

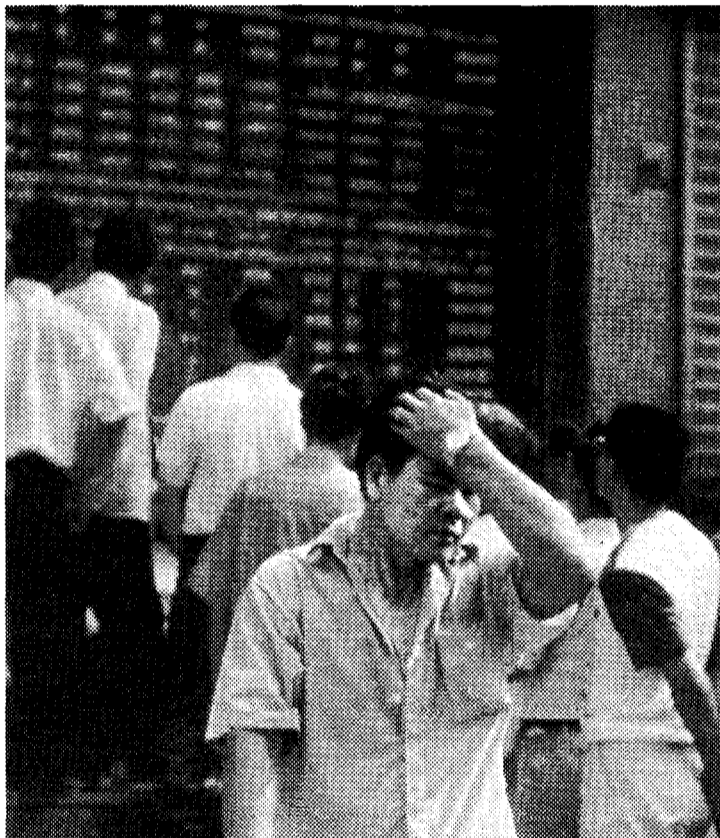
## Capitalist Greed Fuels Worker Unrest

# Crisis Rocks Southeast Asia

TOKYO, November 8—The cascading financial crisis which began in Thailand last summer, rapidly engulfing the capitalist regimes of Southeast Asia, is now threatening to spread throughout the western Pacific Rim. After months of economic turmoil and burgeoning street demonstrations, the Thai government resigned earlier this week. The past month has seen significant strikes by workers in the Philippines against the ravages of currency devaluation, fueling political instability in the run-up to presidential elections next spring, as well as in Indonesia, where the Suharto dictatorship has faced growing popular unrest since last year. Meanwhile, as the *International Herald Tribune* (6 November) reports, "South Korea is plunging deeper into a financial crisis that may soon dwarf those in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia." The growing turbulence has raised deep fears among the capitalist rulers of Japan—the principal industrial and financial power in the region—whose economy has been in a severe slump since the start of the decade.

The drastic fall in Thailand's currency, the baht, which began in July, touched off a chain reaction of devaluations and stock market crashes—extending to Hong Kong, Tokyo and Wall Street—simultaneously exploding the myth of the Southeast Asian "economic miracle." Following earlier industrial development in South Korea, over the past two decades there has been massive imperialist investment in the Asian "tigers," centrally by Japanese capital. But, as we noted last issue, "The recent economic boom in East Asia, like all such capitalist booms, generated a drive for ever-greater profits and resulting financial speculation which could not be sustained. It had to crash, and it did crash" ("Black Monday II on Wall Street—'Death of Communism' Myth Goes Splat," *WV* No. 677, 31 October).

The immediate cause for this series of crashes has a lot to do with China, now dubbed the new Asian "dragon." The baht started to fall a day after Hong Kong returned to Chinese control, with the bureaucratic regime in Beijing vowing to maintain the capitalist economy of the former British colony. Dominated by the increasingly powerful Chinese bourgeoisie expelled from the mainland by the 1949 Revolution, Hong Kong is a key gateway for capitalist restoration in the Chinese deformed workers state. As the venal Stalinist bureaucracy accelerates capitalist "market reforms," low-wage labor in privately owned factories on the mainland is greatly undercutting



Jones/Sinopix



Reuters

As stock markets crashed throughout Southeast Asia, financial crisis sparked strikes and protests. Right: September 14 workers' protest in Bangkok demands resignation of Thai prime minister.

## For a Socialist Federation of Southeast Asia!

exports from Thailand, Indonesia and elsewhere. The danger of looming counterrevolution was underscored by the effusive welcome by American political and business leaders for Chinese president Jiang Zemin, who visited the U.S. shortly after announcing a plan to privatize the bulk of state-owned industry.

The urgent need for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Beijing bureaucracy and stop the galloping threat of capitalist restoration is today posed pointblank. The fate of China—as well as of the Vietnamese and North Korean deformed workers states—is integrally linked to the region as a whole. Just as the Industrial Revolution beginning in the late 18th century gave birth to what Karl Marx called the gravedigger of the capitalist system—the industrial working

class—so too economic development in Southeast Asia has created a vibrant, young proletariat from Thailand to Indonesia to the Philippines. The road to the emancipation of these workers, and with them the peasantry and oppressed ethnic/national minorities, lies in the fight for a socialist federation of Southeast Asia, linked to the struggle for proletarian revolution in Japan, the U.S. and other imperialist powers.

### U.S.-Japan Rivalry Heats Up

In large part, the industrial boom in Southeast Asia resulted from the massive shift by Japanese corporations to producing electrical appliances, automobiles and other commodities in the region. This process was accelerated following the 1985 Plaza Accord, which the U.S.

pushed in order to cut its trade deficit with Japan. In doubling the value of the yen against the U.S. dollar, increasing the price of Japanese exports, the accord impelled the Japanese bourgeoisie both to step up attacks on labor at home and to sharply expand production facilities in low-wage areas. Japanese capital now accounts for more than a third of all foreign investment in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

While rampant speculation helped touch off the recent currency devaluations, there were more fundamental factors at work. While the economies of the region are closely tied to Japan, the currencies—including, until July, the baht—are pegged to the U.S. dollar. Until recently, Tokyo was able to maintain the yen's edge against the dollar. But when the yen dropped precipitously against the dollar, Thai, Indonesian and Malaysian exports became much more expensive in Japan. With the sharp rise in exports of Chinese manufactured goods, the previously astronomical growth rates of the "tiger" economies slowed to a crawl this year.

Southeast Asia has today become a key theater for renewed interimperialist rivalries—between not only the U.S. and Japan but also Germany, which is rapidly

*continued on page 10*

**Spartacist League Debates Argentine PBCI**

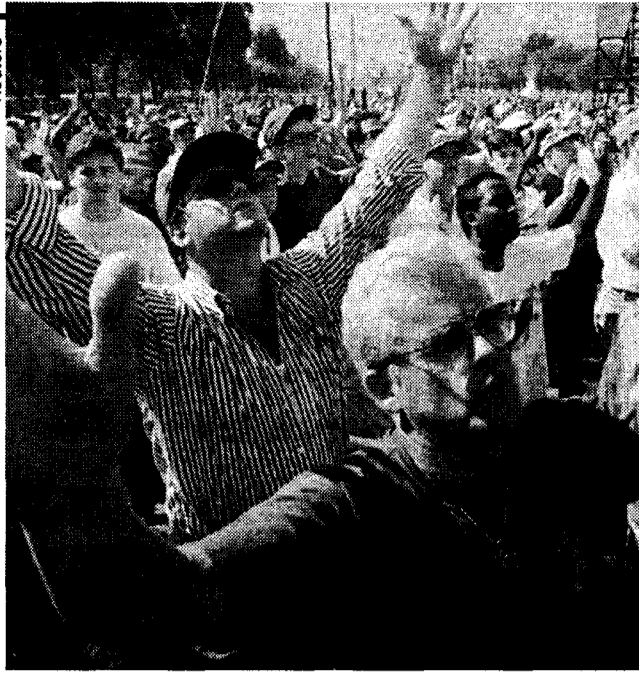
**Trotskyism vs. Nationalism  
in Latin America**

SEE PAGE 4



# PL in Promise Keeper Land

Reuters



Washington, D.C. rally of sinister, right-wing Promise Keepers—what was PL doing there?

“What Were PLP Communists Doing in the Midst of the PK Fascist Gathering?” That bizarre question was raised by none other than the Progressive Labor Party (PL) itself, headlining an amazing report in *Challenge* (15 October) on how these oh-so-revolutionary “Communists” actually tried to sell their paper to the October 4 Washington, D.C. rally of the Christian revivalist, men-only Promise Keepers. “All of us felt a little intimidated,” the author admits, but you see, “the majority of the people there were workers, and...we have to win them away from this fascist movement.”

Promise Keepers is not, as PL has it, fascist, but it's sinister enough. Headed by former college football coach Bill McCartney, Promise Keepers uses locker-room oratory and pep-rally melodrama to push deeply reactionary politics. McCart-

ney, who was prominent in opposing a Colorado gay rights bill in 1992, raves, “Homosexuality is an abomination of Almighty God.” Hundreds of thousands of men have been drawn to rallies which fanatically promote the patriarchal, authoritarian family in which the man obeys the Almighty and the wife obeys her husband. “There can be no compromise here,” its followers are told: “You must lead.”

The *Challenge* article reported how its sales team also dropped in on a counterdemonstration organized by the bourgeois-feminist National Organization for Women (NOW), dubbed “liberal style fascism” by PL. Taking Stalin's “third period” notion of “social fascism” to its extreme logic, PL habitually labels virtually every movement other than its own as some sort of “fascism.” Despite its

constant calls for “Revolution, Revolution, Communist Revolution!” PL has little sense of the class line. The recent UPS strike, the first significant break in two decades of working-class defeats, was seen by PL as “mainly a battle between two sets of bosses” (*Challenge*, 24 September). And a recent contribution by one “Red Deacon” on the letters page, which is where PL's current line is generally expounded, argued for building “a base in the enemy's organizations: unions, churches, military, etc.” So why not mingle with a nest of outright retrogrades like the Promise Keepers?

PL is rarely seen at broader leftist rallies where its members might actually have to defend their politics. In the 30-plus years since its cadre split from the staidly reformist Communist Party for abandoning Stalin's supposed “militant revolutionary line,” PL has regularly swung back and forth between—or combined—crude ultraleftism and craven reformism, sometimes writing off any struggle for reforms and otherwise pushing “center-left” coalitions with low-level union bureaucrats or the openly liberal campaigns against racist textbooks. These gyrations have tended to engender cynicism and a disregard for history—not to say for reality—among PL's membership.

Given its own reactionary line on social questions and “family values,” there was some political logic to PL's presence at the Promise Keepers' pray-in. Early on, PL railed against “movements which unite with drug addicts and homosexuals” (*Progressive Labor*, February 1971), and to this day the group has a policy of excluding gays from membership. Celebrating Stalin's glorification of the institution of the family—one of the aspects of the Stalinist political counter-revolution which began in 1923-24 and destroyed the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky—PL pushed the line that the family is a “fighting unit for socialism.” In this, PL—and Stalin—explicitly repudiated the Marxist understanding of the family, developed in Friedrich Engels' *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, as a fundamental social prop for the maintenance of class society and the main social institution for the oppression of women.

For all of PL's ranting against “liberal fascism,” its latest orientation is in keeping with the generally benign treatment

Promise Keepers has recently gotten from the bourgeois media and politicians, including Democratic president Clinton. Thus, while the pro-Democratic Party NOW described Promise Keepers as “the third wave of the religious right,” NOW head Patricia Ireland nonetheless absurdly appealed to these anti-woman reactionaries to make a “promise to respect women's equality.” This sort of response led liberal columnist Katha Pollitt to moan in the *Nation* (27 October), “Where's the cynical secular liberal East Coast media elite when you really need it?”

What was striking about the Promise Keepers rally is that this reactionary, overwhelmingly white movement managed to attract some thousands of blacks and other minorities. This is a reflection of the line being pushed by middle-class black “leaders” today—from the *Nation* of Islam's Louis Farrakhan to Democratic Party stalwart Jesse Jackson—that black people have to “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps” to overcome the oppression, poverty and degradation they suffer under this racist capitalist system. The bourgeois rulers, who are raking in enormous profits while slashing social welfare programs across the board, loved the message of “atonement” and self-blame pushed by Farrakhan's reactionary Million Man March. And former Queens Democratic Congressman Floyd Flake, for example, urges black people to turn the other cheek in the face of attacks on affirmative action and welfare, preaching: “There was a time when we lived without it, and if they take it away, we can live without it again!” (*New York Times Magazine*, 19 October).

PL's primitive moralism and its wallowing in bigotry and backwardness—buttressed by depicting the average worker as a none-too-bright, lumbering Joe Six-Pack—have taken it some pretty strange places over the years. But, in the face of the bourgeoisie's trumpeting of the “death of communism,” this Stalinoid outfit seems to be getting increasingly unhinged. As part of our fight for socialist revolution, the Spartacist League opposes all manifestations of religious mysticism and racial and sexual oppression. We seek to mobilize the multiracial proletariat to seize power and put an end to oppression and exploitation for all through the creation of a classless, socialist society. ■

## The Anarchy of Capitalist Production

*The financial crisis currently rocking Southeast Asia and extending to stock markets internationally underscores the anarchic and crisis-ridden nature of the capitalist mode of production. In the Communist Manifesto, written 150 years ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained how capitalism had developed an international system of production and exchange which constantly came up against the fetters of the*



TROTSKY



LENIN

*bourgeois nation-state. Today, capitalism has long since outlived any progressive role, fostering ever deeper immiseration of the working masses and the danger of further inter-imperialist wars. We fight to forge the international revolutionary party necessary to lead the working class to power around the globe.*

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations....

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed....

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (1848)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 678

14 November 1997

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### Build PDC Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners!

"The labor movement must be awakened from its slumber and must be roused to the menacing significance of the attempt of the capitalists to break the morale of the working class by imprisoning its best fighters. The workers must not be allowed to forget those who lie in prison for them, but must be stirred into action in their defense.

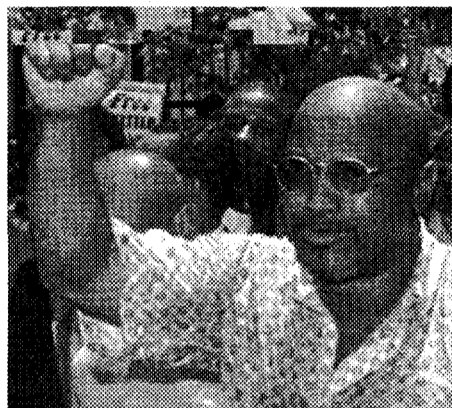
"The International Labor Defense will take the initiative to organize a widespread campaign for the unconditional release of imprisoned fighters of the class struggle and will endeavor to unite all the forces of conscious and militant labor for this fight."

This statement, adopted at the first conference of the International Labor Defense (ILD) in June 1925, remains the aim of the Partisan Defense Committee today. This is the PDC's twelfth annual "Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners." When the PDC initiated our stipend program and Holiday Appeal fundraising in 1986, we were in fact reviving a tradition of the ILD and its founder and early leader, James P. Cannon. The ILD, the American affiliate of the International Red Aid, was born in discussions between Cannon and Bill Haywood, a leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Moscow in 1925. Haywood had gone into exile in Moscow after being convicted—along with thousands of other members of the IWW and the antiwar wing of the Socialist Party—for his opposition to World War I. These discussions resulted in a fusion of the internationalism of the Russian Revolution with Haywood and Cannon's shared IWW heritage of militant labor struggle and non-sectarian defense.

Our annual Holiday Appeal fund drive sustains the monthly stipend program for 16 class-war prisoners and provides holiday gifts for them and their loved ones. For while these courageous fighters endure the punishment meted out to them by the ruling class day after day, they also must endure the pain of watching from afar as their children grow into

young adulthood without them.

**Geronimo out after 27 years in prison hell!** On June 10, a jubilant crowd of 400 thronged around Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), one of the PDC's original class-war stipend recipients, as he walked out of



Reuters

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt)

jail. He was released on bail when an Orange County Superior Court judge ruled that he was denied a fair trial in 1972. But Geronimo is still not free. He has the legal status of someone charged with a crime but not yet convicted, as the Los Angeles D.A. has filed notice to appeal the decision. All supporters of this fighter for black rights must join in demanding: Drop the charges now!

#### Not Charity—An Act of Solidarity with Those in Prison

The class-war prisoners who receive stipends from the PDC today are from many different political backgrounds. All of them have fought and continue to fight against racist and capitalist oppression:

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!** December 1997 marks 16 years of Jamal's imprisonment on frame-up charges. Former Black Panther, well-known journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless," MOVE supporter—Jamal was framed up on false charges of killing a Philadelphia

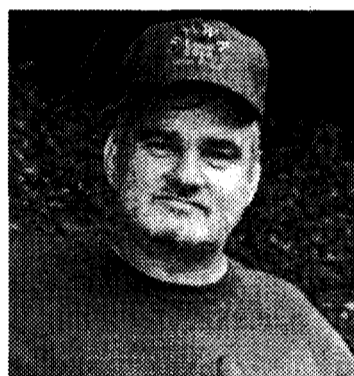
cop and sentenced to die for his political beliefs and his defiance of the racist capitalist order. Jamal's case has won support from death penalty abolitionists and anti-racist fighters around the world. A rising tide of demonstrations and protests in the summer of 1995 stayed the executioner's hand for a time.

Over the past two years Veronica Jones, an eyewitness in the 1981 shooting, and Pamela Jenkins, a government witness in the infamous "39th District" Philly cop scandal, have come forward to provide powerful evidence of police coercion that forced Jones and others to give false testimony favoring the prosecution at Jamal's 1982 trial.

Another chapter in the deadly state vendetta against Mumia is the mandatory 15-year federal sentence on bogus weapons charges faced by his 26-year-old son, Jamal Hart, who was convicted in mid-October. Mumia adopted the surname Abu-Jamal—"father of Jamal"—when his son was born. A prominent fighter for his father's freedom, Jamal Hart is the victim of a transparent frame-up.

Mumia's case is currently on appeal before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. He continues to fight from behind bars with his biting commentaries, which are published in newspapers across the country, and his books, *Live from Death Row* and *Death Blossoms*. All opponents of the racist death penalty must mobilize now to save Jamal's life and fight for his freedom. Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!

**Jerry Dale Lowe** is a United Mine Workers member framed up on federal charges in the 1993 shooting death of a scab contractor in Logan County, West Virginia. The scab was part of a convoy leaving the struck mine, and was shot in the back of the head from the direction of armed thugs hired by the bosses.



WV Photo

Jerry Dale Lowe

Lowe was singled out by authorities because he was a militant defender of the picket line. Sentenced in 1994 to almost eleven years in prison with no possibility of parole, Lowe was released pending an appeal, then forced back to federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky in January 1996. This fall, Lowe filed a petition in federal court to overturn his conviction based on inadequate legal representation and the withholding of evidence by federal prosecutors.

**Ed Poindexter**, 54, and **Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa**, 51, are former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha, Nebraska Committee to Combat Fascism. Victims of the FBI's racist COINTELPRO terror operation,



WV Photo

Mumia Abu-Jamal

they were framed up for an explosion in 1970 which killed a cop. Both were convicted on perjured testimony and sentenced to life. The Nebraska Board of Pardons refuses to commute their sentences to a specific number of years, which would allow them to be considered for parole. Poindexter is at Lino Lake, Minnesota and Mondo is at Lincoln, Nebraska.

**Jaan Laaman** and **Ray Luc Levasseur** of the Ohio 7 are radical activists with a shared history of opposition to racism and imperialism, and were arrested in 1984 and 1985, respectively. They were sentenced to 45 years to life under RICO conspiracy laws on allegations of bank expropriations and bombings targeting symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late 1970s and '80s. Jaan Laaman is at Leavenworth, Kansas and Ray Luc Levasseur is in the Administrative Maximum (ADX) high-tech torture chamber at Florence, Colorado.

**Hugo Pinell** is the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. A militant anti-racist, he was a leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson, who was murdered by prison guards in 1971. Pinell has languished in prison for over 30 years and was recently again denied parole. He is currently serving a life sentence at the notorious Pelican Bay prison in Crescent City, California.

Nine MOVE members are in their 20th year in Pennsylvania prisons, serving sentences of 30 to 100 years. They were falsely convicted of killing a police officer in the 1978 police attack on their Philadelphia home. They are **Chuck Africa** and **Michael Davis Africa**, Graterford; **Debbie Sims Africa**, **Janet Holloway Africa**, **Janine Phillips Africa**, **Merle Austin Africa**, Cambridge Springs; **Edward Goodman Africa**, Camp Hill; **Delbert Orr Africa** and **William Phillips Africa**, Dallas.

#### Send Your Contributions to the PDC Now!

All proceeds collected for the Holiday Appeal will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252.

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization that champions cases and causes in the interests of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. ■

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# Spartacist League Debates Argentine PBCI

## Trotskyism vs. Nationalism in Latin America

A hallmark of a Leninist-Trotskyist party is the fight for programmatic clarity—internally against the inevitable pressures of bourgeois society and externally to expose before the proletariat all false pretenders, especially of the centrist variety, to the mantle of revolutionary Marxism. In this spirit, on March 15 the San Francisco Bay Area district of the Spartacist League/U.S. took up an impromptu debate challenge from a visiting representative of the Partido Bolchevique por la Cuarta Internacional (PBCI) of Argentina. As was clear in this debate, the pseudo-Trotskyist PBCI is a quintessential example of Trotsky's description of centrism as revolutionary in words and reformist in deeds.

Then calling itself the Partido de los Trabajadores (PT), the PBCI emerged from a split in late 1988 from Jorge Altamira's Partido Obrero (PO). In April 1989, the PT/PBCI wrote us with the aim of opening a discussion. Their letter asserted agreement with our polemic against Bolivian fake Trotskyist Guillermo Lora and his capitulation to bourgeois nationalism ("Revolution and Counterrevolution in Bolivia," *Spartacist* [Spanish-language edition] No. 18, October 1986). For its part, the PT/PBCI had written documents upholding the Trotskyist Transitional Program and criticizing the "anti-imperialist united front," the favored rubric of Latin American centrists and reformists for subordination to their "own" bourgeoisies. The group was then also reconsidering some of the more overtly anti-Soviet positions it had inherited from Altamira's PO.

Following a series of letters and some direct discussions, in March 1992 the PBCI and the International Communist League signed an "Agreement for Further Discussion" mandating a written and verbal exchange of views open only to the memberships of the two organizations. Among the issues to be debated were the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war between Argentina and Britain, the class character of the states in the Soviet Union and East Europe and the questions of Afghanistan and Poland.

The PBCI subsequently demonstrated that its political trajectory was contrary to the Trotskyist program defended by the ICL (see "Discussions Between the ICL and the PBCI of Argentina," *ICL International Information Bulletin* No.

31, October 1992). Indicating its political appetites, the PBCI informed us that it was involved in intense organizational discussions with the "International Bolshevik Tendency" (IBT). The IBT was formed primarily by embittered ex-members of ours who, under the pressures of anti-Soviet imperialist revanchism during the early 1980s, wanted no part of an organization that genuinely stood for the unconditional defense of the

based split from the decomposing IBT. The CBCI now also includes the Chilean Grupo Bolchevique.

The CBCI says it is Bolshevik. In its programmatic theses, it claims to stand for the class independence of the proletariat and to uncompromisingly oppose popular fronts, class-collaborationist coalitions of workers parties and bourgeois formations. It claims to recognize the need for a Leninist party that fights to mobilize the

Labourite social democracy but bourgeois nationalism. Thus, one of the early differences we noted with the PBCI was its chauvinist position supporting its own bourgeoisie in the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war.

As we have experienced firsthand through our own intervention in the workers movement in Brazil, the gap between the sometimes orthodox-sounding statements of the CBCI groups and their actual practice is breathtaking. They profess to be for the independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois state and to be firm opponents of racism. Yet a prominent supporter of the LBI, Artur Fernandes, seized control of the SFPMVR municipal workers union in Volta Redonda, Brazil by championing the "right" of the racist cops to be in this union and by using the bourgeois courts against his political opponents within the union!

Both the Falklands/Malvinas war and the question of the cops featured prominently in the Bay Area debate. The main speaker for the Spartacist League was Jorge Ramírez, while Sergio Romero spoke for the PBCI and was supported by the CWG, whose members also attended the debate. Under the format proposed by the SL, each side was allotted five speakers during the floor discussion. While a range of speakers—including from the Spartacus Youth Club—spoke for the SL from the floor, Romero took three of the PBCI's five speaking slots in addition to his presentation and summary time, providing a vivid example of the Latin American fake left's penchant for *caudillismo*.

### Falklands/Malvinas: Acid Test for Argentine Left

In the spring of 1982, the Argentine military junta of General Galtieri and the viciously anti-working-class British government of Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher went to war over a handful of rocky islands controlled by Britain and claimed by Argentina. Located on the edge of the Antarctic some 300 miles from the Argentine coast and inhabited by only 1,800 people, mainly sheep farmers, the Falklands/Malvinas were of marginal economic importance. This squalid war was manufactured as a *diversion* by two unpopular, reactionary regimes. In this situation, the task of Leninists in Britain and Argentina was to call for the defeat



Workers Hammer

**Spartacist League/Britain called for defeat of Thatcher government in 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war, fighting for Leninist revolutionary defeatism on both sides in this reactionary war.**

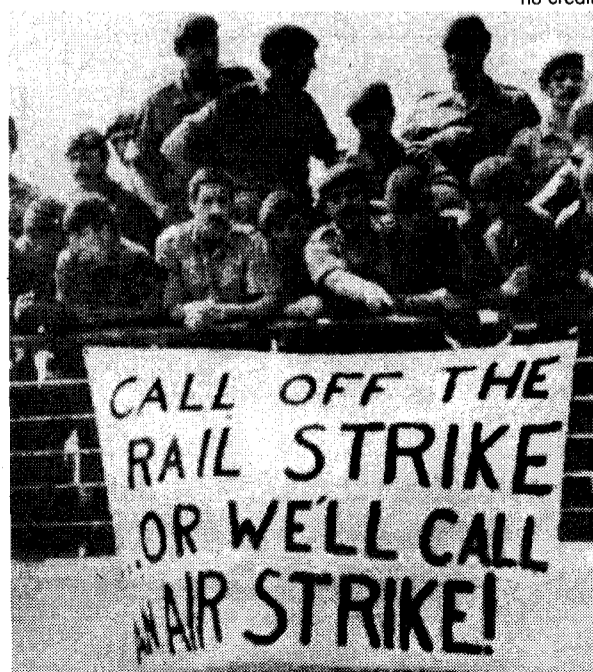
USSR against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution.

The issue of possible political convergence between the ICL and PBCI had clearly been resolved in the negative. In a 3 July 1993 letter, the ICL informed the PBCI that "at the same time as we reaffirm our interest in continuing to discuss, we are forced to conclude that this no longer corresponds to the restricted framework and privileged character laid out in our agreements of 6 March of last year, and we will act according to the now obvious situation."

In early 1996, the PBCI glued together a hodge-podge alliance known as the Bolshevik Current for the Fourth International (CBCI) with the Brazilian centrists of the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI) and the tiny Communist Workers Group (CWG), a Bay Area

working class against racial, sexual and all other forms of special oppression, including anti-homosexual bigotry. It claims to have unconditionally defended the Soviet degenerated workers state and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe against capitalist restoration. The CBCI has broadcast to all and sundry its claim to the mantle of genuine Trotskyism and can produce left-sounding criticisms of fake Trotskyists like the Workers Power group in Britain, exposing these centrists for their grotesque capitulation to imperialism in the former Yugoslavia in the face of NATO bombings.

Yet the Latin American-based groups of the CBCI capitulate to the pressures of their own bourgeoisies no less than do other centrists like Workers Power. In the former case, however, the prevailing forces on the political terrain are not



**Thatcher's victory in Falklands/Malvinas fueled attacks on unions at home, as returning troops threatened to break a strike by British rail workers. In Argentina, Galtieri junta's defeat in war led to its downfall amid wave of mass workers' protests.**





of one's "own" bourgeoisie, i.e., *revolutionary defeatism*. Demanding that Britain get out of all its colonies—from the Falklands to Hong Kong—the Spartacist League/Britain declared in a leaflet issued during the war (quoted in *Spartacist Britain* No. 43, July 1982):

"For the British ruling class, the Tory government's military adventure in the South Atlantic is an attempt to resuscitate the bloodsoaked heritage of the once mighty Empire. For British workers it must be seen as an opportunity to bring down this viciously anti-working-class government and open the road to destroying every last vestige of Britain's brutal colonial history through workers revolution. War creates misery, but it also leads to dislocation and social unrest creating the possibility of revolutionary upheavals, as the Russian workers showed in 1917. That is why the communists of the Spartacist League (SL) say: *The main enemy is at home! Let this war be Thatcher's downfall!*"

Any revolutionary party in Argentina worthy of the name would similarly have called for the defeat of *its* bourgeoisie. But, across the board, the Argentine left supported Galtieri's war.

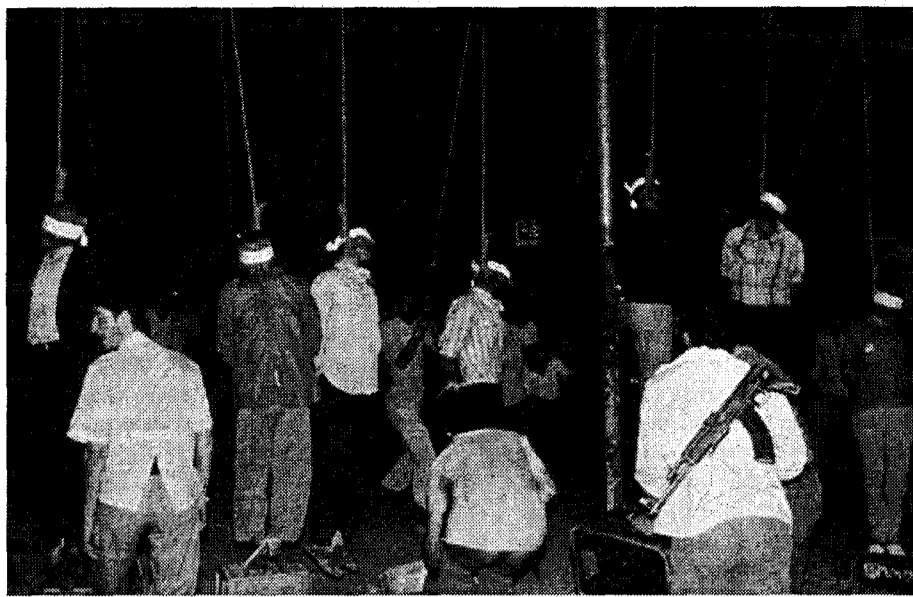
At the debate, PBCI spokesman Romero spent much of his presentation time dreaming up rationales for this rotten position. He claimed that this was an imperialist war motivated by Britain's desire to seize the region's undersea oil reserves. In fact, the British bourgeoisie had viewed the islands as a net economic drain and had been trying to unload the Falklands, handing over various administrative powers to Argentina. But when Galtieri invaded, Thatcher decided it was time for a "nice little war."

Romero tried to conjure up the existence of an "anti-imperialist" bloc of the USSR, Cuba and Libya with Argentina. In fact, anti-Communist hangman Galtieri was solidly behind U.S. president Reagan's anti-Soviet crusade. Galtieri's bloody junta had volunteered elite military units to help overthrow the petty-bourgeois leftist Sandinistas in Nicaragua and to suppress a leftist insurgency in El Salvador. At the outset of the Falklands/Malvinas war, Reagan said, "We're friends of both countries." When he finally came down on Britain's side, the Kremlin adopted a position of (decidedly mild) diplomatic support to Argentina. But even had Argentina been an ally of the Soviet Union, this would not have justified a position of military support to Galtieri. With the PBCI's methodology, one could have supported the U.S. and Britain in World War II—when these imperialist powers were militarily allied with the USSR—or the Soviet-backed Ethiopian Derg dictatorship of the butcher Mengistu in its reactionary war against Eritrea in the 1970s and '80s.

Seeking to portray the Falklands/Malvinas conflict as a classic colonial-style war, Romero cited a statement by Leon Trotsky in a 1930s interview with Argentine trade unionist Mateo Fossa. Arguing for military support to the semi-fascist regime then ruling Brazil in a hypothetical war with "democratic" British imperialism, Trotsky explained: "If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil."

But Trotsky's passing reference to a hypothetical war between Britain and Brazil has no relevance to the Falklands/Malvinas conflict. Trotsky was referring to the necessity to give military support to oppressed nations subject to imperialist conquest and oppression. This was the position taken by the Trotskyists toward Ethiopia, when it was invaded and occupied by Italy in 1935. Trotsky wrote at length about this conflict, stressing that "for us it is not a question of who is 'better,' the Negus [Haile Selassie] or Mussolini; rather, it is a question of the relationship of classes and the fight of an underdeveloped nation for independence against imperialism."

But Britain neither invaded Argentina nor, in the Falklands/Malvinas, was it oppressing Argentina (or, for that matter, any Argentines, since *none* were living on the islands). Thus, the 1982 war between Britain and Argentina bore no



Karim/AI Akhbar

resemblance to the Sino-Japanese war, or to the U.S.-led imperialist bloodbath against Iraq in 1991-92. As SL spokesman Ramírez emphasized:

"Only an irredentist nationalist would compare the massive onslaught of imperialist troops and occupation of half of Iraq's territory with the British navy's takeover of a couple of rocky islands in the South Atlantic which had been in Argentinean hands for 12 years sometime in the 1800s.... Fundamentally the Argentinean territory was not under attack except in the minds of a series of reformists capitulating to the bourgeois-nationalist junta."

There was nothing "anti-imperialist" about Galtieri's attempted seizure of the Falklands/Malvinas. It came only days after a march called by the Peronist CGT trade-union federation, in the midst of the worst depression in the country's history, to protest the regime's economic policies. Some 2,000 demonstrators were arrested, scores wounded and two killed. A general strike to protest the repression was called for the following week. In the meantime, Argentine commandos seized the Falklands/Malvinas.

At the Bay Area debate, Romero conceded:

"Galtieri wanted to deflect class struggle, it's true.... Absolutely all public recordings where Galtieri speaks at the Plaza de Mayo, every time he tries to defend his administration, he is widely jeered by the workers."

By the PBCI spokesman's own admission, Galtieri's war was a diversion. Indeed, this is powerful evidence that the situation opened up an opportunity to intervene among the working masses with a *revolutionary defeatist* line against the junta. Instead, the Argentine left, including the PBCI's forebears, *assisted* Galtieri as he sought to hoodwink the workers by palming this off as a struggle against imperialism. Romero tried to alibi this capitulation at the debate:

"But there existed among the masses the sentiment that this struggle could be developed and generalized to throw the imperialist troops not only out of the Malvinas but also to break the imperialist policy carried forward by the government.... We pose that what should have been raised was a congress of rank-and-file delegates of all mobilized unions to take the struggle in their hands and extend it to the whole country—for the expropriation of British lands, for the expropriation under workers control of American and British monopolies, for the nonpayment of the debt."

Thus, Romero & Co. push a policy of actively *deflecting* workers' struggles away from the *Argentine* bourgeoisie by supporting the war under an "anti-imperialist" fig leaf, serving as a "left-wing" propaganda machine to whip up patriotic support for the junta's war. In this way, all proportions guarded, this policy is analogous to that of the social-democratic class traitors in 1914, who aided the capitalist governments in lining up the working masses as cannon fodder in World War I.

Our line, that the defeat of one's own government could open the way for the proletariat to struggle for power, was vindicated by subsequent events. In Britain, Thatcher's victory served to fuel her war on the trade unions. A British warship returning from the Falklands/Malvinas carried a large banner threatening railway workers, "Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike." In Argentina, on the

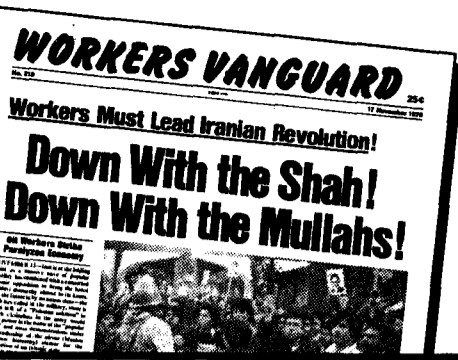
other hand, Galtieri's defeat paved the way for the downfall of his military junta, which was replaced by a weak, unstable civilian government. But the thoroughly servile and housebroken Argentine left, which had rallied to the cause of its discredited bourgeoisie, was totally incapable of taking advantage of this excellent opportunity.

### "Anti-Imperialist United Front" vs. Permanent Revolution

In Latin America, it is common for reformists and centrists to talk of an "anti-imperialist united front" to justify tying the working class to the nationalist bourgeoisie. Its protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, the CBCI carries out the same line, albeit under a different name. Thus, a CBCI declaration refers to its founding "at a meeting of revolutionary defensist organizations." The term "revolutionary defensism" refers to Leninist policy *in a military conflict* between an imperialist power and a colonial or semicolonial country. Thus, during the 1991-92 Gulf War the ICL was revolutionary defensist toward Iraq: while giving military support to Iraq in this war, we called on Iraqi workers to overthrow anti-Communist butcher Saddam Hussein.

To describe oneself as being in general "revolutionary defensist" is a species of crackpotism. Taken literally, it means *never* being defeatist toward one's own bourgeoisie, which captures the essential thrust of the CBCI's politics. The CBCI uses its bogus theory of "revolutionary defensism" as a vehicle to prettify alien class forces—bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism—in the non-imperialist countries. In a 1996 article, "The Crisis in the ICL," the CBCI accuses us of a "pro-imperialist position" on Iran in 1978-79 because we "refused to take a side with the masses that were confronting the regime of Shah Reza Pahlevi." Echoing the British Workers Power group and sundry other centrists and reformists, the CBCI attacks us for refusing to tail after the Islamic fundamentalist "mass movement" led by Ayatollah Khomeini, which placed in power a reactionary, theocratic and virulently anti-woman regime.

The potential existed for a revolutionary overthrow of the blood-drenched, U.S.-backed Shah by the powerful proletari-



While reformists and centrists hailed Khomeini as "anti-imperialist" in 1978-79, Spartacists warned that mullahs' victory would mean bloody terror against workers, women, leftists, national minorities. Left: Executions in wake of Khomeini's "Islamic revolution."

ariat, centrally the oil workers who were already mobilized in struggle against the regime. We raised the call: "Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs! For workers revolution in Iran!" But the Iranian left—especially the Stalinist Tudeh party, which had significant proletarian support—helped to rally the plebeian masses behind the Khomeiniite movement, which was based on the interests of the rich merchants and the Islamic hierarchy. And the entire fake left internationally supported this reactionary "mass movement," with the justification that Khomeini was "anti-imperialist," which boiled down to the fact that he was anti-American. (With this brilliant logic, Adolf Hitler was "anti-imperialist.") We warned that the victory of Khomeini would mean bloody terror against the left, medieval oppression for women, murder of homosexuals and Persian-chauvinist repression of national minorities. For many long years the verdict has been in, proving us, tragically, 100 percent correct.

Over Ireland and the Near East, the CBCI likewise capitulates to petty-bourgeois nationalism. Thus, it declares: "We are for the military victory of the IRA and the defeat of British imperialism in Northern Ireland, while raising our own working-class program." Marxists call for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and defend the IRA against state repression when it strikes a blow at the British army or fascistic Loyalist thugs. But what does it mean to call for "military victory" to the IRA? These petty-bourgeois nationalists are seeking to negotiate a settlement with British imperialism, a deal premised on leaving the troops in place in Northern Ireland. Consistent with its nationalism, the IRA also carries out acts of indefensible sectarian terror targeting British civilians as well as Protestants in the North. Yet the CBCI is silent about this, while endorsing the nationalist project of forcible reunification of Ireland, which would simply reverse the terms of oppression and subject the Protestant community to the rule of the theocratic Catholic state in the South.

Northern Ireland is a situation of *interpenetrated peoples*, where the exercise of

*continued on page 6*

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# PBCI...

(continued from page 5)

self-determination by one people within the framework of capitalism must necessarily come at the expense of another. Marxists recognize that the Catholics are presently an oppressed minority in Northern Ireland. We fight against anti-Catholic discrimination, while appealing to the joint class interests of Catholic and Protestant workers. We call for an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles, which leaves open the question of where the Protestants will end up in the course of a workers revolution.

The CBCI's glorification of nationalism is a rejection in practice of the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. In the economically backward countries, the bourgeoisies are too weak, corrupt and dependent on imperialism to resolve the outstanding tasks—such as agrarian revolution and national liberation—historically associated with the bourgeois revolution. The atomized peasantry, reflecting its petty-bourgeois class nature, vacillates between the urban industrial proletariat and the capitalist class. Consequently, the resolution of the bourgeois-democratic tasks can only be achieved through the proletarian conquest of power—which will necessarily place the socialist tasks on the immediate agenda—and the fight to extend workers rule to the advanced capitalist countries.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was confirmed by the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917. The Menshevik conception that the "first stage" of the revolution would be purely democratic in character, placing the liberal bourgeoisie in power, was repudiated by events themselves. Prior to 1917, Lenin had advanced the idea of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," recognizing the need to mobilize the vast peasant masses behind the proletariat in struggle against both the tsarist autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie. This slogan, however, implied the rule of two classes with historically counterposed interests, and Lenin himself renounced it in his "April Theses" in 1917, where he stressed the "necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies."

Despite the experience of 1917, the Bolsheviks never codified permanent revolution, allowing Stalin and Bukharin to later use the old formula of the "democratic dictatorship" in order to impose on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) a strategy of unalloyed Menshevik stagium, forcing the CCP to liquidate into Chiang Kai-shek's bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (Kuomintang). This led directly to the bloody defeat of the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution by Chiang's forces. In its aftermath, Trotsky generalized the program of permanent revolution to all backward countries (see "The Origins of Chinese Trotskyism," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 53, Summer 1997).

In the post-World War II period, peasant-based guerrilla movements under

petty-bourgeois leadership have smashed capitalist property relations under exceptional circumstances, i.e., the extreme disorganization of the capitalist class in a colonial country and the absence of the working class contending in its own right for power. However, they could not bring the working class to political power. Rather, they created deformed workers states, as in Vietnam, China and Cuba, which suppress any further development of these revolutions toward socialism. These instances confirm the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, albeit in the negative: any substantial progress toward the achievement of the outstanding bourgeois-democratic tasks required the liquidation of capitalism. However, only under the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat can colonial revolution have an unequivocally progressive, revolutionary significance.

In contradistinction to permanent revolution, the CBCI literally gushes over the peasant-based Zapatistas (EZLN) in Mexico, who in turn look to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' bourgeois-nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). An SL speaker at the Bay Area debate quoted the Brazilian LBI: "The Zapatistas should

ized property forms. His call for proletarian political revolution was aimed at maintaining these collectivized property forms while ousting the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. In contrast, as SL spokesman Ramírez pointed out, the CBCI's "revolutionary defensist" line on the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states was divorced from any class criteria whatsoever: having shown "deep hostility to the Soviet workers state when it existed," after the consolidation of a capitalist state in Russia in 1991-92 in the wake of Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in August 1991, the CBCI has displayed political "affinity to left-over Stalinists now transformed into the worst kind of demagogues," like Gennady Zyuganov's *bourgeois-nationalist* Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF).

A CBCI article on its founding meeting calls for the "unconditional defense of the former [!] and surviving workers' states against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution" (*Revolutionary Theory*, July 1996). Calling this "staggering," our spokesman explained: "A former workers state in the epoch of imperialism is a *bourgeois* state. So this is a call for

against Islamic fundamentalist cutthroats armed and financed by the CIA to kill Red Army soldiers and officers. Afghanistan was the front line of Cold War II, the anti-Soviet war drive of the 1980s. The Soviet military intervention also posed the liberation of Afghan women from hideous oppression. When the USSR moved into Afghanistan in December 1979 to defend its southern flank against the CIA-backed *mujahedin* insurgency, the international Spartacist tendency (now the International Communist League) said "Hail Red Army!" and called to "Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!" At the debate, the PBCI spokesman indicated where his organization stood on this defining question by referring to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as an "occupation." In response, SL speaker Ramírez outlined the position of the IS/ICL:

"As revolutionary Trotskyists, we recognized the dire threat that the imperialist-backed insurgency represented to the land of October, and we took up our positions in defense of our class and its conquests.... While recognizing that the Kremlin bureaucracy had only reluctantly intervened in order to stabilize a client state, we nonetheless also understood that it was only the Soviet military intervention which offered the possibility of opening the road to emancipation for the hideously oppressed people of Afghanistan, particularly women.

"In 1989, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan with the futile aim of trying to appease imperialism was the direct precursor to the counterrevolutions that engulfed East Europe and the Soviet Union itself. Through the Partisan Defense Committee, we offered to organize international brigades to help fight the CIA-backed *mujahedin* cutthroats in the city of Jalalabad. This proposal was aimed not only at providing concrete military assistance, it was also premised on the understanding that such an international brigade could further the struggle for political revolution in the Soviet Union... among soldiers and officers who had believed in the internationalist implications of their fight in Afghanistan."

After the ten-year Soviet military intervention had ended, after the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, after the left-nationalist government in Kabul had been overrun by the virulently reactionary *mujahedin*, the PBCI lamely referred to its military defense of the Soviet army in Afghanistan in a 1993 document. To say the least, the PBCI was not exactly putting itself on the political firing line. Moreover, the sole purpose of adopting this position of "military support" seems to have been to attack the ICL. Thus, at the debate Romero attempted to ridicule our slogans:

"For ten years, they had been posing as a central slogan the call for the Red Army to extend the social gains of the Soviet Union to Afghanistan, as though the bureaucracy was to carry out a bureaucratic revolution. This never happened. Moreover, Trotsky very often answered to Shachtman that there was no bureaucratic revolution—there were bureaucratic impulses.... Therefore the Trotskyists' policy was not to place illusions in the Red Army but to concretely advance in building a party in Afghanistan capable of superseding the very policy of the Red Army, which is nothing but the reactionary policy of the Kremlin."

While proclaiming "military support" to the Red Army, the PBCI characterizes the policy of the Red Army as "reactionary." This is a classic example of centrist double-talk and obfuscation. The assertion that the Red Army *always* acted in a reactionary manner is a flat denial of the Trotskyist understanding of the *dual* character of the Stalinist bureaucracy—a parasitic caste that sat atop the collectivized property forms of the workers state while serving as a transmission belt for the pressures of imperialism. The CBCI's line that the bureaucracy had a "constitutionally counterrevolutionary character" is sheer Stalinophobia. Bowing to the pressure of the imperialists and their labor lackeys, the Stalinophobic PBCI couldn't say "Hail Red Army."

Moreover, Romero distorted Trotsky's position on the Red Army's occupation of Poland and the western Ukraine in 1939. It was not Trotsky but Shachtman (who was in the process of renegeing on



Syigma

Russian president Boris Yeltsin on barricades of counterrevolution, Moscow, August 1991. ICL distributed tens of thousands of leaflets headlined, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!"

issue a call for student, worker, peasant unity and raise the general strike for the revolutionary overthrow of the government of Ernesto Zedillo, denouncing the class-collaborationist nature of the PRD's politics." Our comrade continued:

"It was not a question of whether the EZLN was going to seize power. They themselves didn't want it. And now the CBCI rejects the fundamentals of Trotskyism, which understands the incapacity of the peasantry to play an independent revolutionary role.... The working masses in the countryside have no other salvation except their alliance with the communist proletariat. The words of the CBCI, which claims to be for the regroupment of the 'revolutionary defensists,' are nothing more than a centrist mask for their continuous capitulations to bourgeois nationalism and the backward consciousness of the working class."

## PBCI Trips Over the Class Line I: The Russian Question

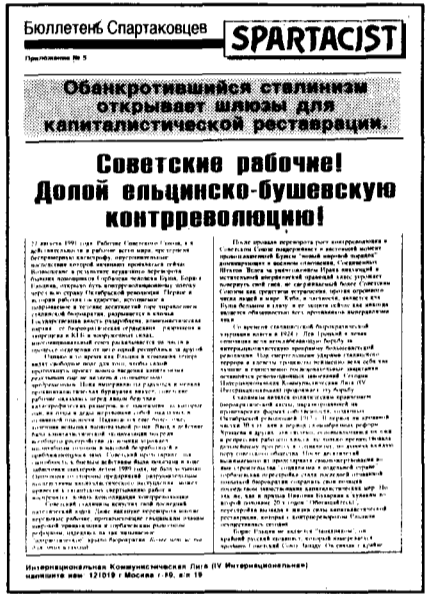
James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, pointed out that the program of unconditional military defense of the USSR was integrally linked to opposition to one's own bourgeoisie: "Defensism and defeatism are two principled, that is, irreconcilable positions.... Defensists at home were defeatists on Russia. Defensists on Russia were defeatists at home." While Cannon was addressing the tasks of revolutionaries in the U.S., his observation applies perfectly to the PBCI. Their inability to be defeatist toward their own bourgeoisie, as over the Falklands/Malvinas war, is integrally linked to their incapacity to stand up to the imperialists' ultimately successful drive to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union.

Trotsky's call for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution was premised on the existence of a degenerated workers state, whose material underpinnings were collectiv-

the unconditional defense of a bourgeois state, born of counterrevolution, against...counterrevolution?! This makes a mockery of Marxism." Ramírez scored the PBCI for declaring "that in the aftermath of Yeltsin's counter-coup, the USSR was a new *bourgeois* state. Yet, at the same time, you continue to call for a 'political revolution.' This guts this hallmark position of Trotskyism, which was premised on the social transformations left over from October [1917], of any programmatic content."

Polish Solidarność posed an acid test for would-be revolutionaries: one that the PBCI and its allies decisively failed. In the fall of 1981, when Lech Walesa's CIA-backed "union" had consolidated around a program for capitalist restoration, we said, "Stop Solidarność counter-revolution!" We supported the imposition of martial law by the Jaruzelski regime to spike a Solidarność power bid in December 1981. At the same time, we stressed that the Stalinists were incapable of politically defeating the counterrevolutionaries and called for a Trotskyist party to lead the workers forward to political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. A Spartacist floor speaker contrasted the PBCI's position on Poland "at the crucial hour": while claiming to be for military defense, it declared that the "principal task is to overthrow the bureaucracy." Our comrade said to the PBCI: "Shying away from the hard truth, you denounced any repressive measures against Solidarność's base. Your bloc partners in the LBI, who can't recognize the class line with the police, did no better in Poland, calling Solidarność 'the most powerful political revolution in East Europe'."

A particularly contentious question at the debate was the decade-long war in Afghanistan which pitted Soviet forces and the left-nationalist PDPA regime



Economist

Gennady Zyuganov, Russian-chauvinist KPRF leader supported by PBCI.



the duty of revolutionaries to defend the Soviet Union) who denied that the Red Army could be the agency for social liberation. In "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene" (*In Defense of Marxism*), Trotsky wrote:

"Seeking to get around reality, namely that nothing else but the social foundations of the USSR forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin, Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy *always* and *everywhere* either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in eastern Poland."

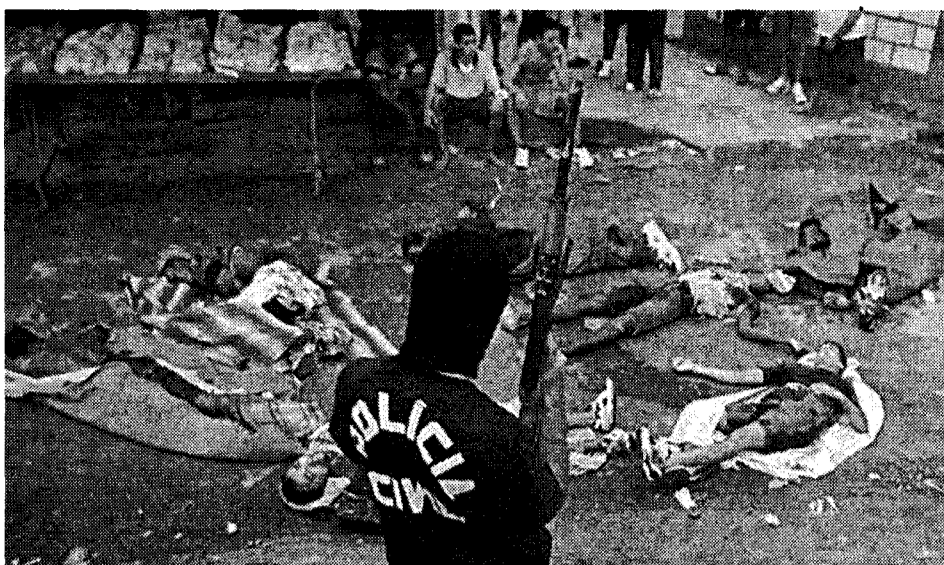
And, as exemplified by the heroic Trotskyists of the Warsaw Ghetto, when the Red Army went into battle against the Nazi scourge following Hitler's June 1941 invasion of the USSR, the Bolshevik-internationalists proclaimed: "Long Live the Red Army!"

The SL speaker underscored the essentially *nationalist* viewpoint of the PBCI: "It is a fact, which you dismiss, that the level of economic development of Afghanistan was and remains such that it is ludicrous to call for the immediate development of an independent proletarian force. But only one who accepts the narrow confines of imperialist-imposed national boundaries would find in this an insurmountable task." Ramírez asserted: "The best thing that could have happened to Afghanistan would have been if the Soviet Union would have annexed it. But the 'peaceful coexistence' Brezhnevites didn't want it—and neither did you. As we said, better to fight [counterrevolution] in Afghanistan than inside the Soviet Union."

Two years after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, in August 1991, Boris Yeltsin seized on a dismal "coup" attempt by the incompetent "gang of eight" Kremlin bureaucrats to launch his pro-imperialist counter-coup. In the absence of resistance from the Soviet proletariat, this subsequently proved to be the decisive event of the counterrevolution. But, as Ramírez noted at the debate, in contrast to the "International Bolshevik Tendency" the ICL did not immediately declare the workers state destroyed. Rather, we sought to mobilize the Soviet working class in defense of its state. Tearing apart the PBCI's lie that we were "objectively neutral" in August 1991, the SL speaker declared: "Our leaflet 'Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!' was a clear statement with a program of struggle against ascendant capitalist restoration." This was the first statement widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union in opposition to Yeltsin's restorationist drive.

As for the PBCI, like the IBT, its "concrete proposal for defense was to take the side of the coup plotters at exactly the time when they actively made clear that they intended to defend nothing." The PBCI "talked about military defense, but there was no military action," Ramírez remarked, "So if there was nothing to 'militarily support,' your call can only mean political support." Far from opposing capitalist restoration, the "gang of eight" were former lieutenants of then Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and supported his *perestroika* "market reforms," but wanted a more controlled development toward a full-fledged capitalist economy without the democratic trappings of Gorbachev's *glasnost* ("openness"). As our comrade said, "The coupists simply sought to negotiate a better deal for themselves."

Claiming that we have moved from "Stalinophilia to Stalinophobia," the PBCI takes us to task for our article "Why Marxists Do Not Raise the Call 'Restore the Soviet Union'" (WV Nos. 638 and 639, 2 February and 16 February 1996). The PBCI denounces as "abstentionist" our refusal to extend electoral support to Zyuganov's Russian-chauvinist "Communist" Party, which is not part of but



Victims of police "drug sweep" in Rio de Janeiro shantytown. Brazilian CBCI group embraces pro-cop elements in the unions. AFP

rather thoroughly hostile to the workers movement. Today the slogan of "restoring the Soviet Union," raised by Zyuganov's KPRF and others, can only be a call for Great Russian chauvinism, which is precisely the intention. Thus, Zyuganov denounced Yeltsin *from the right* for withdrawing the troops of the Russian *capitalist* state from Chechnya, accusing Yeltsin of "betraying Russia's interests." The PBCI's political support to Zyuganov boils down to an endorsement of chauvinists who want Russia to play the role of a regional imperialist power, dominating the smaller peoples of the region like the Chechens. So much for the PBCI's alleged support to oppressed peoples against great power chauvinism!

### PBCI Trips Over the Class Line II: The Popular Front

Leon Trotsky asserted: "'People's Fronts' on the one hand—fascism on the other; these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution." Trotsky opposed any support to popular-front coalitions of workers parties and bourgeois parties. In entering a popular front, the contradiction implicit in what Lenin termed a bourgeois workers party—between its claimed articulation of the interests of the proletariat and its actual program defending the interests of capitalism—is suppressed. We categorically oppose calling for votes to reformist parties in popular fronts, or demanding that a coalition government "carry out its program."

Revisionists invariably seek to obscure the fact that a popular front in power is a *capitalist* government. In its founding declaration, the CBCI calls for "struggling against the Popular Front and its variants." But as comrade Ramírez noted, this is belied by the fact that the PBCI and the LBI are on record supporting a vote for workers parties in popular fronts, as for example Lula's Workers Party (PT) in the 1989 Brazilian elections, when it ran as part of the Frente Brasil Popular alliance. At the same time, the LBI rejects voting for Lula's popular front in the 1994 elections. What's the difference? In 1989, Lula's bloc included only a small representation of the national bourgeoisie, while in 1994 his popular front was directly subsumed into international finance capital. But as Trotsky stressed in his writings on the Spanish Popular Front in 1936, which likewise included only the "shadow" of the bourgeoisie, the presence of even the most modest non-proletarian political formation serves as a guarantor of the bourgeois program of such a cross-class coalition.

The LBI in effect argues that a popular front centered around the national bourgeoisie is "anti-imperialist." This is a negation of the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. Ramírez remarked:

"In the polemic on Afghanistan, you have taken us to task for daring to consider Trotsky's assessment in *The Revolution Betrayed* in 1936 that the Red Army is a 'factor of immense significance' for the world proletariat. But in Brazil, you're quite willing to make use of the PT as a—and this is a quote—'useful instrument to struggle for the emancipation of the working class.' So Lula's class-collaborationist appendix of

the Brazilian bourgeoisie is a useful instrument, but the Red Army, organ of a workers state, cannot be?"

Seeking to justify the CBCI's line on Lula, a CWG supporter referred to the Bolsheviks' demand on the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (SRs) in 1917—during the period of dual power when these two parties controlled the workers soviets while participating in the capitalist government—to break with the bourgeois ministers and take power into their own hands. The CWG speaker then stated:

"So the comrades have said, 'You support the popular front...there's no difference between 1989 and 1994.' Well, we submit that in 1989 there were thousands of workers committees who had illusions in the PT of Brazil and just as in the period between February and October in Russia in 1917, a similar tactic could be employed to educate the workers about these reformists; that is, specifically, call on the PT to break with the bourgeoisie. When they don't do it, the workers get an education. But if you're so sectarian that you could never dream of calling on these people to do something, if you're not interested in intersecting these workers at all, well you could just ignore the whole thing and say: ah, popular front, phooey."

There was only one "fly in this ointment." *The Bolsheviks refused to call for votes to the Mensheviks and SRs in 1917*, precisely because they were in a bloc with the bourgeoisie!

If a mass reformist workers party runs in parliamentary elections independently of the bourgeois parties and is not decisively identified with openly anti-working-class or pro-imperialist policies, it may well be advantageous for revolutionaries to extend critical electoral support. Such critical support affords revolutionaries a broader hearing for their own views and puts them in a better position to attract militant workers who become disillusioned when their leaders betray, as they inevitably do, their professed principles and program.

In response to the CWGer's attempt to depict us as hopeless sectarians, an SL

speaker pointed to the electoral tactics recently employed by the Spartacist League/Britain: "The comrade who spoke just before me said that we pay no attention to workers parties who get into popular fronts. We certainly do. We have something called conditional critical support, which we are applying to Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party today. And we campaign alongside them and seek votes while making full programmatic criticism. But they are opposed to the popular front that Tony Blair is trying to create with the British Labour Party. So we hardly ignore what looks to be a promising left opposition."

### PBCI Trips Over the Class Line III: Cops and the State

Lenin distinguished revolutionaries from reformists by their attitude toward the bourgeois state, whose core is "armed bodies of men"—the army and police and their system of courts and prisons. Reformists, who ultimately aspire to administer the capitalist state, do not view the bourgeois cops as the class enemy. Thus, the CUT trade-union bureaucracy and most of the fake left in Brazil supported last summer's police strikes. The centrist LBI claimed to oppose the strikes while arguing that the ranks of the murderous Military Police, the most notorious of the various police forces in Brazil, could be won to the side of the working class and even organized into "communist cells" (see "Brazil: The LBI and Police 'Strikes,'" WV No. 673, 5 September). But in its actual practice, the LBI is even worse than this, embracing outright spokesmen for the cops among its trade-union supporters!

In January 1996, while we still had fraternal relations with the Brazilian Luta Metalúrgica (LM, now the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil [LQB]), we discovered that LM had entered into an unprincipled combination with other groups, including the LBI, in promoting a slate which won leadership of the SPPMVR municipal workers union in Volta Redonda. LM had not informed us that this union contained a large number of *guardas*, municipal guards. The platform of the LM-backed *Municípios em Luta* (MEL) slate said nothing about the need to separate the police from the union. We pressed for LM to bring its actions into accordance with the communist program with which it professed agreement and to campaign to get the cops out of the union. Addressing this question in his presentation, SL spokesman Ramírez explained:

"A 'union' between workers and cops is a purer form of class collaboration than a parliamentary popular front. Here is the mass organization purportedly for the defense of the workers' class interests, hereby tied to the armed bodies committed to the defense of capital. Writ large, this is indeed the most common and most dangerous form of popular-frontism—especially common in neocolonial

*continued on page 8*

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# PBCI...

(continued from page 7)

countries—that between the leaders of the workers movement...and 'progressive' army officers. Examples abound—Guomindang in China, Torres in Bolivia, Allende in Chile. Comrades, the fight for the removal of the cops from the unions is the concrete expression of the Marxist principle of the independence of the workers from their bourgeois oppressors and their state."

It was the LBI and its supporter in the SFPMVR, Artur Bonizetti Fernandes, who became the major spokesmen for the *guardas* when LM, at our urging, belatedly took up the call for cops out of the union. Immediately after SFPMVR president Geraldo Ribeiro, allied with LM leader Cerezo, called for the removal of the municipal guards from the union in early 1996, Fernandes' faction issued a leaflet unambiguously solidarizing with the hired guns of the bourgeois state, which concluded with a "Call on Everyone to Stand Together to Defend the Guarda at Our Union Meeting." At the March 13 union assembly, one of Fernandes' goons provoked an invasion of the meeting by the Military Police. The ICL, in conjunction with the Partisan Defense Committee and our other fraternal class-struggle defense organizations, launched an international campaign of labor solidarity, demanding "Police Hands Off Volta Redonda Union!"

Simultaneously, the LBI was advising Fernandes on how to smear the ICL. Days before the union assembly, on March 1, the LBI wrote a letter to Fernandes attacking Spartacism as a "current which is characterized by despising the struggle of the workers through their trade-union organizations." Outrageously, the statement singled out our defense of blacks and homosexuals and asserted that we restrict our activities "to the social milieu of the rich middle class of imperialist countries where the struggle against the bosses' regime is not at stake."

The CBCI has attempted to deny that Artur Fernandes is a pro-cop element, or that he is linked to their organization. At the debate, PBCI speaker Romero blustered: "Publicly, our international current published a statement saying that Artur never belonged to the LBI, neither did he belong to any CBCI current." As he said this, SLers displayed various correspondence between the LBI and the Fernandes faction which put the lie to this denial. And at the August 1997 CUT trade-union federation national conference (where the LBI's union supporters refused to challenge the bureaucracy's line of supporting cop strikes), Fernandes was a delegate of the Revolutionary Trade Union Tendency which the LBI, in its words, "promotes" as an "alternative to the CUT leadership."

To round out their pro-cop, anti-Spartacist rotten bloc, the PBCI found a suitable partner in the Communist Workers Group, whose original leaders—a pair of crass male chauvinists—were expelled from the SL as thieves and thugs. The PBCI's "fusion" with the CWG illustrates Trotsky's point that "in the choice of his international allies, the centrist is even less discriminating than in his own country." Bay Area CWG leader Gerald Smith is infamous for hav-

ing been the spokesman in a public video for "CopWatch," a local group whose politics are unvarnished bourgeois liberalism. As expressed in *CopWatch Report* (February-March 1991), this group's avowed purpose is to "stop police crime, roll back the police state and begin to rebuild our communities on the basis of love and caring, *not* fear and violence."

In an attempt to distance himself from his bloc partners' flagrant liberalism, Romero touted a disavowal of Smith's video in the CWG's *Worker* (Spring 1994). The "disavowal" said, "There was nothing wrong with assisting CopWatch

returned from a visit to Buenos Aires in 1992, our comrades reported being shocked at how the PBCI leadership was opposed to expelling wife-beaters and how Jew-baiting and gay-baiting were tolerated inside their organization.

It is totally cynical to masquerade as fighters against racial oppression while simultaneously embracing pro-cop elements like Artur Fernandes. Even by Latin American standards, the Brazilian police are notorious for their brutality to workers, peasants and black people. Death squads, intimately linked with the military police, kill as many as five

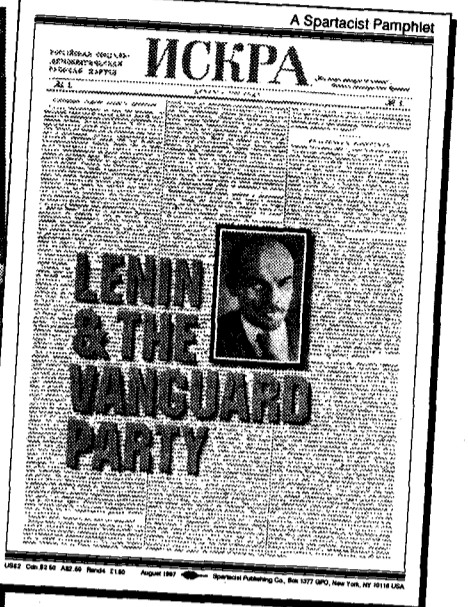
World nationalists, or as somebody said, a garden variety of centrists."

## Revolutionary Regroupment

Unable to deny Fernandes' documented links to both the LBI and the police, Romero's last refuge was to claim that it was the ICL that was in bed with the cops, by virtue of the fact that former SFPMVR president Ribeiro was an ex-cop and supposedly a member of the ICL. (At the same time, the PBCI spokesman bragged that the LBI had written the election propaganda for the MEL slate, which included Ribeiro as well as Fernandes!)



L.Y. Leonidov



Lenin and Trotsky (center) at Second Congress of Communist International, 1920. Spartacist pamphlet details Lenin's struggle to forge Bolshevik Party. Order from Spartacist Publishing Co., \$2.

in making its video" but "we believe nonetheless that communists working with organizations such as CopWatch should not be the ones to make statements of the sort quoted above." As an SL speaker characterized this: "It is all right for the CWG to build and participate in an organization which seeks to prettify the armed fist of the bourgeois state. They just shouldn't openly admit this!"

## The Fight Against Special Oppression

The "Declaration of the CBCI" asserts: "We recognize the existence of special or secondary oppression in capitalist society and struggle against all forms of racial, national, or sexual discrimination from a class point of view, recognizing that the causes of all oppression can only be eliminated with the destruction of capitalism, which can only be achieved under the physical and programmatic direction of the proletariat."

But once again there's quite a gap between the rhetoric and the actual practice of these centrists. SL comrades at the Bay Area debate noted that a 23-page CBCI polemical document on Afghanistan mentioned the woman question only in passing, and that the CBCI had supported both the Islamic fundamentalist Khomeini in Iran and pro-Vatican Solidarność in Poland. Nevertheless, Romero boasted about the PBCI's work among women in factories. We don't know much about the PBCI's purported trade-union work, but when an ICL delegation

street children *every day*. The CBCI gives new meaning to Trotsky's observation that centrists are "revolutionary in words, reformist in deeds."

No less cynical is the way the CBCI dismisses our fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther Party spokesman who was falsely accused of killing a Philadelphia cop and railroaded to death row. The ICL and its fraternal defense organizations have been instrumental in bringing this urgent campaign to the attention of the labor movement internationally and in winning a stay of Mumia's threatened execution in August 1995. But to hear the CBCI tell it, this campaign is an example of "petty-bourgeois ghettoism" in which we "have not made the smallest attempt in order that the American workers resolve in their meetings to take this struggle in their hands and impose in their unions a plan to struggle against Jamal's execution."

This pathetic and contemptible lie is easily refuted. Mumia's defense has been taken up by literally dozens of American trade-union branches, including Chicago transit workers, New York City hospital workers and West Coast longshoremen—as well as by the South African COSATU and NACTU trade-union federations, the five-million-strong Italian CGIL, the Southern and Eastern regions of the British Trades Union Congress and the Brasília federal district of the CUT. And we continue to fight around the world to broaden and deepen support for concrete acts of labor-centered protest for Jamal's freedom.

SL spokesman Ramirez summed up the PBCI's, at best, economist approach to the proletariat: "Despairing of any possibility of changing the working class, you adapt to the existing consciousness of the workers. But as Lenin repeatedly pointed out in *What Is To Be Done?*, the existing spontaneous consciousness of the worker is at best trade-union consciousness, which is a form of bourgeois consciousness and incorporates the expression of the backward prejudices fostered by the rulers in the masses, while at another level, adaptation to bourgeois currents brings with it adaptation to the values of bourgeois nationalism.... Comrades, the group that appears before you is a fake. They aren't Bolsheviks but Stalinophobic Third

To our knowledge, Ribeiro did not join LM/LQB until after our break in relations. But what is certain is that neither LM/LQB nor Ribeiro were ever part of the ICL. What we had with LM were fraternal relations, a dynamic process of testing *apparent* programmatic agreement through common work and debate of differences. We recognized that the transformation of LM, consisting mainly of self-taught workers, into a Leninist propaganda group would not be easy.

Many of the early discussions with LM were conducted by Norden and Negrete, who were subsequently expelled from the ICL and now form the "Internationalist Group," which is currently allied with the LQB. These two sought to excuse political weaknesses on the part of LM by claiming they were only "cultural differences." That is repugnant liberal paternalism—in reality, a statement that comrades from economically less developed countries would be second-class members of our International. It turned out that Norden and Negrete had themselves written the 1994 "Declaration of Fraternal Relations" which LM signed, falsely claiming that it proved LM's deep and broad agreement with the ICL. This is the method of centrist international lash-ups like the CBCI, which concoct such documents as an orthodox "umbrella" beneath which each national affiliate can carry on its opportunist practices.

When it became clear to us that LM's ingrained trade-union opportunism was counterposed to building a Trotskyist party in Brazil and that its main leader, Cerezo, refused to resign from a post as unelected adviser to a union in which the group then had no members, we broke fraternal relations (see "A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica," WV No. 648, 5 July 1996). This action has been fully vindicated. Not long after the break, the LQB's Ribeiro brought suit against the union, inviting the capitalist state to intervene in the affairs of the workers movement. The LQB thus demonstrated that at bottom its methods were the same as those of the LBI and its pro-cop spokesman Fernandes, who also dragged the union into the bourgeois courts. They were all prepared to use unprincipled methods in order to maintain their union offices.

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LM/LQB, which is vital in establishing the basis for building a revolutionary party in Brazil, because nothing would eclipse the future of Trotskyism there quicker than *false unity* with centrist opportunists. A Leninist party is not built simply through linear recruitment, but mainly through programmatically based splits and fusions. Particularly when fusions are undertaken on an international scale, there must be thorough testing to ensure that there is solid underlying political agreement.

A Spartacist floor speaker gave the example of our relations with veteran Ceylonese Trotskyist Edmund Samarakkody in the 1970s. In 1964, Samarakkody and a comrade of his in Sri Lanka's parliament had joined in voting for a motion that brought down the popular-front government of Mrs. Bandaranaike. The iSt assiduously pursued Samarakkody's group from a distance for years. Seeking to explore and resolve outstanding programmatic differences over such issues as nationalism, interpenetrated peoples and the popular front, we conducted a serious discussion in writing, producing two internal bulletins containing documents by us and the Samarakkody group. What we did not know was that Samarakkody had come to regret his vote of no-confidence in Bandaranaike's Sinhala-chauvinist "lesser evil" popular front and now sought to disavow it. It took many years to figure out that there were two faces to what happened, because of the problems in English and Sinhala translation, among other things.

When Samarakkody came to our 1979 international conference, where the proposed fusion was to have been consummated, he realized that we were not interested in the sort of international nonaggression pact common among centrists, but rather wanted a real fusion that didn't paper over political differences. Thus the conference featured discussions on the question of voting for workers parties in popular fronts and other areas of disagreement between our organization and his. The Samarakkody delegation found a pretext to abort the fusion. Shortly thereafter, his group split, and we ended up regrouping with the left wing. The SL comrade who raised this example noted that we were faced with a somewhat similar situation when we encountered Luta Metalúrgica. We had heard that LM opposed Lula's popular front in principle. But when we stationed

## IG, LQB—Forever "Fraternal," Never to Wed? Consummation or "Brides of Christ"

From the moment they engineered their expulsions from the International Communist League nearly a year and a half ago, the handful of defectors now calling themselves the Internationalist Group (IG) have howled about the ICL's supposedly "unprincipled" break in fraternal relations with the Brazilian Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista (LM/LQB) in June 1996. Last November, the IG and LQB trumpeted a "Joint Statement of Commitment to Fight to Reforge the Fourth International," promoted as "the road to an early Leninist fusion" (*Internationalist*, January-February 1997). "Early" has increasingly become rather late, but we have yet to hear word of marriage plans.

The first point of "unity" in the IG/LQB statement was to denounce the ICL's break with the LQB as a betrayal of a "sharp class battle over the central question of the state (on the removal of the police from the unions)." This fiction centers on the claim that the LQB, whose supporters held leading positions in the municipal workers union in the town of Volta Redonda, finally fought

the good fight to expel cops from that union. We not only demonstrated this to be a complete fraud, but have also thoroughly documented how the IG's Brazilian confederates subsequently dragged the union into the bourgeois courts to advance their own opportunist ends. This shameless class treason underscored the utterly necessary and principled character of our earlier break with the LQB. As we wrote in "IG's Brazil Fraud Exposed" (WV No. 669, 30 May): "Following a sufficiently long testing period, including with ICL representatives on site, we broke relations because it became abundantly clear that for LM, opportunist maneuvers to maintain control of a union took precedence over the crucial task of forging a revolutionary party."

For Leninists, who fight to build a democratic-centralist revolutionary international, fraternal relations are a process of common work and political clarification aimed at testing whether fusion can be achieved on a solid basis of programmatic agreement. Not so for the IG. Even when IG leaders Norden and Negrete were in our organization,

they saw the LM/LQB as a showcase Latin American section whose union "influence" they could brag about in international propaganda. To that end, Norden and his protégé Negrete authored the September 1994 "Declaration of Fraternal Relations" between the ICL and LM, investing it with a comprehensive programmatic agreement that didn't exist. The IG still holds up that statement as the basis for its own relations with the LQB.

Meanwhile, the IG Web page fills cyberspace with increasingly shrill defenses of the LQB not only as class-war heroes but for making great strides in building the "nucleus of a genuine Trotskyist party" in Brazil. So why—a year after the IG/LQB statement and more than three years after Norden and Negrete authored the initial declaration—hasn't there been a fusion? Will the IG and LQB ever consummate their promised "early fusion"? Or are these "fraternal relations" more on the order of the mystical, never-to-be-consummated (at least in the secular sense) "bride of Christ" vows taken by Catholic nuns?

a representative on the ground in Brazil, we uncovered the reality of LM. The ICL broke off the political testing process because it was clear that we did not have agreement with LM on a revolutionary Marxist perspective.

The ICL broke relations with LM because we didn't want to be in the same organization with trade-union opportunists. The LBI and its ilk have no such scruples. So they have to invent a fairy-tale explanation for our break in relations, imputing to us their own anti-Leninist methods of functioning, in which splits and fusions are undertaken solely in the interest of organizational maneuvers and bureaucratic power plays. Betraying the mercenary outlook typical of such centrists, in its 1996 article, "The Crisis in the ICL," the CBCI slanderously "explains" our split with LM as follows:

Ryan, the bureaucrats atop the union movement accept the interests of capitalism as legitimate, and try to confine the class struggle within the parliamentarist limits imposed by the class enemy....

"The Harris Tories are at the forefront of the capitalist offensive in this country, but they are far from alone. The federal Liberal government has slashed billions from social programs. And the NDP, which the union bureaucracy portrays as labor's 'political arm,' has hiked tuition, shut hospitals, cut welfare and axed public sector jobs from the provincial government benches in Saskatchewan and B.C., just as it did earlier in Ontario under Bob Rae."

The TL leaflet also stressed the need for a single unified teachers union instead of five different unions based on sex, language and religion and raised the call for fully funded, mandatory public education as opposed to state funding of religious education: "There should be a single, secular school system—bibles and prayers have no place in the classroom!"

While ravaging education, the bourgeoisie has also been ripping apart medicare, welfare and other vital social programs, which are deemed to be unnecessary or unsustainable "overhead expenses." To prevent effective resistance to this all-sided assault, the rulers seek to "divide and rule" by setting working people at each other's throats along national, racial, linguistic and other lines. Importantly, the strike won support from immigrant and minority workers, for example in Toronto's working-class east end, where immigrant parents were prominent

"When the ICL tried to ask for a part of the money it had invested, the bomb exploded in its hands." According to the CBCI, we then supposedly decided to purge Norden as a "scapegoat" for the break with LM.

Actually, the fight with Norden was initiated not over Brazil but a year earlier, over his attempt to pursue an opportunist "regroupment" policy with geriatric reformist remnants of the former East German Stalinist ruling party. Far from being "scapegoated," Norden systematically refused to argue out his political differences in the open, although he was urged to do so many times; eventually he provoked his own expulsion. There is nothing "secret" about any of this, either. We have made the documentary record of these fights publicly available (see "Norden's 'Group': Shamefaced Defec-

tors from Trotskyism," *International Bulletin* No. 38, June 1996 and "The Fight for a Trotskyist Party in Brazil," *International Bulletin* No. 41, April 1997). The ICL is also unique in publishing what our opponents write about us in our *Hate Trotskyism*, *Hate the Spartacist League* pamphlet series, which includes the Norden group's own account of its departure from the ICL (*Hate Trotskyism* No. 9, August 1996).

For the ICL the revolutionary program is a guide to action, not "socialist" camouflage. That is what separates us from centrists of all stripes. As one SL speaker put it, "Our purposes in regroupment are very simple. We aim to bring together groups whose orientation is toward the achievement of new October Revolutions—nothing else, nothing other, nothing more or less." ■

## Ontario...

(continued from page 12)

As the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste, section of the International Communist League, warned in a November 5 leaflet distributed to teachers and other workers:

"The working class is held back by a leadership that pushes the bankrupt idea of a 'partnership' between labor and capital. From the teachers' union tops to Ontario Federation of Labour chief Gord Wilson to supposed 'militants' like the CAW's Buzz Hargrove and CUPE's Sid

on the picket lines. In its leaflet, the TL declared:

"To rally all the oppressed in struggle, labor must demand *full citizenship rights for immigrants and refugees*. Chauvinism against Quebec has long been used to undermine class struggle by tying the workers of English Canada to their own capitalist rulers. The workers movement must support *independence for Quebec* in order to break the grip of chauvinism and lay a basis for joint struggle against the English Canadian and Québécois capitalists....

"The fight for free, quality education as well as free universal health care and other basic social programs requires a fight to sweep away the entire profit-driven capitalist system and create a socialist society based on meeting human needs. For this, it is essential to forge a new, revolutionary leadership of the labor movement. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste fights to construct a revolutionary party which, in the course of class struggle, can make the working class conscious of its historic task of overthrowing the rule of capital." ■

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# Southeast Asia...

(continued from page 1)

pumping capital into Asia. As long as the USSR existed, the imperialist powers to a certain degree subordinated their conflicting economic interests to further the U.S.-led anti-Soviet alliance. These constraints have been removed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, when the U.S. engineered an infusion of \$30 billion by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to bail out (U.S. banks in) Mexico in 1995, this was openly challenged by Germany and Japan. For its part, Washington refused to join in the \$17 billion IMF bailout of Thailand recently pushed through by Japan—even while insisting on a role in drawing up the austerity measures imposed on the Thai people as part of the “rescue” package. But when the IMF put together another “emergency aid package” for Indonesia last week, the U.S. put its oar in with a \$3 billion contribution.

The explosiveness of U.S.-Japan trade rivalry was underscored recently by the threatened American embargo of Japanese cargo ships (see WV No. 677, 31 October). Japan's current drive to establish an “Asian Fund” outside the control of the U.S.-dominated IMF initially drew howls of protest from Washington. This month's APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) talks in Vancouver will no doubt feature more jockeying among the imperialists and between them and their Southeast Asian clients.

Even while losing its once hegemonic economic position, U.S. imperialism continues to project its overwhelming military might to subjugate the peoples of the semicolonial countries and to maintain an edge against its imperialist rivals. Japanese imperialism has also been moving to assert itself militarily. After amending the constitutional ban on deployment of military forces overseas, the Japanese government participated in a United Nations “peacekeeping” mission in Cambodia in 1992-93. This summer, as the currency crisis erupted, Prime Minister Hashimoto dispatched three military aircraft to Thailand, supposedly intended to “evacuate” civilians during fighting in Cambodia between Hun Sen's government and his royalist rivals.

Over 35,000 American troops are stationed in South Korea, forming a front line for U.S. imperialist interests in East and Southeast Asia. The collapse of the USSR has greatly increased imperialist pressures against the remaining deformed workers states. In Vietnam, the Hanoi bureaucracy's pursuit of capitalist “market reforms” threatens to undo the heroic victory against the U.S. and its South Vietnamese puppet regime in 1975. And today North Korea, withering under the grotesque caricature of socialism practiced by its bureaucratic rulers, is in the throes of famine. Trotskyists call for unconditional military defense of



Manila, November 1996: Protest against conference of imperialist-dominated APEC trade group. Reuters

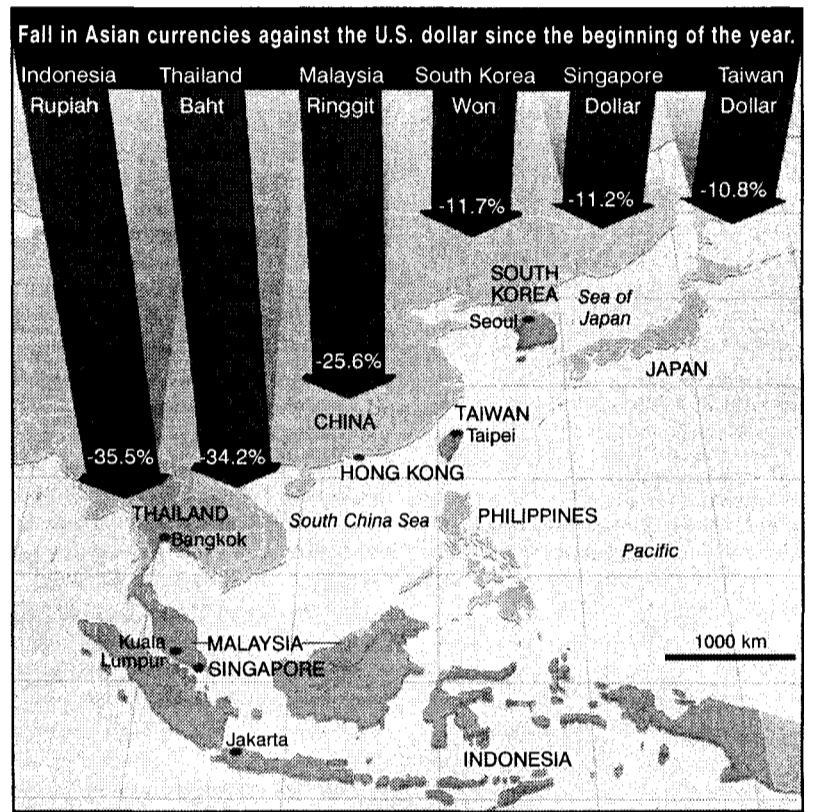
these deformed workers states against imperialism and internal counterrevolution while fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies. We call for revolutionary reunification of Korea, seeking to mobilize the powerful and combative South Korean proletariat to sweep away bourgeois class rule and smash imperialist depredation.

The growing competition between the U.S. and Japan in the Pacific, and similar developments elsewhere, underscore the Marxist understanding of imperialism as laid out by Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in his 1916 book, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, written in the midst of World War I. Polemicizing against German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky's view of an “ultra-imperialism” in which conflicts among the capitalist powers could be peacefully resolved, Lenin insisted rather that the ruthless competition for markets, resources and investments would lead only to more and bloodier world wars unless the imperialist bourgeoisies were overthrown through workers revolution. Today, Kautsky's revisionist notion has been recycled by many leftists who join with various bourgeois ideologues in proclaiming the advent of a “global economy” dominated by “transnational” corporations. Thus, pointing in particular to the rapid industrialization of Southeast Asia, David North's Socialist Equality Party has asserted that “globalization” constitutes a “qualitative transformation” of the capitalist system.

In arguing against labor reformists and union-hating “socialists” like the Northites, we stressed: “The growth of internationally competitive manufacturers in East Asia and Latin America is reversible and cannot continue at anything close to the rate of increase of the past few decades. That is a political, economic and, indeed, mathematical certainty” (“The ‘Global Economy’ and Labor Reformism,” Part Two, WV No. 661, 7 February). Now that the financial crisis roiling Southeast Asia has made this apparent to all, the Northites talk of “the shattering of the ‘Asian miracle’ and the collapse of the associated myth that this represented

some new and viable path of capitalist development” (*Workers News*, 3 October). This cynical “discovery” only underscores our characterization of North's outfit as “political bandits” who blithely change their line to suit their immediate purposes.

More significantly, the pro-capitalist



Graphic adapted from Der Spiegel, 3 November 1997

labor bureaucracies have used the spectre of “globalization” and the shift of production to “Third World” countries to line up workers in support of their “own” imperialist exploiters. The American AFL-CIO misleaders agitate for anti-Asian, anti-Mexican protectionism, blaming workers abroad for falling wages in the U.S. In Japan, where workers' living standards and jobs have come under growing attack as a result of corporate restructuring and “downsizing,” the labor tops likewise push chauvinist class collaborationism. The Zenkowan dock workers union issued a leaflet in March condemning port workers in Southeast Asia for “steal-

liberation a socialist revolution in the industrial powerhouse of Japan would be a powerful blow.”

## Asian Tinderbox

The crisis in Southeast Asia has had an explosive effect on the proletariat in these countries. In Thailand, with currency devaluation amounting to a 40 percent cut in real wages and more than 100,000 layoffs looming by the end of this year alone, thousands of workers marched in Bangkok on September 14 under the slogan, “Poor people pay off the debt while the evil capitalists sell off the country.” Subsequent protests were joined by rural peasants and broad layers of the middle class. Recalling the protests that led to the fall of the military regime in 1992, the government backed off from implementing some of the measures demanded by the IMF vultures, such as a new oil tax on consumers. Finally Prime Minister Chavalit, a former army general, resigned after threatening a state of emergency which military leaders refused to implement.

The Philippines, where union membership has nearly doubled since 1985, has been hit by a series of strikes in recent weeks, including a walkout by 5,000 postal workers, while thousands of students, teachers, office workers and others joined in a march on Manila for higher wages and against rises in the price of oil and other basic commodities. In Indonesia, thousands of workers at the state-owned IPTN aircraft manufacturer in Bandung went on strike on October 13 to demand extra pay to offset the fall in the rupiah's value and to protest corruption—a sensitive question in a



Tempo



Australasian Spartacist

Left: Women workers play a prominent role in Southeast Asian labor struggles, as in this strike in Indonesia. Right: Spartacist League/Australia contingent at Melbourne protest against Suharto dictatorship calls for release of imprisoned workers' leaders.



country where Suharto's family and cronies have made fabulous fortunes in state-sponsored business ventures.

Last month, Suharto appointed one Widjojo Nitisastro to be his special "troubleshooter" in enforcing the IMF's dictates. This is the same man to whom Suharto turned in 1966 to "restructure" the economy after the anti-Communist bloodbath the year before that claimed at least half a million lives. From the Indonesian military dictatorship and Mahathir Mohamad's Islamic regime in Malaysia to Thailand's "constitutional monarchy" and the Philippines with its veneer of "democratic" trappings, the imperialist-backed bourgeoisies are more than willing to unleash bloody repression to prop up the system of brutal exploitation.

The emergence of the proletariat in Southeast Asia bears resemblance to the development of the Russian working class under the tsarist autocracy around the turn of the century. Pointing to Russia's "combined and uneven development," where modern industry existed alongside a backward peasant economy, Leon Trotsky advanced the perspective of permanent revolution for countries of belated capitalist development, where the bourgeoisie was incapable of realizing the tasks associated with the bourgeois revolutions in West Europe. Only through the proletarian seizure of power, sup-

ported by the peasantry, can agrarian revolution, political democracy and liberation from the yoke of imperialism be achieved. This perspective was vindicated by the October Revolution of 1917, in which the numerically small but powerful proletariat, led by the Bolshevik Party, broke the chain of imperialism at its weakest link.

Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks understood that genuine socialist development could only be achieved through the extension of proletarian rule internationally, particularly to the advanced capitalist countries. The nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country," pushed by Stalin and his heirs, sabotaged the struggle for socialist revolutions elsewhere and fatally undermined the Soviet workers state, leading ultimately to its counterrevolutionary destruction in 1991-92. Writing in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky warned:

"The question formulated by Lenin—*Who shall prevail?*—is a question of the correlation of forces between the Soviet Union and the world revolutionary proletariat on the one hand, and on the other international capital and the hostile forces within the Union.... Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap goods in the baggage trains of a capitalist army would be an incomparably greater one."

This same danger is today fueling the drive toward capitalist restoration in

China, whose Stalinist rulers preach the lie that only through integration into the world *capitalist* market can the country achieve modernization and social progress. A Trotskyist party in China would link the fight for political revolution to stop the counterrevolutionary drive with the struggle for socialist revolution throughout the region.

Throughout Southeast Asia, the despotic capitalist rulers promote religious obscurantism and racist xenophobia, at times under the cloak of "anti-imperialism," to deflect plebian anger over the current crisis. Typical of this are the recent anti-Semitic diatribes by Malaysia's Mahathir singling out Western "speculator" George Soros for causing the financial crisis. At the same time, Malaysia's Islamic regime persecutes Hindus and other minorities. The existence of a powerful Chinese bourgeoisie throughout Southeast Asia has time and again provided fuel for racist demagogues, particularly in Indonesia, where reactionary Islamic forces have fomented anti-Chinese riots whose victims are typically small merchants. And in the Catholic-dominated Philippines, both Chinese and Muslims are subjected to persecution.

The necessity for a proletarian axis to cut through the region's myriad ethnic, communal and national divisions is underscored by the multiethnic character of the working class in these countries.

For example, migrant laborers regularly travel between Malaysia and Indonesia, while in Thailand, fully one million immigrants had been absorbed into the workforce until the recent crisis.

Closely linked to the fight to defend immigrants against chauvinist reaction is the need to mobilize the working class to champion the rights of women, particularly against religious fundamentalist forces. Women workers make up as much as half of the proletariat throughout Southeast Asia and predominate in many light industries, such as the Nike slave-labor plants. Young women workers have played a leading and combative role in the recent strikes in Indonesia and were prominent in the Bangkok anti-government protests.

The combative proletariat of Southeast Asia must learn the lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution if it is to throw off the pervasive oppression and poverty enforced by its capitalist rulers and their imperialist patrons. First and foremost is the need to build internationalist vanguard parties committed to the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution and serving as tribunes of all the oppressed. The International Communist League fights to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International to lead the struggle for new October Revolutions from Malaysia and Thailand to Japan and the U.S. ■

## France...

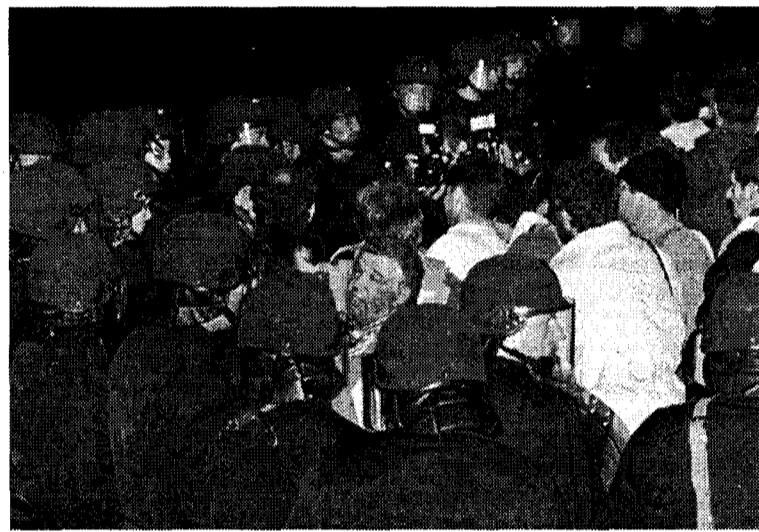
(continued from page 12)

bourgeoisie, Jospin wasted no time in deploying his riot police to disperse the truckers' barricades at key locations, especially at border crossings. Encouraged by government strikebreaking, a gang of hooded thugs in Vitrolles, a stronghold of the fascist National Front, attacked picketers with iron bars and baseball bats in order to clear the way for a convoy of scab trucks. During an earlier truckers strike in 1992, former Socialist president François Mitterrand ordered police attacks on picket lines and army tanks were used to dismantle barricades.

However, given the widespread popular support for the strike, evidenced in the large numbers of workers who spontaneously came to the blockades to contribute food and money, Jospin felt constrained from unleashing brute repression against the strikers. As the editor of the conservative daily *Le Figaro* explained: "You can have a social explosion. So that is why the government is very cautious. You can intervene, you can send the tanks, when the people are fed up with the strike.... This is not the case here" (*ITN World News*, 6 November). Nor was it the case for Juppé in December 1995.

But unlike the openly right-wing Juppé, Jospin and his cohorts were able to use their influence within the workers movement, particularly through their lieutenants in the trade-union bureaucracy. Appearing at a truckers' barricade in Le Mans, PCF transport minister Jean-Claude Gayssot assured the strikers, "You can count on us." This was only hours after Gayssot's government had unleashed cops against the strike, which this so-called "Communist" justified by appealing to "respect" for "international agreements."

The strike remained firmly under the control of the reformist union bureaucracies from beginning to end. The bureaucrats ensured that strategic points were not blocked by pickets. When wildcat roadblocks were thrown up around Paris, the cops moved in immediately. When the CFDT trade-union federation, the dominant union among the truckers, announced a sellout deal, many workers were disgusted and some tore up their CFDT union cards, but they complied and removed the barricades. While leaders of the Communist-led CGT and the social-democratic FO union federations denounced the settlement, they are no less tied to the government than the Socialist-led CFDT. The sellout was



Reuters

brokered by Jospin's government, which promised legislation supposedly "guaranteeing" that the trucking bosses would honor the accord.

The strikers demanded a pay increase to \$1,700 a month for a maximum of 200 hours of work. The agreement promised to implement this wage raise *three years* from now, and only for a tiny percentage of the workforce. For now, the truckers have been granted a pay hike of only 4 to 6 percent, while the key issue of a reduction in working hours—the average workweek is now 60 hours—was set aside for "further talks" to be completed in September 1998! After a twelve-day strike last year, the truckers won retirement at the age of 55 and a wage bonus (see "French Truckers Face Down Government, Bosses," *WV* No. 657, 6 December 1996). But the bosses simply ignored the agreement.

The predictable response of the reformist and centrist "far left" to the strike was to pressure the "Socialist"-led government to act on behalf of the workers. Lending credence to Jospin's vague promises to reduce the workweek to 35 hours by the year 2000, an article on the truckers in *Rouge*, newspaper of Alain Krivine's fake-Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), featured a display with a large "35." But what the Socialists—and their capitalist masters—intend to impose with their "shorter workweek" scheme is speedup, "flexible" hours and precarious "temporary" jobs. Workers will be forced to do the same work in 35 hours that they currently do in 40 or 50 hours. A subsequent article in *Rouge* (6 November) totally whitewashed the role of the government in unleashing cops against the strikers, blaming it all on the European Union and Chirac, while beseeching Jospin's regime "to position itself in a broad conflict" on the side of the workers.

Riot cops deployed by "Socialist" prime minister Jospin to break up truckers strike barricade along Spanish border. Ligue Trotskyste calls for workers to break with capitalist popular-front government and fight for proletarian power.



In a similar vein was a November 4 leaflet signed by a split from the workerist Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle—LO) called Voix des Travailleurs (Voice of the Workers), the Gauche Révolutionnaire group connected to the British-based Militant tendency and the Rouen-based ART anarchoid group. This propaganda bloc, burying the political differences between these competing organizations in order to better promote pure-and-simple economism, was limited to demands like a \$300 wage increase and a "massive reduction of working hours," spiced with talk about a "general strike." While the leaflet criticized the Jospin government for serving the bosses, in fact such economist "militancy" serves only to reinforce the authority of the existing union leaderships and the illusion that workers should expect a better deal with the PS and PCF in government.

The centrist Pouvoir Ouvrier, affiliated to Workers Power in Britain, openly called for a vote to the PS/PCF in last May's elections. While LO stood its own candidates in the first round, they offered support to Jospin's PS and Robert Hue's PCF in the second round where seats were contested by the National Front. And after the election, LO, in a July 15 factory leaflet, urged workers to "discuss how to exert pressure, or how to help the Communist ministers" as the best way to avoid "disappointment" in the new capitalist government.

In contrast, the LTF refused to call for a vote to any of the parties of Jospin's bourgeois coalition under any conditions. In a leaflet distributed before the elections, the LTF declared: "The alternative proposed by Jospin and Hue is a new class-collaborationist alliance uniting the PS and the PCF with bourgeois formations (Radicals, Greens and the ultra-chauvinist Jean-Pierre Chevènement). As

good defenders of capitalism, they present nothing but a 'left' cover for austerity and racism and promise to uphold the capitalist system with a 'human' face" (reprinted in *WV* No. 669, 30 May). The reformists' loyalty to French imperialism is exemplified by the PCF's chauvinist call to "produce French" and by its support to the government's "Vigipirate" racist terror campaign, in which the army is used to terrorize North Africans and immigrants. The LTF fights for full citizenship rights for all immigrant workers, who constitute a key component of the French proletariat, especially in the strategic auto industry.

The French truckers strike demonstrated the enormous social power of the organized working class. The strike-breaking role of the PS/PCF should serve as a sharp warning to those militant workers and radical youth who bought the lie promoted by the reformists and their centrist publicity agents that this government would act in the workers' interests and stop the threat of the fascist National Front. It is the task of the LTF, which has opposed the popular front from the outset, to hammer home the point stressed by Leon Trotsky in the 1938 Transitional Program, that "the People's Front dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road for fascism." The LTF fights to forge an authentically Bolshevik, internationalist party to lead the proletariat to power. Such a party can only be built through relentless political struggle against the class-collaborationist, chauvinist misleaders and their centrist hangers-on. As we wrote in the current issue of *Le Bolchévik*: "The role of this party is to introduce in the working class the consciousness of its interests and historic tasks. We are fighting for new October Revolutions, led by a reformed Fourth International." ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Transport Paralyzed by Truckers' Blockades

# France: Workers Confront "Socialist" Government Strikebreakers

PARIS, November 9—After tying up road transport throughout the country for nearly a week, French truckers began dismantling strike barricades on Friday after the Socialist-led CFDT trade-union bureaucracy agreed to a sellout deal with the trucking companies. This widely popular strike was the first working-class challenge to Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin's bourgeois coalition government since its election last May. While cynically paying lip service to the strikers' "demand for dignity," Jospin amply demonstrated to the bourgeoisie that this capitalist government headed by reformist workers parties would do its utmost to derail and suppress the upsurge of workers' struggles which began nearly two years ago. Indeed, Gaullist president Jacques Chirac congratulated Jospin for his handling of the strike.

The strike, the second by truckers in less than a year, demonstrated both the power and combativity of the French proletariat and the abject treachery of the reformist misleaders. As almost two hundred truck barricades were thrown up on highways across the country, blocking off most fuel refineries and oil depots, the government was forced to begin requisitioning and rationing gasoline, while auto assembly plants and other factories began to shut down for lack of parts. The impact of the strike extended throughout West Europe, affecting road haulage to Britain, Germany and Spain. France's allies in the European Union screamed for the government to come down hard on the strike, with British Labour prime minister Tony Blair personally phoning Jospin to lecture him that the situation was "not acceptable."

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West European bourgeoisies have launched all-sided assaults aimed at slashing the living standards of the working class and scuttling social programs which were instituted to ward off the threat of social revolution following World War II. How-

ever, these attacks have encountered resistance from the workers. Today, in much of West Europe—notably France, Italy and Britain—it is the reformist workers parties, the social democrats and "Communists," that have been called in to spearhead the attacks on working people and minorities. Thus, when Jospin's right-wing Gaullist predecessor, Alain Juppé, tried to ram through cuts in pensions and other benefits two years ago, he provoked the massive December 1995 strike by public sector workers. That upsurge paved the way for the election of the popular front—a class-collaborationist coalition of the Socialist Party (PS), the Communist Party (PCF) and smaller bourgeois parties—raising expectations among the working class that things would be different. But Jospin & Co. are no less committed to anti-working-class austerity than their conservative predecessors.

Many strikers bought into illusions promoted by the trade-union misleaders and the "left" that the Jospin government is an ally in the struggle against the bosses and the right. But it is precisely the role of the popular front—whereby the workers parties formally commit themselves to uphold capitalist property and interests—to demoralize and politically disarm the proletariat and prepare the way for inflicting decisive defeats on the workers movement. A popular-front government is a capitalist government! This point was stressed by comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), section of the International Communist League, in discussions with strikers on the picket lines. As the front page of the current *Le Bolchévik* (No. 144, Fall 1997) declares: "It Is Necessary to Break with Jospin's Capitalist Government! For a Workers Government!"

The strikebreaking character of this "left" capitalist government was clear from the outset. Despite his government's pretensions to acting as an "arbiter" between the workers and the

*continued on page 11*



As truckers shut down highways throughout France, workers' misleaders engineered sellout in service of their bourgeois masters.

## Union Tops Pull Plug on Ontario Teachers Strike

TORONTO, November 10—The largest teachers strike ever staged in North America ended in a blatant capitulation by the union bureaucrats, as 126,000 Ontario teachers returned to work today. The teachers walked out on October 27 to protest plans by Ontario premier Michael Harris' Tory government to ax a billion dollars and ten thousand jobs from the school system in order to finance a 30 percent tax cut for the rich. The strike was immensely popular. Seeing the teachers' struggle against education cutbacks as their own, thousands of parents and students joined picket

lines and strike rallies across Ontario. In the largest such rally, 25,000 strikers and supporters turned out in Toronto on November 6. Only five hours later, leaders of three of the five striking unions appeared at a televised press conference to announce an unconditional surrender.

These union officials were afraid to show their faces on the speaker's platform at another Toronto rally on November 8, which featured sizable contingents from the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) and other unions. The day before this rally, a meeting of a thousand Toronto-area pub-



November 6: 25,000 turn out for Toronto rally to support teachers strike against education cutbacks.

lic school teacher union members had erupted in anger, with screams of "betrayal," demands for a membership vote and vows to stay out. The two other unions—representing secondary school and Catholic teachers—soon caved in and announced a return to work.

Calling the strike "illegal" because it was not over purely contractual issues, the provincial government moved to get a court injunction to force the teachers back to work. But faced with enormous support for the strike, including threats of

solidarity action by the CAW and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the bourgeoisie instead relied on the workers' misleaders to end the walk-out. Amid all the militant rhetoric emanating from rally platforms during the strike, the main emphasis of the various union tops was to "get rid of this government" by returning the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP)—or even the bourgeois Liberals—to office in the 1999 provincial elections.

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