit. The situation cries out for a rationally planned economy on an international scale. Only the overthrow of the irrational and exploitative system of capitalism by the international working class can lay the basis for a

planned, socialist economy based upon material plenty and the highest possible technological achievement.

"The working men have no country," wrote Karl Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*. This simple statement of proletarian internationalism has always been anathema to social democrats whose first loyalty is to the national interests of their capitalist masters. Transmitting the chauvinism and racism of the bourgeois rulers into the working class, the NDP and labor tops represent a crucial defense of the capitalist system of exploitation. It is urgently necessary to build a revolutionary workers party which fights all forms of chauvinism, racism and bigotry, and unites the struggles of working people in Canada, the U.S. and beyond in the fight for socialist revolution. ■

Smash Tory War...

(continued from page 24)

Hampton jailed striking Toronto postal union leaders for defending their picket lines. His idol is Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party and newly elected prime minister in Britain. While enforcing the anti-union laws of the previous Tory government, Blair is moving to sever Labour's ties to the unions and remodel it as a bourgeois party like the Democratic Party in the United States.

Workers and the oppressed need a fighting alternative to the pro-capitalist labor tops and social democrats, who betray and mislead their struggles and enforce the capitalists' austerity attacks. It is necessary to build a revolutionary party based on the program and principles of Marxism—a party which fights every manifestation of oppression and injustice, imbuing the working people with the understanding of the necessity to shatter all the chains of capitalist class rule.

Tory Offensive and the Left

Inspired by the "Days of Action," various self-styled "revolutionary socialist" groups have been prodding the OFL bureaucracy for more militancy and bigger actions. Some, notably Socialist Action and the International Socialists (I.S.), have been demanding that the OFL launch a province-wide general strike to "kick out the Tories." Their call might sound like a militant, class-struggle answer to the Harris government's attacks. But it isn't—it's a *posture*, intended to mask deeply NDP-loyal politics.

This was expressed with particular clarity by Socialist Action leader Barry Weisleder, himself a middle-level bureaucrat in the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). Following the postponement of the Windsor "Day of Action," Weisleder complained:

"The possibility of an early June federal election was enough to spook organizers with the fear that workers could not campaign for the New Democratic Party and plan an anti-Tory protest in Windsor at the same time.

"Why not, is not totally clear. Fighting both the federal Liberal and provincial Conservative governments, which jointly attack public services and workers' rights, seems only logical. In fact, making the links between the bosses' parties in this way could show more powerfully that only the NDP potentially represents an alternative for working people."

—*Socialist Action*, Summer 1997

Thus Socialist Action portrays more and bigger mass protest, leading to a province-wide general strike, as the best way to sell the NDP as the workers' "alternative."

The I.S.'s *Socialist Worker* (21 June) says: "We need to demand that the OFL leaders stop their backsliding and build the real fight that we need...." We don't recall the I.S. demanding a general strike against the attacks of the Rae NDP government—in fact, they called on workers to re-elect it! Like the OFL tops, the I.S. went all out for the New Democrats in the June federal election, and they've made clear that they'll do the same again provincially in 1999.

These outfits portray a general strike as a "militant" pressure tactic, whose aim is to replace Harris with an NDP government. Socialist Action, the I.S. et al. take their cue from these "big time" social democrats, whose fundamental worldview they share. This is reflected at a very basic level in their disdain for picket lines. Any good unionist, let alone a socialist, knows that strike pickets are the basic battle lines of the class struggle and mean "do not cross." But this ABC of

labor solidarity has been vitiated for decades by the labor misleaders through deliberately porous "informational" pickets and outright strikebreaking. In turn, the I.S. and Socialist Action openly justify crossing picket lines.

Last year, members of the ISO, the American co-thinkers of the I.S., blithely waltzed across the picket lines of striking building maintenance workers in New York. And Socialist Action leader Weisleder personally tried to bust through a picket line of striking OPSSU workers in Toronto (see "'Socialist Action' Leader Caught Scabbing," SC No. 113). It takes chutzpah to holler for a "province-wide general strike" when you think respecting picket lines is "optional"!

Then there's the question of the capitalist state. Marxists understand that the cops and prison guards are core components of this apparatus of repression, which exists to defend the rule of the tiny class of bourgeois parasites. The capitalist state cannot be "reformed" or "taken over" and used by the workers and oppressed; it must be smashed through socialist revolution. Yet jail guards, along with private security guards, are "organized" by OFL unions, and the OFL has even urged the police "unions" to join them in anti-Tory protests! The notion that the armed thugs of the capitalist state are "fellow workers" whose "struggles" should be supported is deadly dangerous. Just recall how Ontario Provincial Police thugs beat strike pickets during last year's OPSEU strike.

The I.S. support the presence of prison and security guards in the unions. They even hailed provincial jail guards as the "militant" vanguard of the OPSEU strike. In the course of that strike, the OPSEU screws subjected inmates to a lockdown and, when prisoners staged a protest, rushed in from their picket lines to suppress it! As for the police, the I.S. encourages them to "rebel collectively." But the cops "rebel collectively" only to demand more firepower and broader license to kill. To encourage their "rebellion" is to reinforce these thugs' view that they are a law unto themselves. Worse yet, *Socialist Action* (Spring-Summer 1996) praises the Metropolitan Toronto Police for acting as "benign mediators" during the OPSEU strike. These are the same cops who have unleashed a reign of racist terror against black youth and other minorities in Toronto.

In sharp contrast to these reformist "socialists," we wrote on the eve of the OPSEU strike:

"To win labor's battles, worker militants need to know where the class line is drawn—who our allies are, and who our enemies are.... The jails are already full of black youth, Native and poor people, reflecting the brutal racism of capitalist class 'justice.' In periods of social struggle, the prison population is swelled by union militants—like former CUPW local president Andre Kolompar, imprisoned by the NDP during the last postal strike. *Get the jailer thugs out of OPSEU!*"

—SC No. 108, March/April 1996

We Need a Revolutionary Workers Party

Because their vision does not extend beyond the social-democratic "reform" of capitalism, the fake-lefts' maximum criticism of the labor bureaucracy and the NDP is their "cowardice" and "treachery." But the labor tops are not merely craven: they function as agents of the class enemy within the workers movement. The role of these "labor lieutenants of capital" is to keep working-class struggle within bounds acceptable to the master class. They carry out this task not least by poisoning the working people with the crippling and divisive ideologies of the bourgeoisie—e.g., national chauvinism and racism.

BT: Scabs and Frauds

In the latest issue of its journal *1917* (No. 19, dated "1997"), the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) denounces our interventions around the Ontario labor "Days of Action" as "a caricature of sectarianism." The BT claims that we call on the working class to "stoically endure rightist attacks" while they, in contrast, are "intervening in the actual class struggle" by demanding a general strike to bring down Harris. This from an outfit whose most recent intervention "in the actual class struggle" was to scab on a building workers strike in New York City—and then issue a pamphlet "justifying" their crossing of picket lines! It's pretty hard to build a general strike when you can't even respect the most elementary line of the class struggle.

The BT journal includes "excerpts" from a 1974 article on Britain in our paper *Workers Vanguard*, in which we called for "a general strike for limited, defensive aims." According to the BT, the fact that we called for a general strike amid the pivotal 1974 British miners strike but have not raised such a call in the Ontario "Days of Action" proves that we have undergone definitive "degeneration." Their claim is fraudulent at every level.

Britain in 1974 was wracked by a nationwide political crisis. By choking off coal supplies, the miners strike led to the closure of large sections of industry. In response, the Tory government imposed a national lockout (three-day work week). The ruling class was deeply split over how to deal with an explosion of workers struggle. In calling for a defensive general strike to reverse the Tories' policies and bring them down, we emphasized that "should such a strike be victorious, even under reformist leaders and despite their inevitable attempts to sabotage the struggle, it would then open up a pre-revolutionary situation."

The BT's "excerpts" omit the entire second half of our 1974 article which, among other things, raised the call for a "Labour Party/TUC [Trades Union Congress] government pledged to a socialist program of expropriating the capitalist class." This was an explicitly *anti-parliamentary* call, designed to expose the pro-capitalist Labour and

TUC leaders and show the need for a revolutionary alternative. Contrast this to the BT's formula for a general strike in Ontario today, which is explicitly for nothing more than a parliamentary shuffle:

"Without significant popular unrest, any new Liberal, NDP or coalition government would probably leave them [the Tory 'reforms'] in place, as Chrétien did with Mulroney's GST. If, on the other hand, Harris is brought down through mass strike action, the government that replaces him will have to be a lot more cautious."

For the BT, a general strike is necessary in order to win...a "more cautious" bourgeois government in Queen's Park.

By its very nature, a countrywide general strike poses the question of *power*—which class shall rule, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? Although what is being addressed here is a provincial general strike, since Ontario is the industrial and economic heartland of Canada such a strike would necessarily reverberate throughout the country. For the BT, however, appeals for an Ontario-wide general strike serve the same purpose as the labor bureaucrats' calls for local one-day actions: they are nothing more than pressure tactics aimed at a parliamentary shake-up.

The BT uses "general strike"-mongering as a fake-militant cover as they sow illusions in the labor tops, whom they criticize for little more than being "cowardly." The problem with the labor bureaucrats isn't a lack of guts, but their *political* role in tying the workers, through the vehicle of the NDP, to the ruling class and its system of exploitation. As we wrote in an earlier polemic against the BT and their ilk ("Left' Charlatans and the General Strike," *SC* No. 111, Winter 1996/97): "The fight against the many attacks of the Harris government requires mobilizing the social power of the labor movement at the head of all the oppressed. However, the key to victory is not mindless appeals for more and bigger 'action' from the pro-capitalist labor tops but the fight for a new, revolutionary leadership which can rally all of the many victims of capitalism in class struggle." ■

A successful struggle against Mike Harris and the capitalist ruling class he represents cannot be waged simply on the basis of more "militancy" in "defense of social programs," or in pursuit of simple economic demands. It is necessary to take up demands in defense of all the oppressed. Key among such demands are full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees and opposition to Ottawa's racist deportations. Militant workers must oppose the NAFTA "free trade" rape of Mexico, fighting for united internationalist workers struggle.

A major obstacle to class struggle in this country is the deep animosity created by the national oppression of Quebec and the chauvinist tirades of the English Canadian ruling class. The NDP in particular is a stalwart defender of "Canadian unity" and an enemy of the national rights of the Québécois people. The working class must stand foursquare against Anglo chauvinism and support independence for Quebec, thereby laying a basis for directing social struggle against the capitalist rulers in both nations.

To mobilize youth, the poor and the unemployed, labor must demand: Jobs for all at union wages! Share the available work among all hands—for a shorter workweek at no

loss in pay! For a massive unionization campaign to organize the unorganized! Down with "workfare"—for welfare at a living wage! Against the ravaging of health care, education and child care, it is necessary to fight for free quality health care for all, open admissions with free tuition to universities and colleges, and free 24-hour child care. All these demands mean a frontal assault on the capitalists' "right" to profit. Realizing them requires seizing industry out of their hands and reorganizing society in the interests of the vast majority, based on a socialist planned economy.

As the revolutionary leaders Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin explained, the proletariat as a class "in itself" must become a class "for itself"—one which understands that the road to its own liberation and that of all humanity lies through the destruction of capitalist class rule. That task requires the construction of a revolutionary workers party which gives conscious leadership to the struggles of the workers, not only to defend and improve their present conditions but to sweep away the whole system of capitalist wage-slavery. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste is fighting to build such a party. Join us! ■

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Smash Tory War on Workers and Poor!

The last round of union “Days of Action” in Ontario gave a taste of the tremendous potential power of organized labor. As half a dozen cities were shut down one after another, the huge mobilizations increasingly drew the unemployed, student youth, immigrants and refugees into united protest. In Toronto last October, pickets turned strikebreaking court injunctions into scraps of paper. Properly directed, this is the kind of social power which could defeat the vicious attacks of Mike Harris’ provincial Tory government.

But the Tory assault continues unabated. Tens of thousands of public-sector jobs have been axed; slave-labor “workfare” has been introduced; a quarter of all hospitals in Toronto are being closed. Now Harris is moving to ban strikes and impose contracts on nearly 500,000 teachers, municipal and health-care workers. This is part of a giant “restructuring” scheme which includes widespread privatizations, union decertifications and thousands more job cuts.

Across the province, teacher and public employee unions are threatening protest strikes, and more “Days of Action” have been called. But the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) leaders have no intention of leading a struggle which can smash the Tory attacks. Instead, the union tops *accept* the need for “restructuring” cuts, and seek only to negotiate over terms and timing. Thus Judy Darcy, national president of the CUPE public employees union, boasted at a recent OFL emergency convention how CUPE had agreed to numerous cutbacks and layoffs “without disruptions.”

Labor’s power cannot truly be brought to bear against the current onslaught without the understanding that the interests of the working class—who produce all the wealth in this society—are irreconcilably opposed to those of the capitalist owners of industry and commerce. The union bureaucracy operates as mediators in this ongoing conflict between labor and capital. Accepting as legitimate the interests of capitalism, they seek to confine class struggle within the limits imposed by the class enemy. Thus, despite the size and militancy of the “Days of Action,” the OFL bureaucrats never intended them as anything more than an “extraparliamentary” diversion, designed to buy time for the revival of their



Bill Sanford/Canada Wide

Union “Day of Action” in London, Ontario, December 1995. Working class has social power to defeat capitalist austerity attacks.

“political arm,” the social-democratic NDP.

Power Workers chief John Murphy declared straight up: “Where we’re going to beat Harris is at the ballot box, not walking up and down University Avenue.” A planned “Day of Action” in Windsor—stronghold of the “militant” CAW auto workers brass—was abruptly postponed in June so the spectre of class struggle would not haunt the New Democrats during the federal election campaign. Yet it was the NDP which directly paved the way for the Harris onslaught. With its notorious Social Contract, Bob Rae’s 1990-95 Ontario NDP government ripped up union contracts and instituted across-the-board wage cuts. In a flagrantly racist move, it canceled medicare for foreign students and threatened the same for refugees. Today, NDP provincial regimes in B.C. and Saskatchewan are instituting “workfare,” closing hospitals, attacking immigrants and Native people and whipping up chauvinism against Quebec—just like Mike Harris.

At the emergency OFL convention, pride of place was given to Ontario NDP leader Howard Hampton. Five years ago, as provincial attorney-general in the Rae cabinet,

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