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# Internationalist



Expulsions From the  
Ligue Trotskyste de France –

## CRISIS IN 'THE ICL

*Reforge the Fourth International!*



Leon Trotsky in Coyoacán, Mexico, 1939.

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**Documents of the  
Permanent Revolution Faction**



The

**Internationalist**



*Fraction  
Révolution  
Permanente*

**Expulsions From the Ligue Trotskyste de France –  
ICL Accelerates Slide Toward Abstentionism and Centrism**

***Communism Lives***  
**In the Struggles of the Workers and Oppressed**  
**And in the Trotskyist Program**  
***Reforge the Fourth International!***

**Declaration of the Permanent Revolution Faction, 3 February 1998**

The International Communist League (ICL) has just expelled the Permanent Revolution Faction (PRF), which fought against the abstentionist and centrist course of the organization. The new course of the ICL was expressed most dramatically in its shameful flight from an important class battle led by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) to expel police from the union movement. The methodology that led to this betrayal is now being generalized by the leadership of the ICL, which seeks to justify this by revising central theses of the Spartacist tendency and Trotskyism. This new expulsion, from the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), included a member of the LTF Central Committee and a member of the former editorial board of *Le Bolchévique*. This comes after the expulsions of long-time leaders of the ICL from the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México in 1996, who subsequently founded the Internationalist Group/Grupo Internacionalista (IG). In fighting against the drift of the ICL, whose constant zigzags produced a generalized crisis in the organization, the PRF was formed in political solidarity with the program of the IG.

Developments in the international situation after the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe have had an unprecedented impact on the International Communist League. By the admission of the International Secretariat (I.S.) itself, a majority of the [national] sections have been characterized either as centrist or afflicted by centrism. In the space of a year and a half, these sections have had several conferences aimed at clarifying the situation and putting the sections back on the rails. However, one can see that these cures were unable to exorcise anything. The evidence shows that the national sections reflected (sometimes to the point of caricature) a line coming from the international leadership. As the PRF stated in its counter-report at the last conference of the LTF, the political disorientation of the ICL is the fruit of the huge contradiction and gap between the vision of the world purveyed by the international leadership, which only sees defeats everywhere, and the living reality of the class struggle. In the absence of a coherent line, we have experienced precipitous veering, oscil-

lating between frenetic activism without a strategy and (more frequently) abstentionism that flees from any external intervention. Moreover, this has led a whole series of experienced cadres to resign from the organization.

This situation of generalized crisis reflects the pressures of this new post-Soviet period on the ICL. As Trotsky pointed out in *Lessons of October*, defeats of the proletariat are always accompanied by sharp turns, even within the vanguard party. The defeat for the world proletariat and all the oppressed represented by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe has served for the ICL leadership as an alibi to justify a tendency toward abstentionism, fleeing from and avoiding struggles when they don't deny their existence altogether. To back up this policy, the ICL came to the conclusion that the historical crisis of humanity is no longer reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership, but that the proletariat itself is no longer up to its tasks, due to a "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement" (Call for the Third Conference of the ICL). Thus the zigzags characterizing the current policy of the ICL reflect the contradiction between its formal identification with the Trotskyist program and its defeatist vision of the present period.

This contradiction leads to programmatic revisions on several fundamental questions. The central thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, the founding program of the Fourth International, is that "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The negation of this thesis was at the heart of the destruction of the Fourth International in 1950-53 by Pabloist revisionism. This key phrase introduced the main document of the Second International Conference of the ICL in 1992. But now it is simply swept under the rug. A top leader of the ICL declared in a letter, directed against the IG which reaffirmed this thesis, that: "Today, the crisis is not *limited* to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes throughout the world are qualitatively more politically disoriented and

organizationally dispersed.” From that, he concluded that “we have been thrown back to before 1914.” The Permanent Revolution Faction fought this impressionist, anti-materialist and deeply anti-Trotskyist thesis head on, insisting that we are still in the imperialist era, which is the epoch of wars and revolutions—another conception that is lacking in the new declaration of principles of the ICL.

Prior to the constitution of the PRF, its members waged political struggles for a Trotskyist intervention by the LTF in the last [French] truckers strike and against the abandonment of the perspective of regrouping North African cadres in exile to forge the nucleus of a Trotskyist party around an exile journal. During the truckers strike, the I.S. refused to publish a leaflet to intervene in this first important strike confronting the racist, anti-worker popular-front government of [Socialist Party prime minister] Lionel Jospin and [Communist Party transport minister] Jean-Claude Gayssot. The faction’s members fought for the LTF to intervene with demands putting forward a program of proletarian opposition to this bourgeois government of class collaboration. It called for extending the strike and electing strike committees, to provide an arena for the confrontation of the revolutionary program with that of the strikebreaking bureaucrats; for the formation of workers defense groups against the fascists, who attacked the strike; for the defense of immigrants, to break with the popular front, build a revolutionary workers party and fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.

It is through this struggle for the revolutionary program that communists bring to the most advanced elements of the working class and oppressed the consciousness of their historic tasks, to forge a Trotskyist party tested in battle, and not through passive “commentaryism” and abstract propaganda, which is more and more the refrain of the leadership of the ICL. To justify its refusal to put forward demands for the truckers strike against the union bureaucracy and the popular-front government, the leadership of the ICL had to redefine economism, identifying it with any intervention in economic struggles. It thereby encouraged and fueled a line which already predominated in the French section, leading to the collapse of its leadership and the paralysis of the section during the strikes of November-December 1995. At that time, the abstentionist policy was concentrated in the Central Committee of the LTF, even though it thought it was following the international line. Today this policy comes directly from the I.S.

With the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR, the bourgeoisie believes its hands have been freed to unleash a whole series of attacks against the working class and the oppressed, expressed in Europe by the dismantling of the “welfare state” and the reinforcing of the racist Fortress Europe. Yet we are also experiencing a series of defensive struggles by the working class whose scope hasn’t been seen since the years 1968-69 (in Italy between 1992 and 1994, or in France with the mass mobilizations and strikes of November-December 1995, demonstrations in defense of the *sans papiers* [undocumented immigrants], against racist laws, and against the fascists of the National Front). In several European countries, the social democrats have been put into office, either alone or in

popular-front coalitions, in order to hold back the mobilizations of the workers and the oppressed and to neutralize and defeat them on the altar of class collaboration.

Currently in France, the reformist mass parties are in the popular-front government with the support of the union federations. All the components of the “far left” of yesteryear want to “help” this bourgeois government of the “plural left,” or wish it “success,” in the hopes of eventually joining it. For their part, the centrist groups which are sprouting up in various places want to “push” this capitalist government to carry out their reformist “emergency plans” (i.e., they want to beg for some crumbs from it). All of them called to vote for this popular front, or for one or another of its components. Today, as the government launches its uniformed guard dogs against the truckers, against the multi-ethnic youth of the working-class suburbs, and against the unemployed; as it continues to deport immigrants after making police lists of their addresses, vowing to expel more than 100,000; as it maintains the Pasqua-Debré [immigration] laws [introduced by the previous conservative administration], while reinforcing some of their most repressive aspects through the Chevènement-Gigou laws [on immigration and nationality, introduced by the current cabinet], and as it passes its anti-working-class measures of social regression, the situation cries out for the intervention of a party armed with the Trotskyist program in revolutionary opposition to the popular front. But in this situation, the ICL digs itself deeper into its abstentionism.

However, the bankruptcy of the current policy of the ICL didn’t appear yesterday. Already in 1996 we saw the expulsion of long-time leading cadres who had fought against an entirely fabricated struggle by the I.S. leading to its revision of the Trotskyist analysis of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The I.S. now says the bureaucracy “led” the counter-revolution in the DDR [East Germany], when in fact the Stalinist regimes capitulated before the imperialist bourgeoisie and its anti-Soviet social-democratic spearhead, paving the way for counterrevolution. These cadres also fought to defend the perspective of a principled fusion with the LQB after a common commitment to fight to drive the police out of the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda in Brazil. These expulsions of Spartacist cadres were aimed at getting rid of an obstacle to placing the ICL on its new centrist course. The fight waged by the comrades of the LQB to oust the cops is an expression of the Marxists’ fight for the class independence of the proletariat, while practically all other left organizations support, directly or indirectly, the cops and their “strikes.” But in the face of the danger of repression and as the struggle heated up, the International Secretariat of the ICL declared that it wished to “pull our hands out of the boiling water,” due to “unacceptable dangers to the vanguard,” and ignominiously abandoned this principled class battle while breaking its fraternal relations with the LQB.

Subsequently, the leaders of the ICL have invented a whole panoply of lies and subterfuges to cover their betrayal of this struggle. Today, in the face of escalating repression and attacks against the class-struggle activists in Volta Redonda, amid new judicial proceedings against them by the

L.V. Leonidov



V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky celebrating second anniversary of the Russian October Revolution in Moscow's Red Square, 7 November 1919. From David King, *The Commissar Vanishes* (1997).

popular-front and pro-cop elements, the ICL has vilely attacked the defense campaign of the Brazilian Trotskyist worker militants, seeking to drag them into the mud.

After this desertion from the class struggle in Brazil, a twisting and tortuous centrist course has dominated the ICL, deepening and generalizing as it extends to other aspects of the Spartacist program, intervention and heritage. Thus we saw a revision of the Trotskyist position on permanent revolution. In order to attack the IG on the question of permanent revolution, and to stigmatize it with denying this theory, the international leadership had to rehearse some old Stalinist-Menshevik dishes, declaring that in Mexico and all of Latin America the proletariat and peasantry must fight against remnants of feudalism in the countryside. The leadership of the ICL waged a campaign for a whole year claiming that the IG had renounced permanent revolution, when in reality it was the ICL which had reinterpreted the permanent revolution in saying that it depended on there being remnants of feudalism. In the heat of the factional battle, this position had to be "corrected," [with the ICL leadership] now saying that there are no pre-capitalist remnants in Mexico and Latin America, but without giving any explanation. As the Permanent Revolution Faction noted in a 11 January 1998 letter:

"The point is that this is not a secondary or academic question. The permanent revolution is a central question of Trotskyism. An erroneous conception of permanent revolution can only lead to political disorientation and capitulation before non-pro-

letarian class forces, in Mexico and internationally."

The PRF stressed the fact that "the agrarian revolution, like the other democratic tasks, can only be realized by the seizure of power by the proletariat, drawing in its wake the peasant masses, not in a confrontation with imaginary feudal lords but against the capitalist class power of the bourgeoisie."

Meanwhile, on the eve of the electoral victory of [Cuauhtémoc] Cárdenas in Mexico City, the ICL decided that henceforth there was no popular front around the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] in Mexico, even though the struggle against this popular front had been a position it had upheld for almost a decade. As one could expect, this only added to the general political confusion in the organization internationally. The Mexican section was thus incapable of generating any propaganda regarding those elections. Behind that lay the abstentionist policy which refused to undertake the struggle to break the workers, union and left militants, Indian peasants, women and all the oppressed from this popular front. Denying the existence of this Cárdenas popular front was in fact a refusal to fight the bourgeois nationalists and their shills on the left, and a refusal to struggle to tear the leadership of the working class and the oppressed masses away from them.

Coming one after another, these revisions and "correctives"—on permanent revolution, on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the popular front—could not hold together without giving them an elaborated revisionist foundation. Thus all the re-

cent incantations in the ICL on the effects of this period supposedly marked by an “historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the working class” went hand-in-hand with liquidating and putting into doubt the role of the party and revolutionary leadership. As Trotsky wrote in 1934, amid a battle in the Trotskyist organization in France, only months after the historic defeat of the proletariat in Germany with Hitler’s conquest of power: “It is particularly now that we must put up a pitiless fight against abstract, passive propagandism, against a policy of waiting. Along this line, the differences are certainly differences of principle” (“Summary of the Discussion,” August 1934).

Having placed all these questions at the center of the debate in the ICL, the Permanent Revolution Faction fought up to the moment that it was expelled from the LTF. Fleeing from political debate, the international leadership and the majority in the LTF declared explicitly that their tactic would be to seek to “humiliate” and “demoralize” the PRF, resorting to decorating the office of the LTF with multiple photo montages of Stalin and Castro in order to make a lying amalgam between Stalinism and the IG and PRF, even going so far as to add Maoist-style dunce caps in the place of political arguments. It all culminated in meetings with chants for “confessions, confessions,” demanding that the PRF declare whether or not it was in contact with the IG. Needless to say, it was a truly pitiful spectacle to see people claiming to be Trotskyists chanting for “confessions.” With all that, the majority only succeeded in humiliating itself by teaching cynicism to the membership, and its demoralization is already well under way.

But contrary to the expectations of the ICL leadership and its partisans within the LTF (whom the I.S. had described only a few months ago as “sycophants” who were carrying out a flatly centrist policy), all these measures did not succeed in pushing the members of the PRF into resigning. On the contrary, the PRF energetically defended its principled positions within the organization. Finally, after a pretense of internal debate, the international leadership could no longer tolerate our presence and decided to get rid of the minority with lightning expulsions, seeking to cut its losses and homogenize the ICL around its new liquidationist course. The charge selected was alleged contacts of the PRF with the IG, not bothering about the fact that the I.S. had been brandishing this threat for weeks while saying that it didn’t want to take organizational measures “for the moment.” This moment came a few days after the LTF conference, when a “control commission” was put together and sought to come into the home of militants of the PRF to make an inspection and interrogate them late at night (11:23 p.m., to be precise). When the PRF members responded that they would present themselves at the office the next day to meet with the control commission, the representative of the leadership announced to them by telephone that five minutes were up and they were expelled.

Even after the fact, in its formal expulsion letter, the leadership pretends that we “precipitated” our expulsion. Nothing could be more ridiculous, since in reality we fought to stay in the organization in order to wage a political struggle that the majority

refused to engage. After several weeks, the majority produced a document that didn’t respond to any of our arguments, but which tried instead to pretend that Trotskyist militants of the former colonial countries had capitulated to French chauvinism! The proof? That the PRF declared itself proud of the Trotskyists from France and other countries who carried out a courageous struggle under Nazi occupation to win German soldiers and sailors to the cause of the Fourth International, just as they hailed the heroic struggle of the U.S. Trotskyists imprisoned during the Second World War for their opposition to the imperialist slaughter.

For Trotskyists, discipline is intimately linked to the program. We would like to recall here the declaration made by a spokesman of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which gave rise to the Spartacist tendency. When the leaders of the RT had been suspended from the SWP and were threatened with expulsion, the RT spokesman declared: “We put forward...the proposition that discipline stems not from the organizational form of a party but from programmatic principles of the Fourth International. Again in Trotsky’s words, ‘The International is not at all a form as flows from the utterly false formulation of the Independent Labor Party. The International was first of all a program and a system of strategic, tactical, and organizational methods that flow from it’” (*Marxist Bulletin* No. 4, Part 2).

We are loyal to the program of the Fourth International of Trotsky, and to the revolutionary continuity represented by more than three decades of struggle of the Spartacist tendency, the program and tradition which the leadership of the ICL is in the process of abandoning. We have been and remain disciplined in relation to this program, and it is this discipline which led us to consider the positions of the IG, to proclaim our faction and to undertake a struggle in the ICL. The flagrant indiscipline with respect to this program is the liquidationist and self-destructive political course on which the I.S. has engaged the ICL. The I.S. has shown itself incapable of carrying out a principled class battle, not to mention leading the socialist revolution. This is not the road we have chosen. To put an end to capitalism, the need to regroup authentically Trotskyist cadres in a party that is necessarily internationalist, functioning according to the principles of international democratic centralism, is posed today with the same acuteness as it was at the time of the foundation of the Fourth International 60 years ago.

Despite the triumphalist cries of the world bourgeoisie about the so-called “death of communism,” what is dead is Stalinism, that negation and nationalist perversion of communism—which is international in its essence. Communism lives—it lives in the uninterrupted class struggle of the working class and the oppressed; it lives in the program of Lenin, Trotsky and Cannon which the Spartacist tendency defended and which it has begun to abandon and renounce; it lives in the struggles and the program upheld by the IG, the LQB, and the PRF and in the fusion of our organizations which will prepare the ground for the Trotskyist world party of socialist revolution. Forward to reforge the Fourth International!

Permanent Revolution Faction  
Paris, 3 February 1998

# Crisis in the ICL

When the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) expelled several of its long-time leading cadres in mid-1996 and shortly thereafter broke fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, ICL leaders portrayed this as a struggle that would strengthen the organization for the rough waters ahead in the post-Soviet period. Instead, it opened up a crisis that has engulfed most of the international tendency which for some three decades upheld the banner of authentic Trotskyism. The ICL's action in Brazil was a *betrayal*, abandoning a sharp class battle at the height of the struggle. This and the accompanying expulsions were the expression of a new political line, which is now being generalized with disastrous results. Today, the ICL is flailing about, abandoning historic positions one after another, spewing out lies to cover up its desertion, and losing long-time cadres in the process. In the last three years, a number of senior leaders of ICL sections in Australia, Britain, France, Mexico and elsewhere have quit in demoralization.

Yet some have taken a different path, choosing to continue the fight for the historic Spartacist program which the ICL leadership is abandoning—first in practice but increasingly at the theoretical and programmatic level as well. This led late last year to the formation of the Permanent Revolution Faction (PRF) in the Ligue Trotskyste de France, including a member of the LTF's Central Committee and a member of the editorial board of *Le Bolchévik* before that body was dissolved a couple of years ago by the International Secretariat (I.S.). After a truncated "discussion" lasting barely a month, the PRF was expelled one week after the LTF conference and just days before the ICL's international conference.

The comrades who formed the PRF had recently fought against the abandonment of an "*Iskra*" perspective toward work among North African exiles and immigrants, as the I.S. renounced plans to publish an exile journal to cohere the nucleus of Trotskyist parties in the region. Then, when a powerful national truckers strike broke out last fall in France, presenting the first major confrontation with the Socialist-led popular-front government, they called for the LTF to publish a leaflet with a program of transitional demands for struggle—which was flatly opposed by the I.S. Drawing the lessons from these fights and the crises in the sections of the ICL, the PRF emphasized that the origin of the capitulations lay above all in the international leadership, which repeatedly conciliated rightist elements up to the point that they went "too far."

In an extensive platform analyzing the crisis of the ICL and in several shorter documents, the PRF declared its political solidarity with the Internationalist Group, refuted the lies put out by the I.S., and opposed the centrist course of the international leadership on key issues of the class struggle. The PRF platform noted that the I.S. itself had characterized a *majority* of the national sections of the ICL as out-and-out "centrist" or beset by centrism—that is, their revolutionary words were contradicted by opportunist deeds. This list of centrist-afflicted ICL sections included the Australian, French, German, Irish, Italian and Mexican sections.

If the British section didn't make this short list it was because it was too inert or moribund to do much of anything at all. Basically, everything outside the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Trotskyist League of Canada was in big trouble or already down the tubes. But the PRF pointed out that it was the increasingly erratic course of the international leadership that was generating opportunism and demoralization.

## Mexico

Two of the most challenged sections were precisely the SpAD (Spartakist Workers Party of Germany) and the GEM (Grupo Espartaquista de México), which had been the focal points of the earlier operations by the self-described "new I.S." to "clean out" the "shit," as the hastily dispatched I.S. representative promised to do in France. Apparently earlier cleansing operations left a lot to be desired, because the I.S. was having a devil of a time straightening out the miscreants. In an I.S. circular of 27 May 1997, international secretary Parks complained in her inimitable style:

"Currently the IG is assiduously prowling around our Mexican group, trying to find recruits by carving them out of the living body of our Mexican section and its youth group.... Regrettably our Mexican youth group in particular is inexplicably soft and porous to the poisonous IG. Thus it is reported that some comrades *kiss* Buenaventura when they meet him—despite the fact that he was expelled from their organization as a hostile and brazenly open agent for the IG.... I could understand such behavior if comrades who engaged in it were aware that they had a deadly contagious disease (rabies, whatever) and in so doing they were effectively destroying the IG. But this is not the case.

"No less than four youth members in the Mexican section—one of whom is a dual member—have offered themselves up for contact with the IG. Worse still is the case of the dual member who allegedly encouraged a youth member to en-

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gage in an *hour-long* phone call with Negrete....

"If youth comrades in Mexico wish to be contacts of the IG, then that is simply incompatible with membership in our youth group. You can't live in our house and simultaneously rent a room in theirs."

This ultimatum was followed by a letter from another member of the I.S. asking why, since "combatting the IG was the main political priority for the GEM"—a revealing statement in itself—"no one in the GEM leadership blew the whistle on the exchanges of handshakes and embraces with the IG?" The Mexican members' actions certainly give the lie to the ICL leadership's slander that under the "regime" of the former GEM leaders now in the Internationalist Group there was a "poisonous internal atmosphere" of "denigration and humiliation of comrades," particularly the youth. The "Mexico fight" was a vulgar purge, which the GEM members recognize implicitly.

A subsequent on-site inspection of the Mexican section by SLer Barbara F. sounded a further alarm about "shaking hands with, kissing and exchanging phone numbers with lggies." Titled "Centrism and the GEM," this remarkable, not to say delirious, document carries the superhead: "A Killer Moth in the Night, the Virgin Mary in the Metro, Ashes in the Air and Permanent Revolution in Mexico." A footnote advises the reader to "see me and me alone for historical materialist illumination." And lest anyone think that her ravings lacked the imprimatur of the leadership, the author says the report is "the fruit of some hours of consultation that I had the privilege of spending with two leading cadre of the ICL, Jim Robertson and Al Nelson." Barbara F. rails that a youth member said "sometimes our opponents [i.e., the IG] can be right," while another member "raised the possibility of seeking an agreement with the party permitting ongoing exchange with the IG." She reports that a senior GEM leader (who resigned from the organization shortly thereafter) was "forced to physically take [a youth member] by the shoulders and turn him around" to stop him from talking to an IG comrade. After giving a class against the IG, Barbara reported:

"I ended the class by asking them to stand up with fists raised and repeat with me three times, 'Our International—love it or leave it.' This itself became a point of dispute in the discussion round."

One youth defended this, reportedly saying "that in order to lead at the height of revolutionary struggle we will have to chant and shout and show that we love our organization," while another objected "that I'd made him feel like he was a child back in the Catholic church."

Behind all this concern about kissing and shaking hands and shouting about "love it or leave it" is the political fact that the GEM leadership was having difficulty convincing the membership that there was no popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The GEM had warned Mexican workers, leftists, youth, women and everyone else about the Cardenista popular front ever since this front was created in the 1988 presidential elections to control opposition to the decaying semi-bonapartist PRI regime. But now that the son of former president General Lázaro Cárdenas was poised to be elected governor of Mexico City, the GEM suddenly abandoned this historic position. While

the ICL leadership now likes to ridicule this position by referring to a few "rag-tag leftists" around Cárdenas and his bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), GEM members had to argue that this was their new position in the middle of the May Day march of several hundred thousand workers, leftists, urban and rural poor. You could see the popular front in action as Cárdenas spoke from the podium of one of the sponsoring "independent" union federations.

To this day, GEM supporters find it difficult if not impossible to defend the ICL's new denial of the existence of an opposition popular front in Mexico when it is staring them in the face, particularly as the ICL is denying its own past line. We can attest, however, that they are dutifully carrying out the policy behind the "analysis": after producing *no* propaganda concerning the elections last July until long afterwards, they are now *not* intervening to call on workers and the oppressed to break from the class-collaborationist front led by Cárdenas. And this includes, in particular, at one of the strongholds of the Cardenista popular front, the National University (UNAM), where the GEM has a student fraction and where there are *thousands* of leftists who support Cárdenas from *outside* the PRD. As "socialist" supporters of the popular front in the University Student Council (CEU) refused to support secondary school student protests against the removal of the vestiges of open admissions, saying now is not the time to embarrass the new governor of the capital, Cárdenas, the GEM was nowhere to be found.

Likewise, the members of the Mexican section have been thrown into total confusion by the ICL leadership's dramatic flip-flops on the fundamental question of permanent revolution (see below).

## Germany

The other ICL section already subjected to a prophylactic "cleansing" by the I.S. was the SpAD. In 1995-96, a frame-up fight was waged over work in Germany—based on the outrageous invention that Jan Norden, long-time *Workers Vanguard* editor and member of the I.S. until the 1996 purges, supposedly claimed that the ICL was not the revolutionary leadership—or even the revolutionary formation—in the fight for political revolution and against counterrevolution in the DDR (East Germany) in 1989-90. Following the expulsions in June 1996, the "Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee" of the SL/U.S. (9-10 November 1996) declared, "The struggle against Norden and his small coterie has armed and strengthened our party," while adding warily: "but the issue is not exhausted" (*Spartacist League/U.S. Internal Bulletin* No. 61, December 1996). In a letter circulated in the ICL, the I.S. coined the slogan: "As Norden Leaves, Thousands Rejoin." Not hardly!

The series of false fights over Germany, Mexico and Brazil grievously harmed and weakened the ICL. The expulsions were followed by innumerable extraordinary plenums and emergency conferences, without providing a clear axis for struggle to the national sections. This was particularly true in Germany. Norden had pointed out in several documents that the SpAD was coming under the influence of left social democracy and retreating into a policy of obdurate abstentionism. Since the rightist elements in the SpAD defending that policy received the backing of the I.S.,



they soon implemented their line. The result was: capitulation to social democracy and abstentionism.

The former took the form of a genuinely opportunist orientation toward a faction in the Mandelite group in Germany (the RSB). The German Pablo/Mandelites are shot through with the politics of social democracy, having spent the entire post-World War II period up *through* 1968 in the SPD. Now, in a "Report on the State of the SpAD" (23 January 1997), Parks reports as an insight gleaned from a call with Nelson that the problems with the German section could be traced back to its "longstanding inability to deal with West German social democracy"!

Meanwhile, last June the long-time production manager of *Spartakist* worked behind a picket line during a Berlin construction workers strike. Instead of expelling him, the I.S. recommended that his resignation be accepted, since some of the SpAD leaders had effectively sanctioned his scabbing. The comrades of the PRF comment in their platform document on this shameful episode, showing that it is not an isolated incident. In addition, in a 26 December 1997 note to the I.S. they asked for "all the documents or reports on the intervention (or absence of intervention) by the SpAD during the student strikes last month." In response came a letter from Berlin (2 January 1998) showing how far the abstentionist policy in the German section had gone in the student strikes last November. As thousands of students were protesting and occupying campuses, what was the policy of the SpAD? "By declaring the student occupation at the Humboldt University the 'gate to scabbing,' we excluded ourselves" from any active intervention in this "one campus in the world where we have a significant concentration of students."

This ludicrous policy reached the point that:

"In the youth and in the local exec, comrades were very uncomfortable with boycotting the student general assemblies and the occupied strike headquarters. But appetites to intervene were paralyzed by the student pickets in front of the university. Standing on this 'picket line,' our youth denounced ex-member F. at first as a scab because he went into the occupied east wing."

The 2 January letter attributes this policy to "a false counterposition between propaganda and action." A letter by Jon B. for the I.S. referred to an equation by the SpAD of student pickets with workers' picket lines. No, the SpAD's policy was the predictable consequence of the line put forward by the I.S. taken to its illogical extreme—whereupon the I.S. intervenes to "rectify" the situation. Does the ICL leadership, or much of the membership, have an inkling as to what it says about their new politics that they could denounce as "scabs" students who were occupying a university? And meanwhile, they let an actual scab resign rather than expelling such a class traitor!

### Whose Chauvinism?

The crisis in the ICL came to a head in the Ligue Trotskyste de France, which is hardly accidental. France has been at the forefront of workers struggles in recent years, and here is where the ICL leaders' claim of a "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement" clashes most sharply with reality. Even before the factional struggle broke out, the I.S. recognized that the French section was in crisis. A letter by ICL

international secretary Parks (17 October 1997) reported, "The LTF has not recruited anyone since the big strike wave in December '95 when one high school student joined the youth." Given the turbulence in France in recent years, this takes some doing. Parks continued: "We noted in the [January 1996] IEC memorandum that we would recruit at the expense of our centrist opponents or vice versa. In France, it's vice versa." An I.S. resolution (reprinted below) declared, "The LTF as presently constituted and led is not viable as a section of the ICL."

At that time, Parks wrote in another letter to the I.S. (21 October 1997) that "it is very clear from the recent fight in the LTF that comrades Djura and Zakaria are potentially a very large part of the solution to our problems in the LTF..." However, when these comrades a few days later called for a leaflet in the French truckers strike, suddenly they were no longer "a very large part of the solution" but instead the focus of the "problem" in the LTF. Since the I.S. had previously declared the LTF leadership to be centrist, the latter was now declared "right centrist" while the dissident comrades were labeled "left centrists." Yet when they declared the Permanent Revolution Faction in mid-December, the I.S. quickly cobbled together a "majority faction" together with the open rightists. This "plural majority" never answered the minority's political arguments and analysis. Instead, the ICL leadership unleashed a barrage of personal invective tinged with national chauvinism against the PRF comrades.

At the LTF conference, the spokesman for the I.S. was Susan A., a former principal leader of the LTF. In her presentation, she demanded "full and detailed confessions" from the PRF comrades about contact with the IG. She cited a 22 August 1997 letter by Djura and Zakaria sharply criticizing the I.S. for abandoning the Iskra perspective toward North Africa. Refuting charges of "national narrowness," they wrote that they opposed a policy like that of the Jewish Bund in Russia, in which only North African comrades would be involved in this work. "What do they know of the history of the Bund," the I.S. rep haughtily said of the minority, adding that they must have gotten an e-mail from Norden! Aside from being false, it is deeply insulting to imply that comrades of North African origin are too ignorant to know about the Bund. In discussions last August they cited Isaac Deutscher on the fight over the Bund at the 1903 congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party, a 1986 presentation by an ex-member to the LTF's Commission on North African Work, and a recent book on the *General History of the Bund*.

This arrogant disdain is no aberration coming from the ICL leadership these days. During the fight over Mexico in April 1996, Parks reviled comrade Socorro, a Chicana former farm worker, as "dim" and having her head in a "sewer"! At that time, Parks also referred to the LQB as being "dim" about the "dangers of international affiliation." In January, *Workers Vanguard* vilely referred to the largely black Brazilian comrades, who are under vicious attack by the capitalist state, as "dangerous hustlers." And now, the LTF's *Le Bolchévik* (Spring 1998), in a thoroughly dishonest article about the French faction fight, publishes extracts of a majority document with the disgusting chauvinist headline: "The PRF Has Found Its Land of Asylum: France." At a time when the popular front government is stepping up deportations,

what is this piece of filth supposed to mean?

Then came the vile and absurd accusation by the majority that the comrades of the PRF had “capitulated to French chauvinism.” Why? Because the minority hailed the heroic internationalist work of the French and other Trotskyists in World War II who sought to recruit German soldiers and sailors (and were sent to the concentration camps and executed by the Nazis for doing so), just as they hailed the U.S. Trotskyists who were jailed for their courageous opposition to the inter-imperialist slaughter. The PRF comrades had written that the claim by Nelson, that there was “little inspiration in the sordid history of French Trotskyism,” had an element of truth but was one-sided and an example of national narrowness. The LTF majority rushed to demonstrate its allegiance to the I.S., incredibly claiming that only a couple of Frenchmen were actually involved in the internationalist work under Nazi occupation.

The charge of capitulation to French chauvinism directed against comrades from a former colony is particularly despicable coming from the French section of the ICL, whose leaders as late as 1992 refused to acknowledge that Algeria had militarily won the war of independence against France. The LTF leaders were rightly condemned by the second international conference of the ICL in that year for their position capitulating to diehard French colonialists who refused to admit defeat. This is what the ICL had to say about the French section then:

Motion: “The LTF, reflecting some kind of degeneration, has suffered a general collapse of leadership following a prolonged and increasingly wide departure from Trotskyist internationalism as indicated by the following:

- 1) a capitulatory attitude toward opponents work as expressed in the relationship with the centrist Damien Elliott;
- 2) an abstention on shop floor struggle including the absurd rationale that militant workers are opponents;
- 3) the truly weird position held in the LTF, that Algeria didn't win the war with France;
- 4) shamefully treating our Algerian supporters as colonial people without a voice;
- 5) the creation of a Bonapartist regime reflecting a fear of the ranks and to conceal the leadership's unsavory political record;
- 6) and a necessarily growing anti-internationalism and lack of collaboration expressed most sharply by a substantive breach of democratic centralism over the Algeria article.

“In conclusion the LTF is not representative of an authentic Trotskyist grouping...”

—from ICL *International Internal Bulletin* No. 40, March 1997

In fact, there is a striking continuity between the LTF's contemptible policies and functioning then and now, with the difference that today its policies are initiated, backed and enforced by the international leadership of the ICL.

At the beginning of the faction fight, another I.S. delegate, Adam, sent back to the LTF to bring it to heel, declared in a presentation that the goal of the majority would be to “humiliate” and “demoralize” the members of the minority. In their 26 December note to the I.S., the PRF comrades wrote that such tactics would only lead to “pronounced demoralization of the members by inculcating them with cynicism.” In response, international secretary Parks explicitly *endorsed* the policy of “hu-

miliation,” claiming that this would have been Lenin's policy. When a few days later Adam again declared the goal of humiliating the PRF (which *Le Bolchévik* now shamelessly repeats in print), a minority faction member told him heatedly that it was shameful to direct such remarks at comrades from a semi-colonial country. He should think, she added, about what it would mean for members of the SL/U.S. to say they intended to “humiliate” black comrades.

As for Parks' defense of this disgusting tactic, Lenin *never* engaged in such demeaning demagoguery toward communists from subject peoples. It was the Russifier *Stalin* who sought to belittle and humiliate opposition comrades of non-Russian origins. For this Stalin was roundly condemned by Lenin, in his last battle before he was fatally stricken. The Bolshevik leader insisted that proletarian class solidarity required profound thoughtfulness and sensitivity on such matters, and denounced Stalin for “carelessly fling[ing] about accusations of ‘nationalist-socialism’.” Lenin warned against “the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest” (from “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomization’” [December 1922]). Lenin's warning holds with full force today: those who carelessly fling about accusations of nationalism against internationalist communists from oppressed countries, those who talk cynically of “humiliating” and “demoralizing” such comrades, are *incapable* of leading international socialist revolution. On the contrary, they are reflecting the prejudices of, and making their peace with, “their own” bourgeoisies.

We have been measured in responding to the insults bandied about by the ICL leaders, but this endless repetition of chauvinist epithets is clearly no slip. It is part of their new politics.

### Confessions and Revisions

In the recent faction fight in the French section, the majority, on instructions from the I.S., put up a bizarre photo montage in the LTF office consisting of pictures of Stalin, Castro, Norden and Negrete. This device is a classic example of the *amalgam*, equating the fight for authentic Trotskyism being waged by the comrades of the Permanent Revolution Faction with Stalinism. The majority found this so “amusing” that when comrades of the PRF were assigned to work in a particular room doing huge translations—deliberately to keep them so busy that they could not write more internal documents, or even read the documents attacking them, many of which they were never given copies of—the displays multiplied and appeared over their workplace. (Later the majority added photos of Algerian FLN leaders Boumediene and Ben Bella.) When the PRF comrades pointed out that the majority was only demeaning itself, that it was adopting methods reminiscent of Maoism, and asked when they would start using dunce caps, the next day dunce caps appeared on the displays. Meanwhile, at meetings the majority would chant in chorus demanding “*des aveux, des aveux*” (confessions, confessions). This is quite a statement in a country where everyone on the left is familiar with the book by Arthur London on the 1948 Stalinist show trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia titled *L'Aveu* (The Confession).

The I.S. never answered the analysis by the PRF of the crisis of the ICL, of the increasing abstentionism of the I.S., of its abandonment of the struggle to forge communist nuclei in the semi-colonial countries, of its betrayal in Brazil, of its capitulation over the popular front in Mexico. After several weeks, the majority came up with a limp document inventing a new charge—that the PRF and the IG supposedly don't care about, or oppose, the fight against counterrevolution in China. This kind of "gotcha" politics, constantly inventing new charges as soon as the last batch is disproven, is the antithesis of serious Marxist polemics.

The ICL's overriding aim is to obfuscate, and sometimes it manages to confuse itself. One of the few answers to any of the political points raised by the PRF was Jim Robertson's admission, in a presentation on 20 December 1997, that the ICL's whole argument against the Internationalist Group over permanent revolution was based on a false premise. We have insisted that the struggle in Mexico and Latin America was against *capitalism* and not "feudalism," "the heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism," "feudal remnants," or "feudal peonage," as the ICL claimed, pointing out that these concoctions were thought up by the Stalinists to justify their program of "two-stage revolution." In response, the I.S. and *Workers Vanguard* insisted that this meant we were "denying permanent revolution." This is uncannily like the Stalinists accusing Trotsky of "underestimating the peasantry."

Last October, a note was circulated in the ICL reporting:

"Jim has been thinking about the Internationalist Group's position on Mexico and permanent revolution.... He had the following comments:

"The IG has the peculiar view that because capitalism is global, all the component elements of the world are necessarily capitalist as well. So since Mexico can be termed a capitalist country, the IG then insists that all the property relations within Mexico are also capitalist. (One has an image of Norden regarding Pizarro and Cortés as capitalist entrepreneurs. But these should not be confused with Andrew Carnegie—they were conquistadors from the Most Catholic Country who had hit the New World looking for loot.)

"One can make all sorts of arguments about Latin America because conditions differed in different countries at different times. The most unambiguous example of where the IG's position is wrong is the American South prior to the Civil War. The Southern system of slavery was most definitely not capitalist; indeed the purpose of the war was to bring the Southern economy in line with the capitalist North."

The comrades of the PRF pointed out in a document prepared for a scheduled discussion on the question, "Once Again on Permanent Revolution" (29 December 1997), that Trotsky never made permanent revolution dependent on there being feudal or semi-feudal conditions, and that he applied it to all countries of belated capitalist development, whether they had a feudal history (like Russia) or not (like China). The PRF also pointed out that the ICL leaders' treatment of slavery in the American South was diametrically opposed to the analysis of Marx, who insisted that slave plantations were part of a world capitalist system.

The planned discussion was postponed, and just before it was held a couple of weeks later a new document arrived, con-

sisting of a transcription of Jim Robertson's remarks the day after the faction was declared. He now discovered that what *WV* previously called "Spanish feudal colonialism" was actually "the early mercantile capitalism of Spain," and added:

"I think it's a mistake—it's an easy one to fall into—when we wrote about Mexico that there are pre-capitalist survivals. The only pre-capitalist survivals in Mexico would be human sacrifice. Because the Spaniards who came, although their heads were filled with feudal ideas, were practicing mercantile capitalism whether they liked it or not. And the hacienda system, which I gather is largely displaced most places in Latin America, was production for the world market; it was the analogue to Southern chattel slave plantations, for example. These are not pre-capitalist survivals but the product of a division of the world in which some people get the good stuff and whole areas of the world are kept down."

The whole basis of the ICL's previous argument against us on this question suddenly disappeared. From one day to the next, the members of the majority faction had to change their line. Most were struck dumb, others soon came up with the line that their previous line was just an "error of analysis," ignoring the multiple claims spread over a whole year that by disagreeing with this analysis the IG was renouncing or gutting permanent revolution. Now the *Le Bolchévique* prints the most minimal correction, saying it was "inaccurate" for them to refer to "feudal" remnants, and accusing us of making a big deal out of this characterization. It says nothing about the fact that their entire polemic against the IG over permanent revolution hinged on the revisionist claim they now withdraw.

### Lies and "Clarifications"

Marxism is a guide to revolutionary action. It is therefore exacting on questions of theory and analysis, for there are almost always programmatic implications. In the fight against the existing leaderships of the proletariat, which use all manner of false consciousness to bolster the bourgeois order, Marxists seek to achieve political clarity through polemical struggle. But over the past year and a half of voluminous "polemics" against the Internationalist Group/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*, *Spartacist* and virtually every other publication of the ICL, readers have found political *confusion* as they sought to decipher the twists and turns of the arguments against us. The writers flail about blindly, using arguments of any kind, no matter how inconsistent with previous claims. Above all, the press of the ICL, which used to be proud of its ruthless honesty, is now filled with sheer inventions, lies and smears about the IG/LQB, many of them self-contradictory.

Of course, once the practice of prevarication takes hold, it spreads quickly. We're not the only ones the ICL press is lying about, as the I.S. itself admits when it has its guard down and thinks we won't read what they say. The PRF comrades note how I.S. leaders complained last fall that the LTF was writing phony polemics against its opponents. Parks wrote (letter of 17 October 1997) that: "I experienced first hand the ways in which the LTF's propaganda disarms comrades and enables our opponents to dismiss us with a wave of the hand." Nelson writes in response, in a letter of the same date, that "the leadership...lies to

the I.S. and politically disorganizes and misleads its members.” Being unable or unwilling to combat centrist and reformist opponents, “they resort to superficial or falsified polemics, as with LO” (Lutte Ouvrière). And it’s not only the LTF. The year before, I.S. spokesman Jon B. wrote of the Spartacist League/Britain and the polemics in its paper, *Workers Hammer*:

“Unable to deal with a somewhat more complex reality, the SL/B resorted to ‘simplifying’ (i.e. falsifying) the positions of our opponents. That is the kiss of death, enabling our opponents to dismiss us as liars and thereby keep their membership sealed off from our criticisms. And if we have to lie about our opponents in order to deal with them it means we have no confidence in ourselves and our program.”

–“Opponents Work/Propaganda–SL/B and SpAD” (7 July 1996)

But lying is a learned trait, and the writers for *Le Bolchévik* and *Workers Hammer* learned how from reading *Workers Vanguard*, *Spartacist* and the internal reports by the ICL leadership. For the last two years, they have been churning out an endless stream of lying smears against us, distorting our positions, distorting the ICL’s own past positions, ignoring proven facts, picking up and retailing lies from the steel bosses’ press and pro-cop provocateurs in Brazil, all on the premise that anything goes to get the IG/LQB. The ICL smears are not only false, they are so demonstrably false that they aren’t believable.

Along with the lies comes the cover-up. Take the attack on Norden for saying in his January 1995 speech at Humboldt University in Berlin that the key to the triumph of counterrevolution in the DDR was “the absence of revolutionary leadership.” It is interesting to read in the ICL’s internal bulletins a response by Parks from 18 November 1996 to a member of the German section who pointed to a picture caption in *Spartacist* No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91), which said: “In absence of revolutionary leadership, nascent political revolution in DDR was overtaken by capitalist counterrevolution.” According to Parks, this caption “contradicted the main line of our analysis on Germany on the question of revolutionary leadership.... Indeed that reveals the two counterposed lines which wrongly coexisted in the organization until comrade Nelson engaged the political fight with Norden.” We pointed to that same picture caption in *The Internationalist* No. 2 (April-May 1997). It turns out that the ICL leadership now rejects this, but they haven’t said so publicly.

Even more interesting is how the I.S. covers up *internally*. This is shown in a curious document by ICL leader Andrews, described in ICL *International Internal Bulletin* No. 40 (March 1997) as an “edited transcript” of his remarks at the January 1996 International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting “as clarified in remarks at the SL/U.S. CC plenum on 9 November 1996.” This concerns the same issue of whether the ICL was the revolutionary leadership in Germany in 1989-90. At the London IEC meeting, Andrews had gotten up to say that this way of posing the question was metaphysical, that we were “a challenge for revolutionary leadership,” that “we were in the struggle to become” a revolutionary leadership. When Norden cited this a week later at the conference of the SpAD, saying that was a correct way of putting it, this caused consternation among the leadership and an urgent phone call was placed to the ICL center to get a

transcript of Andrews’ remarks. Now in the edited version of his remarks, “clarified” nine months later, we read that “we were revolutionary leadership in the struggle to *become*” (*sic*). So with careful editing and clarifying, Andrews no longer says that the ICL was a challenge for revolutionary leadership, that it was in a struggle to become the revolutionary leadership, but that it *was* the leadership, albeit somewhat ungrammatically engaged in the struggle to become (what?).

We recall also that when *Workers Vanguard* declared that there was no longer a popular front in Mexico, this too was termed a “clarification” of its line. So when the ICL talks today of “clarifying” something, keep a sharp lookout.

### Bureaucratic Methods and Centrist Politics

The political *methods* of the ICL leadership show signs of pronounced degeneration, but *behind the high-handed bureaucratic methods is a centrist political course*. Precisely because the I.S. undertook a pre-emptive strike to eliminate in advance internal opposition to its desertion in Brazil, and because the new line of the organization is in the process of developing, we did not rush to make a final judgement of where the ICL is going. But with the further development of the internal crisis and the experience of the factional struggle by the PRF, it is possible to draw some further conclusions. The ICL leaders themselves feel the need to elaborate their centrist new course.

We have pointed to a developing “drift toward abstention” on the part of the ICL, drawing a parallel to the American left social democrat Daniel De Leon, whose abstract leftism was combined with a refusal to intervene in “partial struggles” of the working class. The I.S.’s line on the French truckers strike confirms that this is a conscious policy. As the comrades of the PRF noted in their presentation to the LTF conference, many of the crises in the sections of the ICL have their origin in the glaring contradiction between the international leadership’s view of a post-Soviet period of all-around defeats for the working class and the reality of sharp struggles providing openings for intervention by communists. Whether in a phase of frenetic activism or when keeping the membership immersed in internal tasks, the I.S.’s zigzag course has provided no coherent direction for the class struggle. This is not accidental.

Why did the I.S. desert from the struggle in Brazil? Just because they couldn’t line up the LQB against Norden and Negrete, as the Mensheviks of the misnamed Bolshevik Tendency claim? This is penny-ante Kremlinology, not Marxism. Because of cowardice, as the BT *and* the ICL pretend we say? We accuse the ICL leadership of something far worse—committing a betrayal of the Trotskyist program. The I.S.’s abandonment of the *Iskra* perspective toward North African exiles points to the origins of this betrayal. It is not just that the I.S. feared the “boiling water” of the class struggle in Brazil, judging that the “risks to the vanguard” (namely itself) were “unacceptable”—though they would be happy to leave the LQB to face the consequences in a struggle the ICL had encouraged. It wasn’t simply an untested leadership realizing that it didn’t know what it was doing in a hot situation. Dropping the perspective of a journal directed to North African exiles and immigrants in Europe indi-

cates that the I.S. is *turning its back on the struggle to cohere communist nuclei in semi-colonial countries.*

The platform of the Permanent Revolution Faction states this conclusion, and points to an earlier parallel—the case of the Italian centrist social democrat G.M. Serrati. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Serrati opposed the theses on the national and colonial question presented by Lenin, saying they harbored the danger of opportunism. With a welter of leftist verbiage about how Lenin's theses could open the way to class collaboration with the bourgeoisies of the colonial countries, Serrati was in fact continuing the shameful policy of the Second International of failing to fight against colonial and semi-colonial domination by the imperialist bourgeoisies.

De Leon in the U.S., Serrati in Italy—these are representatives of a left-centrist variant of social democracy (Serrati's wing of the Italian Socialist Party was known as the Maximalists) in the pre-World War I period. This is the direction in which the ICL leadership is heading today. They deny there is a popular front in Mexico, in order not to have to fight to break workers, students and others from it. They refuse to put out propaganda with a transitional program in the first major strike against the popular-front government in France, thus leaving the field open for centrists who seek to pressure the popular front in power. The ICL now says that the Stalinists “led” the counterrevolution in East Germany, thus amnestying the Social Democrats who, as the ICL previously (and correctly) said, were the spearhead of capitalist reunification.

The PRF documents reveal that in polemicizing internally against the Internationalist Group, ICL leaders explicitly *accept* the supposed reality of the bourgeois/reformist “death of communism” lie, just quibbling over the terminology. And in the next breath, the ICL *rejects* the central thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, namely that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. In arguing (against the IG) that this thesis is no longer “adequate,” that there has been a “qualitative retrogression” in the consciousness of the working class itself, it provides an argument for *not* intervening with a revolutionary program to fight against the present reformist leaderships. In drawing defeatist conclusions from a historic defeat for the world proletariat—the counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe—the evolution of the ICL points to a recurring phenomenon in the history of the Marxist movement.

Trotsky noted that the bloody defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 led to the first appearance of the anti-Marxist conception of an “isolated socialist state,” in the program of the German Social Democrat Vollmar at the end of that decade. The defeat of the German Revolution in 1923 was a major factor in the consolidation of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, whose line of building “socialism in one country” was a justification for not fighting for socialist revolution internationally. In the 1930s, the world-historic defeat for the proletariat represented by Hitler's 1933 victory in Germany was the excuse for the Stalinized Comintern's going over to reformism, in the form of the class-collaborationist “popular front” which became the policy of CPs around the world from 1935 on.

Nor does the logic of the class struggle spare those who call

themselves Trotskyists. When after World War II there was a relative stabilization of capitalism in Europe while Stalinism expanded its sway, this led the principal leader of the weakened Fourth International, Michel Pablo, to conclude that the fight for an independent revolutionary leadership was no longer key. This Pabloist revisionism ultimately led to the destruction of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

As we have pointed out (see “The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles,” in *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997), counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states has given rise to a period in which conditions are extremely *uneven* around the world. In the countries of the former Soviet bloc, there has been a pronounced rise in chauvinist terror as new capitalist rulers compete in using nationalist poison to consolidate their regimes. In China, the drive toward counterrevolution is in full swing, but faces an increasingly restive proletariat. Southeast Asia is a powderkeg as a result of the meltdown of its capitalist economies last year. In the U.S., class struggle was at a historic low point until the Teamsters UPS strike last year, the largest labor battle in decades. Latin America has seen numerous general strikes, as well as peasant revolts in Mexico and Brazil. The West European bourgeoisies, emboldened by the destruction of the USSR, have launched an across-the-board offensive against the so-called “welfare state,” but have been met with sharp working-class resistance.

The counterrevolution that swept East Europe has not supplanted the crisis of revolutionary leadership but if anything made it more acute. Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928): “The sharpening contradictions of this struggle for ‘stabilization’ or rather of the struggle for the further existence and development of capitalism prepare at each new stage the prerequisites for new international and class upheavals, that is, for new revolutionary situations, the development of which depends entirely upon the proletarian party.” Seven decades later, the capitalist system is no more stable, and future development still depends entirely upon a revolutionary proletarian leadership.

Today, the Internationalist Group, Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and Permanent Revolution Faction join in fighting to reforge the Fourth International on the program of authentic Trotskyism. We publish here the documents of the PRF in its struggle against the centrist course of the ICL leadership, as a contribution to that fight and the fusion our organizations. Trotsky noted in his 1937 pamphlet “Stalinism and Bolshevism,” written at the height of a previous “crisis of Marxism,” that “Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions.” Thus, “the routinists, centrists and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search for a ‘New Word’.” At the same, Trotsky wrote, “the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come.” This is the task that we carry on today. ■

# *Documents of the Struggle of the Permanent Revolution Faction*

*Expelled by the ICL*

## **Motions Passed at Enlarged Meeting of the International Secretariat of the ICL, 1 November 1997**

**Motion:** The LTF as presently constituted and led is not viable as a section of the ICL. Manifestations of the LTF's incapacities include:

- a) hostility and damage to young comrades won to our program which they seek to fight for;
- b) failure to recruit in an objectively favorable situation where our centrist opponents are obviously growing at our expense and resistance to vigorously and intelligently pursuing contacts who seek us out;
- c) profound disorientation on our opponents and their actual political line, resulting in propaganda which falsely attributes positions to our opponents they don't have, thus enabling them to dismiss us as liars, and otherwise ignoring reality;
- d) "dim disobedience" masking political opposition in the LTF leadership to directives from the I.S. and a willful undermining of our international democratic centralist norms in sealing the I.S. off from real information on the work of the LTF and simultaneously shielding the LTF membership and the youth org. from seeing I.S. criticisms of the LTF leadership.

The ICL badly needs a French section. In view of the rapid disintegration and centrist adaptation of the LTF, the I.S. will station...as the I.S. representative to the LTF until the upcoming third international conference. The presence of an I.S. rep is necessary to insure that the comrades in our French section and its youth group can exercise their rights and responsibilities to participate in the preconference discussion. Through this process and with an I.S. rep on site we aim to cohere an indigenous collective leadership of comrades willing and capable of fighting for our program.

**Motion:** The gravity of the situation of the French section mandates allocation of time at the third international conference for a commission on the LTF. The I.S. strongly urges all members of the LTF and the French youth group to attend the conference.

## **Letter to the Ligue Trotskyste de France and the International Secretariat**

by Djura  
[translation]

Paris  
5 November 1997

Dear comrades,

The I.S. has informed us that it does not believe that the LTF should put out a leaflet on the truckers' strike because the LTF would be incapable of doing this in light of its current state (point made by Jon B. to Lisa G.). But at the same time, it asks us to write a "journalistic" box for *WV*. The I.S. also advises the section to simply continue the subscription drive.

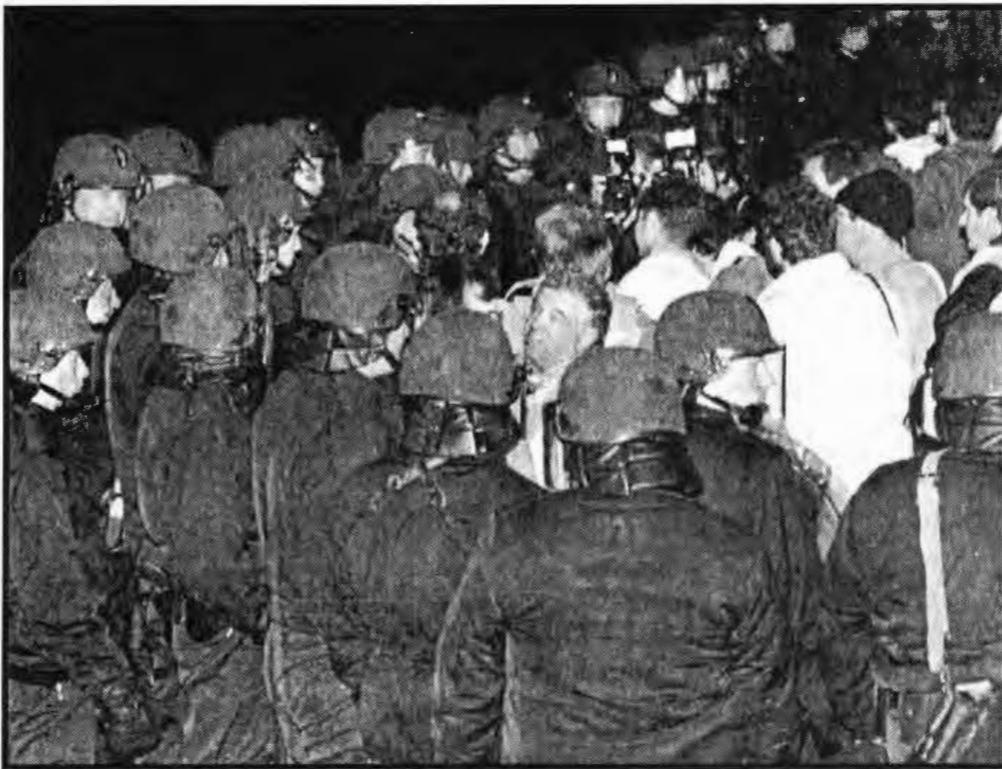
In her 3 November report, Lisa G., in consultation with the I.S., stresses that her worry regarding our intervention in the strike was that comrades would propose "tactics" to the strikers, such as "spreading the strike" and "strike committees."

It is true that the section is in bad shape politically, but to propose not having a leaflet, as the I.S. does, far from clarifying things here can only have disastrous consequences by encouraging the paralysis of the section.

The present class struggle should allow us to bring the Trotskyist program into the working class, to offer perspectives of struggle to those who are seeking an alternative against the popular front.

The truckers' strike has started to polarize some sectors of the working class, such as the Renault-Douai plant, which works on the just-in-time principle and where the workers have shown support for the strikers. In the south of France, the school bus drivers have joined the strike movement. The places where the struggle is sharpest include Marignane and Vitrolles, municipalities governed by the National Front [the fascist party of Jean-Marie Le Pen]. Last night in Vitrolles, company goons widely known to be fascists, hooded and armed with baseball bats and iron bars, attacked the picket line and injured several strikers. They were emboldened to act by the fact that in Strasbourg, Lille, Ile de France [the region around Paris] and on the Spanish border, the cops of Jospin's popular-front government had attacked the strikers. Meanwhile, Gayssot, the Communist Minister of Transport, struts around on the picket

Cottureau/Reuters



**French truckers confront a squadron of paramilitary riot cops dispatched by Popular Front government to break up blockades on highway near Spanish border on first day of strike last November.**

lines "supporting" the strikers against "the bosses." In the midst of this situation, a few days ago Jospin vowed to deport all the *sans papiers* [undocumented immigrants] who are still without papers (around a hundred thousand).

A fighting propaganda group must seize this occasion to bring the revolutionary program into the class struggle. Thus it is important to have a leaflet and to raise the question of extending the strike to rail transport, to the airports (Marignane is already occupied by the strikers while Roissy [Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris] is surrounded by the CRS riot police); spreading this strike to auto, with its large component of immigrant workers, and toward the factories which are de facto paralyzed.

It is necessary to call for elected strike committees and the formation of workers defense groups to defend against fascist attacks and state repression, linked to the question of defending immigrants against racist terror. In a situation of mass unemployment and with a sector of workers whose normal workload is 240 hours [per month, almost 60 hours per week], it is necessary to put forward the sliding scale of wages to fight unemployment, as stated in the Transitional Program.

But instead of this, the I.S. proposes that the LTF write a box on the strike for the next *WV*, a sort of "eyewitness report," in other words an inoffensive commentary from afar rather than a revolutionary intervention in this class struggle. What is more, the I.S. directed the LTF to content itself with selling subscriptions, in other words to carry on with routine work in the midst of class struggle.

A subscription campaign is a crucial tool for building the party through its newspaper, but it must not be the pretext for

an inoffensive policy of turning one's back on the possibility of extending the present struggles and transforming them into a confrontation with the popular front. There is a burning need to bring revolutionary consciousness into the sectors which are in struggle.

The policy put forward by the I.S. fits in completely with the political appetites of the rightist elements within the LTF. This is not the way to build the revolutionary party. Centrism can be fought only through a struggle for political clarity and a real fight, *now*, to bring the revolutionary program into the potentially explosive class struggles which are taking place at this moment in France. That is our role.

Djura

## Letter to Parks

by Al Nelson

6 November 1997  
Bay Area

I just read the letter from Djura to the I.S. dated 05 November. You were certainly right that it echoed the fight against Gino in 1994 on the question of intervening in the struggles of the working class on an economist basis instead of as a Marxist fighting propaganda group.

The main point then was drawn from Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?" that to approach the working class merely on the basis of trade union militancy (i.e., seeking to lend the economic struggle a political character) had the effect, whatever one's intentions, of reinforcing the authority of the existing trade union leadership. The role of Marxists is to bring into the working class an understanding of the capitalist system as a whole and accordingly to attack the political character of the reformist political and union leaderships *and their centrist tails* for their role of stabilizing capitalism by keeping the struggles of the proletariat confined to the level of trade union militancy, i.e., within the framework of capitalist ideology.

It is the original question of what level of consciousness can the working class achieve spontaneously. The Marxists answer: only trade union consciousness, which is insufficient for a struggle to overthrow the capitalist class as a whole and take power in their own name. For this a higher consciousness is required.

This was the heart of the fight with and within the LTF in December 1995. Unable to produce their own communist

propaganda a leaflet was written for them by the I.S. At the time Bruce said the LTF had *never* produced a leaflet like this and they would be shocked by it. They certainly were. First they refused to take it to the printer and then didn't want to distribute it. As Gino had done in Italy, the LTF was capitulating to the opportunist left.

The difference was that Gino wanted to *actively* intervene in the class struggle on a centrist basis using the general strike slogan as the common denominator, thereby reducing our differences with our centrist opponents to a *quantitative* economist basis, i.e., my general strike is longer than your general strike. If he had been successful the Italian section would have been merely the left wing of the popular front.

In contrast in 1995 the LTF's chronic adaptation to their centrist opponents took the form of paralysis, i.e., *abstentionism*, simply vacating the field of political battle, yielding the terrain to the centrists.

Now it seems that both left- and right-centrist tendencies are at work in the LTF. The left-centrists want to "intervene" in the truckers strike on the purely trade union basis of strike tactics, while the right-centrists prefer to ignore the strike altogether. Both are capitulating to the opportunist left who want to conceal the fact that the Socialists are as determined as the Gaullists to carry out austerity measures against the French working class. The right-centrists prefer to be organizationally irrelevant; the left-centrists wish to intervene on an openly centrist program.

The common denominator between both expressions of centrism is that both regard our Trotskyist program to be irrelevant.

So comrade Djura defines our revolutionary program as calls to spread the strike, elect strike committees, etc. The proposal to sell our Marxist party press to the strikers and to take the subdrive into the strike is derided as "routine work in the middle of class struggle." In the politically backward class terrain of the U.S. we sold over 100 subscriptions to UPS and BART workers. That's 100 workers who will be reading a revolutionary Marxist newspaper, starting with our special strike supplement that intentionally said very little about strike issues and concentrated on a broader Marxist analysis that led to the question of which class shall rule.

Presumably this would be regarded by Djura as reflecting a passive "safe policy" as opposed to...what? The Clifite ISO<sup>1</sup> that "intervened" in the UPS strike on the basis of contract demands and tactics that were ever so slightly to the left of the Teamster leadership? For the ISO this was explicitly the expression of their program of pressuring the union leadership by "rank and file" militancy. They too called for mass meetings with democratic votes. Indeed, had not the U.S. left been so indifferent to the strike and the ISO so exclusionist, Djura's perspective would have posed the question of blocking with the ISO on this basis, perhaps in some kind of sandbox ORO strike support coalition.

So while giving lip service to fighting the abstentionist "right-

<sup>1</sup>International Socialist Organization, affiliated with Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party.

ist elements in the LTF," Djura's main fire is reserved for the I.S., following an absolutely classic centrist pattern. See for instance, Trotsky's "Centrism and the Fourth International" (1934). For Djura the main enemy is not the rightists in the LTF but the democratic-centralist Leninists in the ICL leadership, who she perceives as being an obstacle to her appetite to intervene in the truckers strike on an explicit economist programmatic basis.

To approach the working class on the basis of its existing trade union consciousness is to negate the role of consciousness in history by negating the role of the revolutionary party as the subjective factor in history, the *only* instrumentality through which the consciousness of the proletariat can be raised to the level of its necessary historic role of overthrowing the capitalist order internationally.

The "role" comrade Djura would have the LTF play represents an accommodation to the existing consciousness of the workers and therefore the negation of a revolutionary, internationalist perspective.

In addition to reviewing the leaflet that was issued in 1995 (when Juppé and Chirac were running the show), comrades could also review the letter I sent to the LTF at the time, regarding the role of a small propaganda group confronted with mass struggles by the workers.

I was appalled when I read in M.'s letter that when the LTF heard that "Jim said" France had become radical their only reaction was to wonder *when* this had happened! The Socialists were swept into office after the strikes in 1995 stopped the austerity drive by Chirac/Juppé, with the expectation that Jospin's Socialists would reverse those policies.

But all over Europe it is the Social Democrats who have been chosen to be more effective in carrying out these major assaults on the lives of the workers. The present strikes in France, and their echoes in other countries, pose the possibility of undermining the influence of the Social Democracy among the more conscious workers. Under these conditions a small revolutionary propaganda group could experience rapid growth among both workers and students, *provided* we intervene as Leninists on the basis of our revolutionary program, not on the basis of trade union economism, i.e., as the most left tail of social democracy.

Comradely,  
Al Nelson

## Left in Form, Right in Essence

by Parks

7 November 1997

Comrade Djura's 5 November letter to the I.S. and LTF is a malicious and dangerous falsification. The impact (and intent, comrade Djura?) is to split the LTF from the international in the context of the rapid disintegration of the LTF and the *conscious* and *willful* deception and undermining of international democratic centralism by the LTF leadership. This forced the I.S. to pull a full IEC member from a key assignment ... and station him in France as an on-site I.S. representative to insure that the com-



rades of the LTF and its youth organization participate fully in the discussions and preparations for the third international conference of the International Communist League. Immediately thereafter the right-centrist wing of M.'s bonapartist regime quit. Now the left-centrist Djura takes HF's place as the spokesman against intervention by the ICL in our French section and writes fictitious stories to bolster her position. Amid the danger there is a clear political lesson for comrades: all manner of opportunism (right or left centrism, for instance) is nationally based. Djura's document is an alarm to all members of our democratic-centralist international. It is essential for the ICL internationally to fight for *our* ICL section in France.

Let's start with the facts and their falsification by comrade Djura. The truckers strike began and the LTF made no plans to intervene. To their credit, and in complete contrast with our...Paris local, our small Rouen branch was actively scouring the area for barricades and strikers to engage in political discussion. M. and HF made a pathetic token effort the first day, heading out late in the morning, and predictably sat in a traffic jam for hours. No plans for a full-scale mobilization of our comrades to intersect *this first strike against the popular-front government* were made.

Upon hearing this, on Monday, 3 November, the I.S. intervened and insisted that the LTF get out of the office and to the picket lines around Paris, and elsewhere around the country, to intervene with our revolutionary political program as reflected in our propaganda. I personally gave the LTF a deadline of Thursday, 6 November to write a short article for *Workers Vanguard* "reflecting the LTF's direct intervention in this strike." The purpose of these instructions was not, as Djura would have it, "safe commentary from afar" but to prod the LTF at the point of an international bayonet to get out to the pickets. No article came in on Thursday, nor have we received any written report on the LTF's intervention in this strike.

Incredibly, Djura charges the I.S. with instilling "routinism" in the LTF through this intervention. In contrast with Djura's fairy tale, the factual history of the LTF's intervention in strikes has been either: total *abstentionism* or abject *capitulation* to our centrist opponents. Thus in the 1996 truckers' strike the LTF did not go to a single picket or barricade! Similarly during the Renault strike against the plant closing in Belgium, the LTF *boycotted* a multinational demonstration of thousands of strikers in Paris. When the LTF eventually went to a large strike protest/demonstration in Belgium, it took sharp intervention by the I.S. to correct the LTF's centrist impulse to advise the strikers from outside and afar on strike tactics against a factory closing rather than seeking out the vanguard of workers with our revolutionary propaganda, i.e., to engage workers interested in discussing questions such as how to unite the working class and defend immigrants and defeat the fascists, how to oppose Nato imperialism in Bosnia, why the collapse of the Soviet Union has ushered in a period of vicious anti-working-class assaults in Europe led by the Socialist Parties, their ex-Stalinist handmaidens and their centrist tails. (Perhaps G. recalls this phone call we had prior to the team's departure to Belgium.)

In other words, the intervention by the I.S. in the LTF

regarding the current truckers' strike was for a sharp *break* with the LTF's *routine* of abstentionism and capitulation. The LTF comrades have been partially successful. I am grateful that some subscriptions have been sold to strikers. This gives us a precious readership in the working class, the essential foundation for building a *revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist* Leninist party in France.

Djura argues that a leaflet advancing strike tactics is the only appropriate way for a revolutionary party to intervene and the I.S. blocked this. Nobody, not even comrade Djura, could take her own words seriously. To argue that the LTF comrades should stay in the office and write a leaflet was directly *counterposed* to allocating these same cadre resources to get out and intervene in the strike with our propaganda. If the strike continues, I am not opposed to putting out a supplement or leaflet but it won't be the "militant" economism proposed by Djura. However flawed the current issue of *Le Bolchévik* is regarding up-to-date polemics against our opponents, the front-page article has in it the main point we want to make to these strikers: *our party did not vote for this popular-front government*. The article further explains why and how this popular-front government is administering the anti-working class austerity measures, targeting the most vulnerable immigrant section of the workforce first and thus paving the road for the fascists, who are growing. The article—and the excellent UPS supplement included in this issue—explains therefore that economic struggle is insufficient, what is necessary is a *political* struggle against the capitalist system which goes beyond the framework of strike action, and this requires the instrumentality of an authentic Leninist party to lead the proletariat to its own class rule.

Our task is to take advantage of the contradictions that *counterpose* the class struggle to the popular front. Instead Djura emphasizes the combativity and spontaneity of the workers (see V.I. Lenin in *What Is To Be Done* on the need to *combat spontaneity*). But our *unique* task is to warn the workers of the character of their reformist leaderships whose popular-frontist politics are ultimately and at all costs aimed at *preserving the bourgeois state*. Djura's arguments are indistinguishable from the militant economism of Norden in newly reunified capitalist Germany and especially the arguments by Gino (see *International Internal Bulletin* No. 39 "On the General Strike"). Thus it was extremely frustrating to read concrete evidence of how the ICL's opportunity for intervention in this strike was being *blocked* by the LTF. While the LTF insists there are no barricades or pickets around Paris, the French and international newspapers carry stories every day of the "Communist" ministers in the government spending hours at the barricades trying to convince the strikers that this new popular-front government is different and will really defend the workers' interests if only the strikers are patient and give them a chance! Our purpose is to counterpose ourselves *programmatically* to the politics of the bureaucracy, the reformists, and their apologists on the fake left.

Djura argues that our role is to agitate to spread the strike to rail transport, to the airports, to auto. I ask comrades in the LTF and Djura herself to take her own arguments seriously

and consider *how* you would spread this strike. We have no communist fractions in industry in France, no instrumentality and no authority inside these unions. Thus from the outside Djura proposes that we agitate these unions which are led by the Socialist Party and Communist Party, who are part of this popular-front government...to spread the strike. Thus if you take Djura's arguments and think about how to implement them you run right up against deep illusions in the popular front—make the labor bureaucrats and the popular front fight.

Djura's call to spread the strike to shut down all transportation in the country and private industry boils down to a call for a general strike, even though she doesn't use those words. In general, Marxists do seek to broaden and deepen the class struggle, but we do not engage in empty "general strike" phrasemongering. Having intelligent strike tactics depends on a concrete knowledge of the industry and its interconnections with other workers. When we do propose tactics we are *serious* about proposing things that actually have a possibility of winning, and not posturing as the most militant windbags on the left. Where we have had the possibility to implement an extension of the strike, e.g., in the big coal strike of 1978-79 in America, our steel fractions agitated for hot-cargoing coal. That was a concrete step which would have transformed the strike and broken down the isolation of the miners. In Britain in the miners strike of 1984 we called for a fighting triple alliance—a call for united strike action specific to the key and interlinked industries which would have been the precondition to a generalized *political* struggle by the proletariat against the government.

In the recent UPS strike, which was the largest confrontation between labor and capital in the U.S. in years, we did not call for spreading the strike to auto, rail or even the rest of the Teamsters union. We did attack the bureaucrats' policy of porous picket lines and made the point that the UPS strike could be a launching pad for organizing the unorganized workers in the same industry. But the thrust of our supplement was to address the key political questions of the Democratic Party, the need to fight racism, the nature of the state, our opposition to government intervention in the unions, sharply criticizing groups like the ISO for pushing such intervention. Norden's Internationalist Group issued a "militant" economist leaflet immediately. We were more interested in drawing the political lessons and our supplement was grabbed by hundreds of workers and mailed to the 100 or so strikers who bought introductory subscriptions.

Against repeated intervention by Lisa G. in Paris to create an introductory sub for strikers, the LTF CC refused. The fundamental of Leninism that the party press is the scaffolding which supports the construction of a party is thrown out the window by the LTF CC and Djura who sneers that "A subscription campaign...must not be an excuse for a safe policy which turns its back on the possibility of spreading the present

struggles and transforming them into a confrontation with the popular front." Thus in turning her back on selling subscriptions to strikers, Djura in fact blocks with the "right centrist abstentionists" of the LTF. Left in form, right in essence: QED.

Like all centrists, Djura covers this tailism of the popular front with a belief in the spontaneity of the workers—that's the meaning of her call for strike committees abstracted from a revolutionary political program. Against Djura's arguments, Lenin teaches us in *What Is To Be Done* that revolutionary consciousness does not exist inherently in the proletariat but must be brought to the class from *without*. I don't know whether Djura even takes her own arguments seriously. Unless these arguments are picked apart and exposed she will succeed in sowing confusion and distrust, particularly among the youth, against the international and our revolutionary program and lead the LTF further down the path of centrist accommodation to the popular front. Notably our centrist opponents have issued leaflets rather indistinguishable from what Djura proposes. More notably, Djura says *not one word* about our centrist opponents in her argument for a leaflet. Yet our direct competitors are not the PCF, but Pouvoir Ouvrier<sup>1</sup>, the GR<sup>2</sup>, LO<sup>3</sup>, etc., and it is precisely in the crucible of class struggle that these centrist opponents are most vulnerable. As noted in our IEC memorandum, we will recruit at the expense of our centrist opponents or vice versa.

The LTF is a very small, very unstable propaganda group. If we are going to stabilize our section on a firm programmatic basis it is imperative that comrades have an accurate view of our tasks in a situation of mass strikes. Our strength is our *program* not our numbers nor our ability to compete on an organizational level with the mass reformist parties or the union formations themselves. The LTF is often so distant from reality that their discussions are surreal. Thus during the struggle to defend the *sans-papiers* immigrants in St. Bernard church in the summer of 1996, the LTF actually engaged in argument over *who* should organize defense of the *sans-papiers*, the LTF or the CGT<sup>4</sup>! Such a grotesquely distorted vision of our own party in relation to our competitors in the labor movement is the continuing source of opportunist errors and abstentionism in the LTF.

Not accidentally, it was in Trotsky's polemics against French syndicalism (see "The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question," 4 January 1931) that he wrote:

"1. If the theoretical structure of the political economy of Marxism rests entirely upon the conception of *value* as materialized labor, the revolutionary policy of Marxism rests upon the conception of the *party* as the vanguard of the proletariat.

"Whatever may be the social sources and political causes of opportunistic mistakes and deviations, they are always reduced ideologically to an erroneous understanding of the revolutionary party, or its relation to other proletarian organizations and to the class as a whole."

These writings by Trotsky exist in French. I urge the comrades, not least comrade Djura, to read this and think about it and where you are heading.

For a French section of the ICL!

Comradely,  
Parks

<sup>1</sup>PO, affiliated with the British Workers Power group.

<sup>2</sup>Gauche Révolutionnaire, affiliated with the British ex-Militant tendency (now Socialist Party) of Peter Taafe.

<sup>3</sup>Lutte Ouvrière, one of the three large pseudo-Trotskyist organizations in France.

<sup>4</sup>General Confederation of Labor, led by the Communist Party

## Document by Zakaria

[translation]

Paris

8 November 1997

What is the point of departure of the controversy over Djura's 5 November document? It opposed the *refusal* to put out an LTF leaflet to intervene in the truckers' strike which is shaking the country and which represents the first social conflict of this scale confronted by the popular-front government. A "Communist minister" of transport is the first line of defense of the bourgeoisie's interests. The urgent task is precisely to oppose the popular front, the reformist leaderships of the bourgeois workers parties and trade unions, and to combat the centrists who conciliate and smooth things out for them. To build the revolutionary party, we need revolutionary propaganda and slogans to tear the workers and oppressed away from the stranglehold of the reformists and centrists and to orient their struggles against the treacherous leaderships which are preparing new betrayals.

This is not the first time there has been a refusal to publish a leaflet in the recent period. There was the same response when we wanted to publish a polemic for the fête organized by VdT [Voix des Travailleurs, expelled from Lutte Ouvrière last year] two months ago. At that time, it was the LTF Central Committee which set up the obstacles. The latest I.S. motions characterized this leadership as having led to the "rapid disintegration and centrist adaptation of the LTF." But this time the refusal to publish a leaflet on the truckers' strike comes directly from the I.S. As Djura's document states, this line encourages the paralysis of the LTF. To denounce as "centrist," as the I.S. representative does (or "left centrist," as stated in the letters by Parks and Nelson which I have just read), the struggle to bring the revolutionary program—in other words, the Trotskyist program on the basis of

which we are fighting to build the indispensable revolutionary vanguard party—to sectors of the proletariat who are waging an extremely important struggle against the popular-front government would be to deny everything that Trotsky taught us about the relations between the party and the class.

Comrade Djura questioned the I.S. on the issue—which is crucial for a fighting propaganda group—of intersecting the workers' struggles by publishing a leaflet to address the largest strike in the country since the CP-SP-MDC<sup>1</sup>-Greens popular front took office. A leaflet containing the programmatic points on our opposition to and struggle against the popular front, our fight to bring revolutionary consciousness into the proletariat and other layers in order to win the elements who are seeking a class alternative over to the urgent necessity of building a revolutionary party; stressing that this requires a merciless political and ideological fight against the reformist leaderships, the trade-union bureaucracies and their centrist waterboys who break and deflect their struggles by chaining them to the popular front, now in power. Within this framework, we must emphasize the need to spread the truckers' strike to other sectors, as Djura's document states, explaining the centrality of the struggle against racist and fascist terror.

The amalgam which has been made with the capitulator Gino, and his tailing of centrist and reformist organizations, only obscures things. In Italy, Gino was opposing the struggle to build the party and was agitating for calls for an "unlimited general strike" in order to make the LTd'I [Lega Trotskista d'Italia, Italian section of the ICL] a left-wing appendage of the popular-front chain in a context where the reformists and centrists wanted to use the mass mobilizations of workers and youth in order to put a popular front into power. Gino's appetites were leading him to refuse to struggle against the popular front which was on the march (in the literal and figurative sense), with a phraseology which denied the role of the party and in effect asked for a "certificate" of combativity from the workers. The situation in France today is different. The union bureaucrats have done everything to sabotage the strike, and last Sunday the FO and CFDT [union federations] signed agreements with a section of the bosses and with the government, but they were outflanked. Today, it is their comrades who are seated in Matignon [the seat of government]. Naturally, the pseudo-Trotskyists seek to subordinate the proletariat to Jospin's popular-front government, and it is up to us to fight to raise the workers and oppressed up to combat this capitalist government.

Regarding the question of the subscription drive, as Djura said: "A subscription campaign is a crucial tool for building the party through its newspaper, but it must not be the pretext for an inoffensive policy of turning one's back on the possibility of extending the present struggles and transforming them into a confrontation with the popular front"; in other words, the point is to raise the level of our intervention so as not to turn our back on the class struggle. In November-



AFF

**Class collaborators: Communist Party leader Robert Hue (left) with PCF ministers J.-C. Gaysot and Marie-George Buffet.**

<sup>1</sup> Citizens Movement, a small chauvinist bourgeois formation led by Interior Minister J.P. Chevènement.

December '95 we were also in a subscription drive and the LTF leadership was going on with its normal daily routine, going so far as to propose organizing a fifth week [of the subscription drive] in order to achieve the quota, while tens of thousands of strikers were marching by close to the office.

In conclusion, to say, as A. [the I.S. representative] does, that Djura's document is "a piece of shit" is not a Marxist argument. Moreover, it is wrong to pretend that the box for *Workers Vanguard* is a leaflet. All the comrades know that what was asked for was a journalistic eyewitness account, consisting of four double-spaced pages, whereas the proposal for a leaflet, which was *in fact rejected*, was to have a propaganda instrument for intervening in this strike; and this could have cohered and homogenized the [French] section, which was confused about our intervention in this strike and disarmed vis à vis our opponents, as other comrades have stated.

Zakaria

## Motions Voted at LTF Meeting, 9 November 1997

1. The policy of the LTF CC on the truckers strike, as summarized in M.'s report of November 3rd was "solidarity with the strike and collect information." This conscious refusal to intervene with our communist program represents a centrist appetite for tailism. The LTF leadership made no plans to mobilize the Paris local to intervene in this first strike against the popular front government. In contrast with Paris it is notable that the Rouen OC [organizing committee] did get out and bring our program to the strikers from day one of the strike.

—passed unanimously

2. This liquidationist policy, also expressed in the rejection of "Class struggle and revolutionary leadership" as a title for a packet of our communist literature for sales to strikers, expressed by Do. and supported by M., is a *conscious* attempt to bury our struggle to win the working class to our revolutionary party and program.

—passed unanimously

3. We reject the sneering, dismissive attitude to sales of subs to our press in a strike as "routine work in the middle of the class struggle" as in Djura's letter. Sales of our press, especially subscriptions, are a vital tool to introduce our Marxist program and worldview to workers and youth whom we can and must win to our program. Our propaganda, including this current issue of *Le Bolchévique* with the front page article *against* Jospin's popular-front government and including the UPS supplement was an appropriate tool of intervention to bring our revolutionary program to the strikers. Djura's dismissive attitude toward the party press recalls Norden's false allegations that the party engaged in mere "passive propagandism." Her arguments also echo the line of Gino in Italy who counterposed an economist leaflet calling for a general strike to the party press and polemics against the popular-frontist fake left.

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (opposed)

4. Djura's document—in reaction to the passivity of the leadership—counterposes an intervention based on militant economism

focusing on "extend the strike," "strike committees," also a liquidationist adaptation, is simply a more militant version of the VdT/GR/ART leaflet, which also "criticizes" the existing leadership of the unions, and talks about a general strike.

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (opposed)

5. We agree with Parks' letter saying that comrade Djura's letter to the I.S. and the LTF is a malicious and dangerous falsification of the intervention of the I.S. The impact could split the LTF from the international in the context of rapid disintegration of the LTF and the conscious and willful deception and undermining of international democratic centralism by the LTF leadership.

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (opposed) and one abstention

6. The documents of Djura and Zakaria define our revolutionary program as calls to spread the strike, elected strike committees, i.e., on primarily union tactics. This is in contradiction with Lenin's *What is to Be Done?* which makes the point that to approach the working class purely on the basis of trade-union militancy (i.e., "seeking to lend the economic struggle a political character") has the effect, whatever one's intention, of reinforcing the authority of the existing reformist leadership. The role of Marxists is to bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class in complete opposition to the existing reformist leadership and *their centrist tails*. Our job is to politically motivate the need for a *conscious* break from the reformist leadership. The conception that this break will come automatically through more militant union struggle is "spontaneism," which is an adaptation to the existing consciousness of the working class, which is bourgeois consciousness—for which the reformist bureaucracy is the transmission belt.

The leaflet outlined by Djura and Zakaria would be simply a more militant version of the leaflet of VdT which "criticized" the existing leadership of the strike and even poses the question of a general strike. Djura and Zakaria are looking for a *shortcut* to reach the workers and throw the revolutionary program overboard as if it were excess baggage. That is why Djura's proposed leaflet makes no mention of any polemics against our opponents, most notably our centrist opponents who are most vulnerable and dangerous now in the crucible of struggle and with the popular front in power.

Seeking to intervene in the truckers strike with an economic militancy line would have to be an adaptation to our centrist opponents who voted for this popular front government.

The twin policies of "left" and "right" centrism are in continuity with the policies which paralyzed the section at the beginning of the strike wave of December '95. The leadership at first ignored the strikes, then intervened with the line "For a May '68 which goes all the way," a version of militant economism, and the LTF was unable to write any propaganda on the necessity of revolutionary leadership. Then there was an obstruction to distributing the propaganda produced by the I.S. which was titled: "Smash Vigipirate! Unite 'immigrants', women, youth behind the power of the working class! For a new, revolutionary leadership! For a workers government to sweep away the whole rotten capitalist system!"

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (opposed)

7. The popular-front government is a bourgeois government, whose role is to demobilize working class struggle. Their strike-breaking role was illustrated in the truckers strike in which they utilized the armed fist of the capitalist state against the strike and at the same time sent the Communist Minister to the picket lines to reinforce illusions among the working class that this government could be “their” government.

—passed unanimously

8. The root of the problems in the LTF is capitulation to popular frontism and the narrow national chauvinism of the French bourgeoisie. Thus there is a line that connects the LTF’s failure to recognize the defeat of their own bourgeoisie in the Algerian war, the refusal to recognize the right of self-determination for the Basque people in France (only in Spain!), and the inability to combat the popular front. The opposition and disdain to producing an article on the truckers strike for *Workers Vanguard* is profoundly anti-internationalist as is the apparent disdain for the new issue of *Spartacist* (French edition), the main theoretical journal of the ICL. Comrades who seek to reforge the French section must take as their starting point that they are members of the ICL fighting to build a section in France, in contrast to self-satisfied or self-pitying identification as members of the LTF in its present degenerated condition.

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (abstained)

9. The formulation in *Le Bolchévick* No. 144 that “The only [popular front] which ended up with a victory of the working class was the one in 1917 in Russia, because the Bolshevik party waged an intransigent struggle against class collaboration and for the conquest of power by the proletariat” is seriously flawed and telescoped. The Kerensky popular front did not end or lead to victory, but to *Kornilov’s counterrevolutionary mobilization*. A clarification should be printed in the next issue of *Le Bolchévick*.

—passed unanimously

The following two motions were voted counterposed:

**Motion by Zakaria:**

The truckers strike was the first important strike against this popular-front capitalist government. It was subjected to state repression by this government and attacked by fascist goons. As Djura’s document of 5 November 1997 noted: “a fighting propaganda group must seize this occasion to bring the revolutionary program into the class struggle. There is a burning need to bring revolutionary consciousness into the sectors which are in struggle.” Now, the reformist bureaucrats, lackeys of the popular front, rushed to end this strike.

The Transitional Program teaches us how the revolutionary party can and must build a bridge between the class struggle, the immediate demands and the program of proletarian revolution. As part of the construction of the revolutionary party and our intransigent opposition and struggle against the popular front, the reformist leaderships of the bourgeois-workers parties and of the unions, as well as the centrists who push the workers into the arms of the popular front, it was necessary to put forward slogans to tear the workers and the oppressed from the clutches of the centrists and the reformists and to lead their struggle against the treacherous leaderships who are preparing new betrayals and [to lead] their struggle against the popular front.

In this sense, it was necessary to put forward the following demands: for the extension of the truckers strike to sectors like the railroads and airports, to urban transit and auto factories like Renault-Douai where the workers showed support to the strikers; for strike committees to counter the role of the popular-frontist bureaucrats, for workers self-defense squads against the fascists and state repression; to mobilize the power of the proletariat in defense of immigrants; for the sliding scale of working hours against unemployment; to break with and struggle against the popular front; for a workers government to expropriate the bourgeoisie; for a socialist united states of Europe; to build a revolutionary internationalist workers party.

As Zakaria’s document of 8 November stated, a leaflet stressing the programmatic points against the popular front, and “our fight to bring revolutionary consciousness” and “the urgent necessity of building a revolutionary party” means “a merciless political and ideological fight against the reformist leaderships, the trade-union bureaucracies and their centrist waterboys.” This is in the framework of the Transitional Program and Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done?* and is the opposite of economism.

It was necessary to mobilize the LTF and the youth along with contracts to go to the strikers’ barricades with the revolutionary program and propaganda. The arguments against a leaflet counterposed this to the paper and the subscription drive. In fact a leaflet would have made a connection between our full Trotskyist program and this confrontation with the popular front and would have helped us sell subscriptions and papers. But the sub drive, which is a crucial instrument to build a party through its paper, must not be the pretext for a passive and rightist position. The disorientation comes from the fact that comrades felt politically disarmed in this situation and that the refusal to put out a leaflet encouraged the paralysis which reinforces centrist tendencies in the organization and the pressure to capitulate to the popular front.

—failed, all against except Djura and Zakaria (for)

**Motion:**

Zakaria’s motion and document is politically dishonest and an attempt to provide a more left cover for Djura. Zakaria in fact implicitly acknowledges the economist basis of Djura’s document by adding political demands (e.g., “for a socialist united states of Europe,” etc.) which weren’t part of her call for a leaflet. In so doing he attempts to “render the economic struggle political”—a point Lenin polemicizes against in *What Is To Be Done?* Zakaria’s document and motion ignore the substance of the dispute with Djura, which is not “for or against a leaflet” but revolutionary Marxism vs. economism. The “bridge” Zakaria is looking for leads not to the workers but directly to our centrist opponents. Underlining his embrace of the perspective of militant economism, which he correctly fought against in the emergency national conference in 1995, is the implicit presumption that the current popular-front government is less hostile to the working class than the previous right-wing and widely hated Chirac government. What’s changed between 1995 and 1997 is not the ICL’s revolutionary program or means of intervention as a fighting Trotskyist propaganda group, but Zakaria and Djura’s *tailism* of our centrist opponents today before the popular front.

—passed, all for except Djura and Zakaria (against)

# Declaration of International Faction: Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

19 December 1997

## I) The Crisis of the International Leadership

The leadership is to the party what the party is to the class. The recent political fights in the LTF and the developments within most of the sections over the course of nearly two years show that the root of the problem does not lie solely at the level of the leaderships of the national sections. Rather, a growing tendency is taking hold in the leading body of the ICL, the International Secretariat, to turn away from class struggles. It is this course, which is justified by a so-called “historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally” (in the Call for the Third International Conference [of the ICL]), and the ever-shifting line coming out of the I.S. which is behind the evident confusion of the leaderships of the sections and the demoralization of a whole layer of members. Despite its invoking of the “party question,” the course of the I.S. has in reality been liquidationist. It extracts the party from the struggle to win leadership of the working class and to be recognized as the champion of all the oppressed layers. This is what we have seen not just in the fights in the French section but also in many other sections, where the consequences of the I.S.’s line have had a profoundly self-destructive effect.

On the eve of the Third International Conference, simply reading the documents of the I.S. mailings shows that many sections of our International are in acute political crisis, and often on the same issues as those which we have seen in the LTF. In addition to the French section, the I.S. itself characterized the German, Australian, Irish and Mexican sections as centrist or afflicted by centrism. At the same time, a not insignificant number of experienced cadres have quit the party. The call for the Third International Conference itself states: “The ICL is smaller today than it was at the time of the second international conference five years ago, mainly due to the attrition of experienced cadre who felt used up and without hope.” We must ask ourselves: *why* do they have this sense of despair? The reality is that instead of political clarification which provides clear perspectives for struggle, the I.S. has reacted every time by giving directions which contradict themselves every three months, going from frenetic activism to (more frequently) pure and simple abandonment of external intervention, and always laying the responsibility for mistakes on the shoulders of the leaderships of the sections and on the members. It is above all in this line and the unstable policy of the I.S., which by its unpredictable nature hampers Marxist thinking by the leaderships of the national sections, that one should seek the

origin of this demoralization of long-time cadres.

The fights in the LTF over the last period concerned what policy should be pursued by a revolutionary leadership. Let’s list some of these fights. Four months ago, the I.S. announced the abandonment in practice of the “*lskra*”<sup>1</sup> perspective for a struggle to forge the nucleus of a Trotskyist party among North African emigres around an exile press published outside the country. Next came the refusal to put out a leaflet to combat the politics of the centrists who are regrouping around Voix des Travailleurs [VdT—Workers Voice, a group expelled by Lutte Ouvrière in March 1997]. More recently there was the refusal to put out a leaflet to intervene in the explosive truckers strike, the first major struggle confronted by the popular-front government installed in June 1997. In all three cases, we fought against this refusal to intervene, and comrades in the LTF leadership who tried to justify the policy of passivity opposed us. These comrades were characterized by the I.S. itself as centrists and rightists, which is true. But what is striking is that they were inspired by the policy of the I.S. and thought they were carrying out its line. And the I.S. has now made a political bloc with these rightists against our positions. During the plenary meeting of the LTF of 9 November 1997, they voted together for five motions against Djura and Zakaria. Far from this being a rotten bloc between the I.S. and the right wing of the LTF, what this was in fact was *an authentically and deeply centrist bloc* between the I.S., which has boiled down its line, and those whom it calls “sycophants.”

The motions from the I.S. meeting of 1 November [1997] speak of the “rapid disintegration” and “centrist adaptation of the LTF,” and once again we agree with this judgement. The I.S. finds the root of this disintegration and adaptation solely in the French section, which has, certainly, shown the symptoms of this pathology for quite some time. We have sought to combat this. At other times, the I.S. fought against these tendencies to slide into centrism. That was the case in 1992 and again in December 1995, when the leadership of the LTF followed an abstentionist policy which led the section to the brink of collapse. But more recently, it is the I.S. itself which is at the origin of these tendencies, which are multiplying almost everywhere in the International.

Let’s draw a quick balance sheet of the judgements of the I.S. itself concerning the present state of the ICL. Thus the Australian section had to have at least four emergency plenary meetings and conferences in less than a year. In the emergency meeting of the SL/A [Spartacist League/Australia] of 21 April 1997, the section was characterized as having “ceased to be motivated by the Trotskyist program and principles” and as

<sup>1</sup> Name of the newspaper, published in exile, that Lenin used to forge the nucleus of the Bolshevik Party in Russia.



**Leon Trotsky**

adapting to the pressures of social democracy. As for the German section, the umpteenth plenum of the SpAD [Spartakist Workers Party of Germany] on 12-13 July 1997 declared that “the slide toward the liquidation of Trotskyism and the role of the vanguard party has not only continued, but has accelerated and deepened. At this point an apparent majority of the CC has become openly centrist.” Our Mexican and Irish sections are also in the soup. The GEM [Grupo Espartaquista de México] was characterized as Menshevik, with “its own centrist tendencies” (Barbara F., 14 June 1997) and it was said that the “political disorientation of the GEM led to the organizational incapacity of generating any propaganda prior to the elections” (Parks, 21 July 1997). As for the DSG [Dublin Spartacist Group], there was “a general collapse in the collective” and it was very soft in the face of the anti-drug campaign of Militant (now the Socialist Party) which in the first instance targets Travellers [nomadic Irish families]. And even the Italian section, which has intersected developments inside RC [the Party of Communist Refounding], has been characterized as showing “very worrisome signs of the section’s adaptations to the pressures of its own national terrain.”

Now let us look at a fact without precedent in the entire history of the ICL: never before have we seen as in the past two years members of several sections working during a strike. Our International is known for our opposition to crossing picket lines. So why this repeated and stubborn abandonment, by long-time cadres, of what has been a point of pride of the ICL and one of our trademarks? Of course, there is a layer of comrades which has for many years been subject to the pressures of their milieu, often skilled workers. But there is also the policy of the leadership toward these comrades. The case of Herbert B. in the SpAD

was the most egregious, since the section—on the I.S.’s recommendation—couldn’t expel him because a part of the SpAD leadership was complicit in the scab role played by this ex-member, and the I.S. was “happy” that he quit. The same thing happened last year in the SL/A. The I.S. conciliates rightist elements right up to the point when they go too far.

All in all, it’s not just the sections which are in crisis but the ICL itself. Taking an overview of all these seemingly isolated cases, one is compelled to ask the question: Why these repeated manifestations of centrist adaptation in the different sections of our International? For a Marxist, it is impossible to believe that these repeated symptoms of the same sickness can be explained by pointing only to national or particular problems of the section in question. While recognizing the weakness and the multiple mistakes committed by the LTF leadership, we must frankly say that the most rightist elements whom we have fought and who bitterly attacked us were almost always supported by the I.S. and believed that they were loyally interpreting the line of the I.S. Thus our own experience along with our thoughts about the multiple crises which have shaken other sections have led us to a deeper study of the policy followed by the International Secretariat itself during the recent period.

To come back to the sentence at the beginning of this document, the I.S. wants us to believe that the roots of these multiple deviations are to be found solely in the weaknesses of the sections of the ICL. It paints a picture of the International in which almost all the sections outside of the SL/U.S. are plagued by or have gone over to centrism, with the I.S. constantly intervening to correct them. But from all the evidence, these drifts in the sections are an expression (even a deformed expression) of policies whose origins are to be found in the I.S. itself. To claim the contrary, as the I.S. does, is a variant of the thesis fought by Trotsky in his article “Class, Party and Leadership” [1940] that the defeat in Spain was the product of the “false policy of the masses,” when in reality the problem was *the leadership*.

In the I.S. motion of 1 November 1997 on the LTF, the French leadership is accused of “dim disobedience” that was “masking political opposition in the LTF leadership to directives from the I.S.” There actually was something of this sort, but in fact it was the dim and unthinking *obedience* of the central core of the leadership of the LTF which explains their inability to follow on time the turns of the weathervane of I.S. directives. They are always one step behind, they zig when they should be zagging. Another curiosity: in her report of 17 October on the LTF, Parks complains that the Central Committee is full of “sycophants.” But it should be noted that sycophancy is a two-way, vertical relationship. It can’t exist at the base without being encouraged from the top. We see the leadership criticizing its subordinates for behaving as though they were part of a bureaucracy. Where did they learn such behavior?

You don’t have to go far to discover the origins. Just look what happened when Djura proposed that the LTF put out a leaflet on the truckers strike. At first they said that the question would be discussed in a meeting on the weekend. But after a youth meeting where many comrades were favorable to having a leaflet, the I.S. immediately reacted by sending no

leaders of other sections to fight the enemy within. A. arrived saying that it was necessary to "clean out" this "shit." The I.S. sounded the alarm internationally, calling upon the members of all the sections to take a stand on (i.e., against) the document of Djura and that of Zakaria. After this call to open fire against what was seen as a deep-going opposition, no less than 15 (fifteen) documents arrived in the record time of two days. Then, in the meeting of 9 November 1997, a total of five motions were voted against Djura and Zakaria. To tighten its vise and to try to divert the debate by inventing an economist danger, the I.S. consciously lies about what its position was. And all this because...we proposed to put out a leaflet on the truckers strike to fight the popular front and thus correct the bad positions of the I.S.

What can one say of a leadership that complains that a majority of its sections are centrist? What is one to say of a leadership which reacts in this way, throwing up a barrier of thin-skinned and scarcely political hostility against a call to correct the policy followed by the I.S., which this time was calling for the same abstentionist policy as that of the former CC of the LTF during November-December 1995? What is the I.S. afraid of? It is obvious that its policy in France today is the continuation and the reflection of the line adopted by the I.S. in 1996 in relation to Brazil. In this regard, after having studied these events and having evaluated them in the light of the latest fights in France, we will analyze later on in this document the meaning of the I.S.'s flight from the class struggle in Brazil.

For us as Leninists, the party must be built from the top down. From this perspective an examination of the facts subjected to a materialist analysis indicates to us that in the ICL as elsewhere, the rot begins from the head. That is why we *declare the Permanent Revolution Faction* to combat the present leadership of the ICL, which has embarked upon a centrist course that threatens to dig the grave of the revolutionary program defended by the Spartacist tendency for three decades. At most the I.S. wants to preserve this program as a museum piece while it begins to deform it on a series of important questions and refuses to carry out the Leninist-Trotskyist program as a guide to action in the struggles of the workers and oppressed.

We will take up these questions below. But we begin by drawing the lessons of the latest fights in the LTF which set off this explosion of internal political battles. As James P. Cannon said, Bolshevik cadres are forged in the struggle around defense of the revolutionary program against all those who would distort it or turn away from it. In the same book, *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, where he talks about the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP in 1939-40, he also remarks that: "The tendency is very strong in all isolated groups to console themselves with the monotonous repetition of adherence to great principles without seeking ways and means and new opportunities to apply them."

## II) The LTF: A Clinical Case of the Bankrupt Policy of the I.S.

The collapse of the entire French leadership at the time of the big demonstrations and strikes in 1995 did not come out of a clear sky. This was not the first time this occurred. We recall that

in 1992, the leadership of the LTF ordered a member, who had been politically active at his workplace, to stop intervening in a struggle which had been undertaken by his co-workers, who saw him as their leader. This provoked a very sharp fight at the Second International Conference. In France in 1995, the leadership followed an abstentionist policy whose bankruptcy was all too obvious. The class struggle had posed a severe test for the French section and the leadership failed miserably. But where was the debate about this failure without parallel in the history of the ICL? Aside from an emergency conference [of the LTF], this merited only a few lines in the January 1996 I.S. report to the IEC [International Executive Committee], and no serious discussion in the plenary session [of the IEC].

The IEC Memorandum of January 1996 did not provide any perspective for external intervention. The only perspective was to have a series of internal classes. This tendency toward abstentionism was present in the LTF which, at the time of the December 1995 strikes, demonstrated passivity and showed that the tendency toward abstention had actually become a program which led the French section of the ICL to the brink of collapse. The LTF retreated into its shell and ceased to be an active political factor in the left.

Why, two years later, does this abstentionist tendency dominate the LTF? In every case, the CC of the LTF tried to interpret the directives of the center, sometimes throwing itself into frenetic activism without any strategy, and then burying itself in internal work. The idea that M. [then convenor of the LTF Central Committee] has a difference with the I.S. on the party question, as Parks says, is ridiculous. M.'s line has been to always impose the line of the I.S., most often bureaucratically, particularly when she did not understand it. She only failed to understand that the new policy of the leadership consists of sudden, abrupt turns and not a coherent line.

The concept of a universally reactionary period has been stressed and repeated insistently. This is the main theme of the Call for the Third Conference. If this conception were true, then France should be the country par excellence where this theory would apply, as well as the perspective that flows from it. Long considered the classical European country of revolution, France had one of the largest CPs and most pro-Soviet proletariats in the world. If the theory and perspectives of the leadership of our International were correct, one would expect that France would suffer particularly acutely from this terrible reactionary period and from the historic regression in consciousness that the I.S. has observed around the world. In fact, the I.S. warned the French section against exaggerating the implications of the militant truckers strike last year [1996]. That warning fits right in with the scandalous collapse of the LTF leadership in the strike wave of 1995, as well as the resistance to intervening in many actions in defense of immigrants, the most recent being in October, as Parks herself pointed out.

This defeatist and abstentionist viewpoint being taught by the I.S. has found good pupils in the LTF leadership. That is why the absurdity of this theory, this vision and this perspective is revealed with particular acuteness in France. The viewpoint of the I.S., far from explaining what is going on in the



world, only *disarms* those who seek to intervene to change the world. Because it is wrong and defeatist, it leads to confusion, disorientation and demoralization. The I.S. complains that many long-time cadres have concluded that the program and the party have no chance of changing the world at this time. But that is what the I.S. teaches. The results are shown not only in long-time members quitting in several sections—including many local leaders in several sections—but also in the political positions taken in France, not only concerning France itself but also toward North Africa and other questions.

By acting in this way, the LTF is simply translating into practice, in French political conditions, the *defeatist* political line put forward by the international leadership. Of course, it would be grossly false to deny that the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state was a historic defeat for the world proletariat, or to deny that in France the fascists have made inroads into certain layers of the working class who supported the Stalinists in the past. However, France is one of the places where the *unevenness* of this period—in which the offensive of the bourgeoisie has been met with important explosions of struggle—has shown itself most clearly.

Parks reports that there was a “raging discussion in the LTF as to whether or not there had been a radicalization” in France. Yet in denying that there was one, the leaders of the LTF could only think that they were supporting the position of the I.S. After all, if this is a deeply reactionary period of defeats, how could there be such a radicalization in a country that is so important for the international class struggle? Since the leadership of the LTF confidently repeats everything that the I.S. tells it, it was logical that this leadership would try to minimize the possibilities of radicalization in France, to minimize the potential for interest in the Trotskyist program, to minimize the potential for recruitment, and in fact to act as an obstacle to bringing the Trotskyist program into the class struggle.

The international leadership concluded that France was becoming radicalized because, in spite of the passivity of the section, many youth came to a public forum of the LTF. The major events of the class struggle—the enormous strike wave of 1995, the mobilizations in defense of the “*sans papiers*” in which sections of the working class demonstrated shoulder to shoulder with immigrants in the summer of 1996, the truckers strike of autumn 1996, the hundreds of thousands of people demonstrating against the Debré laws [on immigration] in February 1997, and the demonstrations against the National Front—these did not lead it to such conclusions. Is this “pronounced leftward movement” in France that the I.S. noted compatible with the worldview the I.S. insists on? No, it is not. But since political consistency is the least of its concerns, the I.S. has made no attempt to explain the contradiction.

The LTF leadership’s resistance to contacting and recruitment has been commented on in motions and documents. But we must ask the question: why such resistance? This reflects the fact that the leadership of the section has arrived at the conclusion that the Trotskyist program is not relevant to today’s struggles. Hence they don’t think that people could be interested in our program. They express a defeatist position which

goes together with a perspective of historical pessimism. In practice, they act as if communism “is dead,” as the propagandists of the bourgeoisie say. This obstacle to recruitment was fought head-on by Zakaria, as shown by his document of 12-17 October 1997.

But let’s go back to the remarks by the I.S. concerning sycophancy and supposed dim disobedience by the CC of the LTF. Are stubborn passivity, disorientation and toadyism just particular traits or personal sins—or a national “trait” (symptom of a “French disease”)? Or do they have deeper *political* roots? The answer is obvious for anyone who thinks about these political questions. These are the political symptoms and results of a *political line*. And this line was not invented by the leaders of the LTF, even if certain members of the CC (especially HF) were in perfect agreement with this line for their own rightist reasons. The leaders of the LTF simply showed that they were very good pupils of this line—too good, in fact!

Sycophants and toadies will never lead a revolution, or to put it differently, toadyism is counterposed to revolutionary leadership. Thus the present toadyism is the natural product and *political* symptom of the political degeneration coming from the top of the organization. Now the I.S. presents itself as a naive sorcerer’s apprentice who doesn’t know what is going on and what he unleashed. When the I.S. screams today that there is a danger of dissolution of the French section of the ICL, or of the Australian and Irish sections, or the German section, this is the fruit of its own policy. Nelson writes: “In a programmatic sense the leadership [of the LTF] has already effectively dissolved as an instrument of Trotskyism.” Yes, indeed, but as the saying goes, “the fish rots from the head.” And in classical bureaucratic fashion, it tries to put the blame on its subordinates.

Nelson repeats a correct point on the importance of the revolutionary continuity represented by Cannon, the absence of this tradition among the petty-bourgeois leadership of the French Trotskyist movement (i.e., people such as Naville, Molinier, Frank and others) and the frustration which resulted from the efforts to cohere a collective leadership in the pre-war French movement. However, his statement that “our French section can find little inspiration in the sordid history of French Trotskyism” is one-sided and an example of national narrowness. It is the heroic French Trotskyists who published *Arbeiter und Soldat* [Worker and Soldier] and who recruited German soldiers during the Second World War, who published leaflets saying “Long Live the Red Army” while fighting for political revolution in the USSR and against the chauvinist poison of the PCF expressed in the slogan, “*A chacun son boche*” (“Everyone get a Kraut”), who conducted agitational work among

<sup>1</sup> James P. Cannon (1890-1974), one of the founders of the Communist Party of the U.S., who became the founder of American Trotskyism and close collaborator of Trotsky. Pierre Naville, Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank were leaders of the French Trotskyist movement who were sharply criticized by Trotsky. Pierre Frank later became one of the main leaders of Pabloism.

<sup>2</sup> Worker and Soldier: German-language Trotskyist paper published in France under the Nazi occupation and directed at winning German soldiers and sailors to the Fourth International.

the forced laborers, who not only before but also after "Liberation" put out their own newspapers underground, and who carried out work on a large scale among Vietnamese workers in France (in contrast to the shameful abandonment of Vietnamese Trotskyists by Pablo and Lambert). It is true that there was considerable disorientation among the French Trotskyists even during their best work during the Second World War, but this kind of blanket condemnation by Nelson is a pure and simple liquidation of the history of the Trotskyist movement.

### III) I.S. Policy toward the Truckers Strike: Left Phrasemongering and Rightist Leavening

What was the *casus belli* that unleashed the latest fight in the LTF? It was Djura's document criticizing the refusal of the I.S. to put out a leaflet to intervene in the truckers strike, and in particular its refusal to raise supposedly "tactical" slogans such as "extend the strike." After that, the I.S. wanted to shift the ground. One of the five motions against Djura and Zakaria, dictated directly by the I.S. during the LTF meeting of 9 November 1997, pretends that the motion and document by Zakaria are "politically dishonest" and that "the dispute with Djura...is not 'for or against a leaflet' but revolutionary Marxism vs. economism." No, it is the I.S. which is politically dishonest, which consciously lies and seeks to change the terrain. Everyone in the LTF knows that the I.S. opposed putting out a tract "because of the political state of the section." This was reported by Lisa G. after her call with Jon B. Later, when Djura protested against this, Lisa tried to cover for the I.S., saying that this only involved Jon B. Moreover, it is not true that the LTF as a whole was abstentionist toward the truckers strike. Zakaria raised the question of having a leaflet and most of the youth were in favor of that. Now the I.S. tries to cover its actions by fabricating a discussion "against economism"—but in order to do so, they have had to redefine economism to identify it with any intervention in economic struggles.

Djura and Zakaria called for a leaflet posing the question of defense of immigrants. Yes, for the extension of the strike which had been attacked by the fascists, for workers defense groups against the fascists, for strike committees which is a key demand of the Transitional Program *against* the popular-front bureaucrats. It is incredible that the I.S. and its spokesman aggressively *opposed* this demand, i.e., they were content to leave the strike in the hands of the bureaucrats. Yes, for a workers government and the socialist United States of Europe, for a revolutionary party—points which are key to introduce revolutionary consciousness from the outside, as Djura wrote in her document of 5 November. But the I.S. wants to reduce the intervention of revolutionaries to "selling subscriptions" to strikers, claiming any other attitude would be "economism" and "spontaneism." "First we have to build the party, later on we will go intervene in the struggles," they say in substance. Let's study this more closely.

The motions adopted in the meeting characterize us as "economists." But what is economism? In *What is To Be Done?* Lenin pointed out that Martynov, the leader of the economist current in Russian social democracy, said that the task of the

social democrats consisted of "lending the economic struggle itself a political character." Lenin's point was that the task of revolutionaries was to introduce revolutionary consciousness from outside the sphere of relations between workers and bosses, i.e., from the sphere of relations of all the classes and layers of society among themselves and with the state. In this vein, he said that "To bring political knowledge to the *workers* the Social-Democrats must *go among all classes of the population*; they must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*." And as he mentioned: "Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich." Never, not in *What Is To Be Done?* nor elsewhere, does Lenin say that Marxists should not seek to present a program for economic struggles. He said that the task of the communists was to *lead the class struggle* "not only" for economic struggles, but to lead it toward socialist revolution in addressing every form of oppression endured by other social layers among the people. The purpose of leading all these struggles is to introduce revolutionary consciousness, to increase the degree of organization, self-confidence, strength and experience of the proletariat to prepare it for socialist revolution. What the I.S. calls economism is in fact a redefinition of economism, as if this referred to any intervention to raise slogans and a program in economic struggles. And this redefinition is not in accordance with the writings of Lenin and Trotsky.

For example, in the Transitional Program, Trotsky wrote: "The Bolshevik-Leninist stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class." The popular front is in office in France today. Their job is to act as the firemen to put out the fires of working-class militancy. Thus they try to extinguish any explosion of serious class struggle. That is why the Jospin government was put there. That's why they have a "Communist" transport minister. The mass workers organizations are subordinated to the class-collaborationist program through the popular front. In a note by Jim [Robertson] and in the I.S. motion of 28 June 1997, the coming to power of the Jospin popular front is presented as an indication of a movement toward the left, which is only partially correct. In reality, the victory of the popular front also and above all represents an answer by the bourgeoisie and the reformists to the danger of radicalization of the working class, youth and immigrants, i.e., a means for keeping them subordinated to the bourgeoisie. And this can be seen not only in France, but in Italy as well. It is precisely in the workers struggles that we find the first opportunities to intervene to break the workers and oppressed from their treacherous leaders and to rip them from the bourgeois stranglehold of the popular front. But the I.S. doesn't want that—according to it, this is economism.

To fight against the popular front, we have to know how to intervene in mass struggles in order to transform them into a fight against this bourgeois political formation. Is that economism? No. At the time of the June 1936 strikes which shook the inauguration of the popular-front government of Léon Blum, Trotsky

wrote that "Bolshevism, which appears to be sectarianism to philistines of all descriptions, in actual fact unites ideological irreconcilability with the greatest sensitivity with regard to movements of the masses." Trotsky insisted that "Ideological irreconcilability itself is nothing else than the purging of the consciousness of the advanced workers of routine, inertia, irresoluteness, i.e., the education of the vanguard in the spirit of the boldest decisions, preparing it to participate in the relentless mass struggle" ("New Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International," July 1936). This is Trotsky speaking and not some vulgar economist.

Twice in the five motions against Djura and Zakaria voted at the LTF meeting of 9 November 1997, the I.S. pretends that our documents only called for the extension of the strike and for the election of strike committees. In order to set up its house of cards of a struggle against economism, the I.S. lies not only about what its position was but also about ours. Is it economist to say that our party should publish a leaflet in the midst of the first important strike under the popular-front government, calling on the workers to elect strike committees, to extend the strike to the railroads, to air transport and to the automobile factories, to defend the "sans papiers," to build workers defense groups to defend strike pickets against the fascist thugs and state repression, all the while explaining the need for a revolutionary party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution? That is what we called for. To claim that this is economism is to mock the Transitional Program. Must we quote the Transitional Program where it calls for such measures?

Calling this economism also makes a mockery of past struggles of the ICL. What about the British miners strike of 1984-85? Didn't the ICL call for a "triple alliance" of the coal miners, railway workers and dock workers? Was that economism? The fact is that the danger of economism is being waved about here to justify a policy of not seeking to intervene in the truckers strike with slogans directly concerning the struggle in which they are engaged. This policy is wrong. It is

not in accordance with *What is To Be Done?* It is not in accordance with the Transitional Program. It is not in accordance with the policy of the ICL in the past, and it should not be the policy of the ICL today, neither in France nor internationally.

After attacking Djura's document as centrist—or left-centrist, since the I.S. had already declared the majority of the LTF leadership to be centrist—for proposing to intervene in the truckers strike, Parks said, well, when we presented such tactics in the past we did it "seriously," we did it on the basis of a concrete knowledge of the industry and we proposed things which really had a chance of winning. Good. We are very serious too. What about knowledge of the industry? Obviously the LTF does not have a truckers fraction. But let's ask this question: during the 1981 PATCO strike in the United States, did the SL/U.S. have a fraction of Machinists; or in the British miners strike, did the SL/B have a miners fraction or railway fraction? We don't think that we did, at least we have never heard of it. But this did not stop us from putting forward tactical calls to shut down the airports, for a triple alliance, etc. In the bound volumes of *Workers Vanguard* for the years 1978 and 1979, one can read articles on the strike of the coal miners which are filled with slogans for giving direction to the strike and fighting the trade-union bureaucracy. Did the SL have a coal miners fraction at the time?

And it is not true that we don't know anything about France. There were very strong ties between the truckers and the railroad workers in last year's strike, at Rouen for example, where we have a local. During the last strike, the truckers put up a barricade right in front of the Renault [auto] plant in Douai. Workers from that plant even lent the strikers a hand in setting up their barricade. Extension of the strike was not at all a crazy or impossible demand. It was something real. What was necessary was political clarity on the nature of the popular-front government, and it was our job to explain this to the advanced sections of the working class.

# The Internationalist

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In her document, Parks claims that Djura's document makes a cult of spontaneity, or that revolutionary consciousness will arise without the intervention of the revolutionary party. In her document, Djura stresses the opportunity to "bring the revolutionary program into the class struggles" in order to "bring the Trotskyist program into the working class." It speaks of the "burning need to bring revolutionary consciousness into the sectors which are in struggle." Zakaria's document also speaks of this need, insisting on "our fight to bring revolutionary consciousness into the proletariat and other layers in order to win the elements who are seeking a class alternative over to the urgent necessity of building a revolutionary party."

It's true that we also put forward slogans directly concerning the conduct of the strike and the steps which the strikers should undertake, precisely in order to show in practice the role of the union bureaucracies and of the popular-front government. Is that a crime? Let's read what the founding conference of the Fourth International said in its "Resolution on the Tasks of the French Section": "As a matter of fact, Bolshevism's superiority over Menshevism lies not only in the correctness of its policy but also in its ability to bring an organization to share the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat. Bolshevism is genuinely infused with the Marxian spirit contained in the well-known formula: it's not enough just to explain the world; one must change it." After noting the retreat and declining membership of the POI (the French section [of the Fourth International in 1938]), the resolution comments: "It cannot be explained away solely on the grounds of the objective situation: 'sacred union' [of all the parliamentary parties], war, the failure and disillusionment which produce in the toiling masses a distrust toward attempts at labor organization and the party's general activity." And then it criticizes the POI for "the lack of agitation, propaganda, and action concentrated on decisive points."

The list of distortions and falsifications by the I.S. gets longer all the time. Thus we did not attack the subscription drive, and we did not counterpose the leaflet to the sub drive. We are for selling subscriptions to the press, which should be accompanied by propaganda aiming specifically at bringing the party's program into this key class struggle. Obviously, writing a leaflet does not at all mean that the entire LTF should stay in the office. We need reports from the picket lines to write an effective leaflet, in order to address the arguments and illusions that the comrades encounter there. Trotsky has a very powerful passage in "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat" (January 1932) which we believe should guide us:

"But the proletariat moves toward revolutionary consciousness not by passing grades in school but by passing through the class struggle, which abhors interruptions.... The identity, in principle, of the interests of the proletariat and the aims of the Communist Party does not mean either that the proletariat as a whole is, even today, conscious of its class interests, or that the party under all conditions formulates them *correctly*. The very need for the party originates in the plain fact that the proletariat is not born with the innate understanding of its historical interests. The task of the party consists in *learning*, from experience derived from the

struggle, how to demonstrate to the proletariat its right to leadership."

It is downright absurd to claim that calling to extend the truckers strike and to draw the class line against the popular-front government is in some way a capitulation to the popular front and "tailing after the popular front." Everything is stood on its head. Opposing such a leaflet is what constitutes a danger of capitulation to the popular front and its centrist tails. As Djura wrote, the position of the I.S. corresponds to the passivity of rightist elements in the leadership of the LTF. Nor is it true that the centrists' leaflets called for similar slogans. They called to pressure the popular-front government and they were explicit about that. We want to mobilize the working class against the popular-front government and build a revolutionary party to lead this struggle.

Djura and Zakaria declared that the problems were not limited to France, but affected all the sections, one after another, and in fact that these are international problems. It was the ICL as a whole that needed a correct intervention into this strike by a key sector of the workers in the face of a popular-front government. Drawing the lessons of this fight to break with the popular front was an international task. But the fire was directed *against* those who really fought for an active revolutionary intervention.

The following was written on "tactics" toward struggles and strikes of the working class:

"For a Communist Party there is never a situation in which political activity is impossible.... However weak a party is, it can always turn big political events or large-scale strikes which shake the entire economic life of the country to its advantage by organizing and carrying out systematic and practical propaganda.... Party orators must explain how the Communist slogans point the way to overcoming the difficulties.... Depending on the situation, we can get across our action slogans to the sections of workers most concerned by using posters and small-format leaflets or by distributing a more detailed leaflet that explains Communist ideas and shows how they are linked to the problems at hand and the slogans of the day."

The authors of this document even say: "Communists make a *grave mistake* if they stand back *passively*, are scornful of or oppose the day-to-day struggle of the workers for small improvements in the conditions of their life on the grounds that they have a Communist programme and that their final goal is armed revolutionary struggle." These same authors insist that it is only "by means of such day-to-day grass-roots work and by constant and full commitment to participation in all the struggles of the proletariat that the Party can become a truly *Communist party*" and that it will "mark itself off from the obsolete Socialist Parties whose activity is confined to abstract propaganda, recruiting work, talking about reforms and exploiting the 'possibilities' of parliament."

Is this economism? No, it comes from the famous resolutions of the Third Congress of the Communist International on "The Organizational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and the Content of Their Work" adopted by the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky in 1921. QED.

#### IV) The I.S. Revises the Lessons of the 1995 Struggles and the Intervention of the ICL to Justify Its Current Abstention

After presenting a veritable redefinition of economism, the I.S. attempted to revise the history of our intervention into the 1995 strike wave in France. The fact is that the LTF called several times for the extension of the strike to the private sector. Here is what the *Le Bolchéviek* supplement of 4 December 1995 says, under the title "For a New Revolutionary Leadership!": "It is crucial to extend the strike to other sectors, especially the bastions of industrial workers, where immigrant workers are a strategic component—time and again, the lack of leadership to generalize and link up workers' struggles has allowed the bourgeoisie to isolate combative sectors and suppress the workers' militancy." Today, the I.S. would say that this article is "spontaneist" because it talks of workers' militancy!

Here is the main title of the *leaflet* of the LTF of 14 December 1995: "To Defend and Extend the Strike: Elect Recallable Strike Committees!" This leaflet, as well as the supplement, were written largely by the International Secretariat after the collapse of the LTF Central Committee. We can see now why the I.S. is so intent on reducing our position to these two slogans: *the I.S. is polemicizing against its past!* A. says that the youth have drawn a false lesson from the intervention of the ICL in the 1995 struggles. No, it is the international leadership which now repudiates its own intervention in those struggles, which at the time encountered stubborn and mute resistance on the part of the CC of the LTF. This time it is the I.S. which opposes intervening in this strike which has shaken the country, with slogans to fight the reformist bureaucrats and against the popular front of class collaboration.

It is instructive to understand *why* the propaganda that the LTF finally put out in 1995 stressed the importance of extending the strike. The 14 December 1995 leaflet argued: "As we can see, the refusal of the working-class leaderships to fight against racist terror poses an obstacle to the necessary extension of the struggle mainly to the private and industrial sector, with its large, combative component of workers from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Full citizenship rights for everyone here! Down with Vigipirate [the racist "anti-terrorist" army/police sweeps directed mainly against African immigrants and minority neighborhoods!]" Unlike the centrists and anarchists who agitated for a general strike while sweeping the fight against Vigipirate under the rug, we called for mobilizing against Vigipirate and racist terror.

In the plenary meeting of the LTF of 9 November 1997, several interventions, including those of the representatives of the I.S., asserted that if we called for extending the strike in 1995, it was only in order to "fight against chauvinism" and against Vigipirate. But fighting against racist terror is not just a democratic question, it is a strategic question for the revolution. It was the only way to achieve the unity of the proletariat and to reach its immigrant component concentrated in private industry in order to extend the strike. In her letter of 16 August 1997 (adopted by the I.S.), Gordon herself said: "What was the thrust of our

supplements during the December '95 public workers strikes? We pointed out the importance of extending the strike wave to private industry, and insisted that the sellouts who do not fight 'Vigipirate' anti-immigrant state terror don't want to and can't mobilize the industrial proletariat with its heavy component of immigrant workers." It doesn't bother the I.S. to vote for this letter in August and to preach the opposite in November. The I.S. not only falsifies our intervention in December 1995, but even the positions that it adopted itself. The irony is that in both cases it was directed against Djura and Zakaria.

#### V) The Abandonment of the "Iskra" Perspective

It is in this framework of a generalized crisis of the ICL that the flinch occurred on the "Iskra" perspective for Algerian exiles, or more precisely the abandonment of this perspective which was one of the points of agreement at the time of the recruitment of the TPT [Transitional Program Tendency of the Algerian PST (Socialist Workers Party), section of the late Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec)] to the ICL in 1992-93. It is striking to read in the Call for the Third International Conference the following sentence: "The impact of Islam as a political factor also contributed to closing ICL perspectives for work in North Africa as discussed in the Algeria Commission at the 1992 Second International Conference of the ICL." To claim that we simply decided to "close" the work in North Africa in the discussions at the Second Conference is to completely deform an aspect of the content of these discussions. We talked, of course, of the question of leaving the country because of the terror of the Islamic fundamentalists and the government forces, but that was combined with the "Iskra" perspective, i.e., of forging a leadership in exile for future revolutionary parties in North Africa, to publish an emigre journal oriented toward North Africa and toward the hundreds of thousands of refugees in exile. When last August we opposed the plan of the I.S. to disperse the comrades in question, emphasizing that this amounted to abandoning in practice an "Iskra" perspective, several of the responses stated that everyone was in agreement with such a perspective, but there was a *but...* The documents gave many reasons why in reality this was impossible. But today in the Call for the Third Conference, there is no longer even a mention of the "Iskra" perspective. It was simply liquidated.

The origin of this abandonment is to be found in the evolution of the policy of the I.S., and hence the fight against these policies must also be waged internationally. This is absolutely not a narrow national struggle, as comrade Gordon characterized the arguments of Zakaria and Djura in her letter of 16 August 1997 when they raised this question. Rather, it is an affirmation of principles which were fundamental to the founding of the Communist International and the Fourth International. We have fully participated in the internal life of the LTF. Our struggle on this question did not in the least constitute a step back from our involvement in building a French section by struggling against the drift toward centrism of its old leadership. *It represented the continuation of this struggle.* The fight for an "Iskra" perspective to forge an emigre nucleus of North African Trotskyists is an indispensable part of the

construction of a truly internationalist French section of a Trotskyist international. A French section which didn't fight to forge a Trotskyist leadership among the millions of emigres and immigrants from the Maghreb [North Africa] in France would not be up to fulfilling its responsibilities.

Furthermore, an international leadership which encourages the lack of this internationalist responsibility, which limits the struggle to a perspective of immigrant work as opposed to a struggle to form Trotskyist parties in North Africa, is abandoning one of the characteristics of Bolshevism, perhaps not consciously at present, but certainly in fact. And there is already a precedent. First in Brazil, there was the abandonment at a crucial moment of the struggle to expel the police from the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda, accompanied by the after-the-fact renunciation of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations between the ICL and Luta Metalúrgica, a shameful flight which we will discuss later in this document. Now, for a second time, the I.S. abandons the struggle concerning a semi-colonial country in renouncing the "Iskra" perspective and the future construction of North African sections of the ICL.

To paraphrase Trotsky, if there is not a real effort to forge Bolshevik parties in the semi-colonial countries, then "the permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie." In France, this is particularly the case regarding the ex-colonies of the Maghreb, which are linked to the former colonial power thanks to a veritable human bridge of millions of immigrant workers and their children. Without this genuine struggle, *permanent revolution* is nothing but a ritual phrase and is turned into its opposite. This is the tendency that we see in the I.S. This is what lies behind the hard *opposition* to concretizing the "Iskra" perspective.

We also wonder what is behind the proposal for an Islamic Commission. The I.S. deliberately distorts the situation to give the image of a population that has been totally won to Islamic fundamentalism. The reality is much more contradictory. There are plenty of examples of opposition to Islamic fundamentalism among the masses, both in the working class (which has waged determined struggles against the IMF [International Monetary Fund] policies of the government as well as against the Islamic fundamentalists) and among women (priority targets of the Islamic fundamentalist cutthroats), in the Berber minority, of course, and also in Arab cities and villages, including some regions which have been the scene of various massacres. The situation is far from promising in the short run, but we can start building in exile an authentically Trotskyist nucleus that must be forged in the struggle against those who soil this banner by betraying its program.

But what is the theoretical and programmatic import of this new line? In his letter to Gordon of 25 August 1997, Jim Robertson commented on "the confusion found at the second congress of the CI [Communist International] on the colonial question." There was indeed confusion, and this contributed to the wrong line of entering the Guomindang [Kuomintang, or KMT, the bourgeois-nationalist movement led by the militarist Chiang Kai-shek]. But at that congress there was also a social-democratic opposition to the struggle to forge commu-

nist parties in the colonies, an opposition which hid behind rhetoric insisting on the need for a proletarian leadership.

With the flight from Brazil now repeated in the abandonment by the I.S. of the "Iskra" perspective for the construction of a North African Trotskyist nucleus in exile, one has to ask: where is this new policy going? There is a great danger that the line of the I.S. will evolve in a direction similar to that of Serrati in the 1920s. At the Second Congress of the Comintern, Serrati abstained on the vote on the theses on the national and colonial question drafted by Lenin and then modified after discussion of the theses presented by M.N. Roy. Serrati's arguments were supposedly from the left, but in reality they masked a rightist policy of abstention from the struggle to forge communist parties in the colonial countries which fight against imperialism and the local bourgeoisie. Ultimately, this was a capitulation to imperialism and colonialism. According to Serrati, Lenin's theses contained "certain contradictions but also in particular a grave danger for the position of the communist proletariat in the advanced countries." Behind the pseudo-left positions of Serrati there hid a social-democratic line of abstaining from the struggle for workers revolution in the countries dominated by imperialism.

Although there were important confusions at the Second Congress of the Communist International, there was a struggle there against the abstentionist policy represented by Serrati. And the main fight was to root out of the parties newly won to the CI their indifferent, at best, or pro-colonial heritage from the social-democratic parties. The famous 21 conditions for joining the Comintern included thesis 8, which demanded: "In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the [Communist] parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations." In the "Supplementary Theses" written by Roy, which were also approved by the Congress and appended to the "Theses and Additions on the National and Colonial Questions" by Lenin, it was stressed that: "the foremost and necessary task is the formation of Communist parties that will organize the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and the establishment of soviet republics.... The Communist parties of each imperialist country must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies, and through them give moral and material support to the revolutionary movements as a whole."

This point was repeatedly emphasized by Trotsky, in *The Third International After Lenin*, and later in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*. In his pamphlet *What Next?* Trotsky writes:

"What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in the capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of



**Ta Thu Thau,  
Vietnamese  
Trotskyist leader,  
was recruited to  
Fourth  
International in  
France.**

insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism.”

This reference is certainly well known in the ICL, but we can see that the I.S. is now abandoning this policy in practice. One of the dubious merits of Gordon’s letter of 16 August 1997 is that she clearly says that the role of the leadership is not the construction of a North African Trotskyist nucleus in exile but only immigrant work. She rejects all work directed toward the “demoralized and fetid exile milieu” in order to exclusively address “second generation” youth and “immigrant” workers in strategic industrial sectors. We have always fought to carry out work among these layers, but what Gordon says here is different. Her position comes down to the formula, “immigrants” yes, exiles no. And that not only raises a barrier between these two tasks, but also renounces in practice the struggle to forge communist parties in the semi-colonial countries of North Africa through the recruitment of potential cadres who are presently in exile, above all, but not only, in France. As we stressed in our documents in August, many exiles were won to Communism during their stay in France, such as the Vietnamese Trotskyist Ta Thu Thau.

In her letter of 16 August 1997, Gordon argued flatly *against* carrying out any work among the Algerian political émigrés. It was against the deeply liquidationist substance of these arguments that Djura and Zakaria declared that they had a difference with those who want to abandon the Iskra perspective decided in 1993 and who later opposed putting out a leaflet with slogans concerning the truckers strike, as opposed to those who want to fight to build a genuine Bolshevik party. The Communist International insisted that genuine Communist parties must carry out systematic work toward the colonies (and ex-colonies). As we noted in an earlier letter, the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, in its “Resolution on the French Question,” stated:

“The World Congress invites the French party and its Central Committee to pay far more attention and to allot far greater forces and resources than it has up till now to the

colonial question and to propaganda in the colonies; and, in particular, to set up a permanent bureau attached to the Central Committee, in charge of the work in the colonies, drawing into this bureau representatives of the native Communist organizations.”

In the various documents against our positions, a number of arguments have been put forward. Jim says in his letter to Gordon on 25 August 1997: “What came over from the Algerian PST were unconsolidated and immature fragments. An *Iskra* perspective implies propaganda and some capacity therefore to write it, which exists only in potential, not presently. An *Iskra* perspective implies a continuous testing process from a large pool at the bottom and something comparable to the in and out of prison and exile under the tsarist empire.”

Thus he rejects the “Iskra” perspective because of (a) the supposed incapacity of the comrades to write, and (b) due to the absence of a large pool comparable to the Russian exile milieu at the turn of the century. First of all, it is ridiculous to say that the comrades don’t know how to write at the exact moment when there was a draft article on Algeria and Gordon herself recalled that Djura had contributed to writing “good propaganda.” This reminds us of allegations we’ve heard in the past. In fact, when the TPT wrote its faction platform, someone wondered whether our document wasn’t written “in Paris.” That someone was Damien Elliott [leader of the Gauche Révolutionnaire, affiliated with Peter Taaffe’s ex-Militant tendency, now the Socialist Party].

As to the second reason put forward, it is far from relevant. Even when the large pool of emigres on which the Vietnamese Trotskyist group in France was built shrank considerably after World War II, that did not mean that the Vietnamese Trotskyists should have devoted themselves solely to immigrant work and not to building the nucleus of the Trotskyist party. In fact, one of the first steps in the development of Pabloism, and also of the social-democratization of the anti-Pabloites around Bleibtreu-Lambert, was the abandonment of the Vietnamese Trotskyists (not to mention their support to rival nationalist factions in Algeria).

The point is that abandoning the perspective of building revolutionary nuclei of immigrant workers and exiles from the colonial and semi-colonial countries is one of the first signs of opportunist degeneration in the direction of social democracy in the cases of Serrati, Ledebour and the Pabloites. This danger is posed in the ICL today. There is a tendency to abandon in practice the work of building Trotskyist leaderships in semi-colonial countries, which ultimately has a social-democratic character, as was the case with Serrati. The abandonment of an “Iskra” perspective for North Africa follows the abandonment of the struggle to build a Bolshevik workers party in Brazil.

As we wrote in our answer to Gordon (22 August 1997):

“We are in the epoch of imperialism, and there cannot be dissociated national roads to socialism. The struggles in the imperialist powers and in the ex-colonies are interdependent. This is materialized all the more when there is an immigrant proletariat which assures a living link between the imperialist power and its ex-colonies despite the walls of racist fortress Europe.”

“Ultimately, denying or underestimating the importance and

the necessity of regrouping and integrating cadres from the ex-colonial countries into the Trotskyist sections of their respective colonial powers comes down to a repudiation of permanent revolution and to the negation of the role of the party as an instrument and conscious agent of revolution.”

Trotsky wrote in this respect in *The Third International After Lenin*, a fundamental book that we are proud our International published in Russian:

“There were two fundamental propositions in the theory of permanent revolution. First, that despite the historical backwardness of Russia, the revolution can transfer the power into the hands of the Russian proletariat before the proletariat of advanced countries is able to attain it. Secondly, that the way out of those contradictions which will befall the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country, surrounded by a world of capitalist enemies, will be found on the arena of world revolution. The first proposition is based upon a correct understanding of the law of uneven development. The second depends upon a correct understanding of the indissolubility of the economic and political ties between capitalist countries.”

Right after this hard fight on the question of the “Iskra” perspective toward North Africa, a perspective that was earlier proposed by and is now rejected by the I.S., a new fight arose in the LTF on the draft of an article on Algeria. HF, in particular, criticized (in his document of 3 October 1997) the draft written by Djura as being “the concrete expression of the positions defended by comrades Djura and Zakaria in their recent documents,” i.e., reflecting our positions of supposed “national narrowness” which were criticized some weeks earlier by the I.S. HF denounced us for “refus[ing] to recognize that what is happening before our eyes in Algeria is a catastrophe of that scope” (as in Iran). After some time, the I.S. intervened to tone down the discussion and rejected HF’s views. But where did he come up with the ideas that he put forward in his document? In her letter of 16 August 1997, Gordon states: “That instead of a revolutionary party emerging...Algerian political life has degenerated into mass bloodletting between these two reactionary ‘alternatives’ constitutes a profound political defeat.” HF thought that he was defending the position of the I.S., which rejects the “Iskra” perspective for Algeria. The source of his ideas was Gordon’s letter, for which HF tried to be the most loyal spokesman (“sycophant,” in Parks’ terms).

Parks complains that there is increasing cynicism in the French section toward the leadership of the French section and its relation with the I.S. But now, with complete cynicism, Nelson and Parks *do not say one word about the document written*

*by Gordon.* (This letter isn’t even included in the new international bulletin, even though a large part of this bulletin is devoted to the fights in the LTF.) After encouraging rightist elements like HF – and Brunoy, who said that “the Algerian working class is finished, finished” – the I.S. directs an acerbic critique against these terrible positions. The reality is that the membership is taught to be cynical, to pretend that they don’t remember, that they cannot see that what was white yesterday is black today. It was probably the disavowal of HF by the I.S. that led him to quit, because he rightly thought that he was following the line of the I.S. But the line of the I.S. now changes in a kaleidoscopic manner, and he did not make the turn in time.

Cynicism is not only taught in the LTF. One has to read Barbara F.’s document (“Centrism and the GEM,” 14 June 1997) where instead of presenting political arguments, she responds to hesitant young Mexican comrades by exhorting them to chant in chorus: “Our International, love it or leave it.” In this way the representatives of the I.S. have tried to cut off all discussion with ridiculous maxims and an endless torrent of vile slanders. What is one to say, for example, of the very title of Parks’ document against Djura: “Left in Form, Right in Essence”? This is a famous *anti-Trotskyist* Stalinist expression used in the past to accuse the Left Opposition of being disguised social democrats.



**Iskra perspective: Vietnamese Trotskyist newspapers published after World War II in France.**



## VI) Brazil: Flagrant Case of the I.S. Abandoning the Class Struggle

Regarding Brazil, what comes out clearly is that there was a *betrayal* on the part of the I.S., which deserted from the class struggle after having won the militants of Luta Metalúrgica to constitute themselves as the nucleus of a Trotskyist vanguard party and to begin to fight to expel the cops from the Municipal Workers Union of Volta Redonda (SFPMVR). LM had agreed to wage this fight from the very first discussion on this subject in London, in January 1996. But the I.S., which was developing a new line, may have thought that it could push a discussion with LM/LQB on the question of the cops in the unions without confronting the concrete consequences, both for the LQB and the ICL, of carrying out this principled and necessary policy in the class struggle. That is, the I.S. acted in a highly irresponsible manner.

No, to go back to Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, it is not enough to interpret the world, it is necessary to change it. And here we have before us one of the crystal-clear characteristics of the centrist course of the international leadership, as was explained by Trotsky in "Centrism and the Fourth International": "Under the pressure of circumstances the eclectic-centrist may accept even the most extreme conclusions only to retreat from them afterwards in practice." The problem for the I.S. is that the LM/LQB members, having been won to this, began to fight to crystallize this program and this agreement. They succeeded in mobilizing sectors of the working class in Volta Redonda, under conditions of real repression on the part of the state and its agents provocateurs in the workers movement. To our knowledge, there is no recent example where the fight to expel cops from a trade union has been waged with such intensity as by the LQB in Volta Redonda.

The insistence of the I.S. in trying to prove that the LQB took the union to court (an insistence which is based on the lies of the LBI and of Artur Fernandes to cover up their dirty work) is a desperate attempt to use any slander and lie launched by the popular front and its agents in the Fernandes group to justify *a posteriori* the I.S.'s abandonment of the principled class battle that was engaged in Volta Redonda. *WV*'s accusations have been refuted by the LQB, which explained that when Geraldo Ribeiro found out about the legal actions wrongly undertaken in his name by the lawyers, he immediately ordered them to stop these actions, which was done. And he categorically refused an offer by the courts to confirm him as president of the union, because he rejected any intervention by the bourgeois justice system in the workers movement, leading to a break with his lawyers. All this took place *several months before* the articles which appeared in *WV*. These facts have been documented by the Internationalist Group with reproductions of material proofs, but the only response of *WV* has been to repeat the slanders taken from the bourgeois press, which is beholden to the steel bosses, and from the pro-cop elements who in fact hauled the union into the courts. By placing an equal sign between those (the LQB) who have fought to throw the cops out of the union and those (Fernandes & Co.)

who defend the cops and brag of being "oriented" by the uniformed thugs of the bourgeoisie, *WV* aids the popular front against the revolutionaries.

Further, the "arguments" now put forward have almost nothing to do with those raised in June-July 1996. At first, these arguments were centered on the accusation that LM/LQB was infected with "trade-union opportunism" and that there was a fundamental difference on the party question, where LM supposedly refused to make the political leap to consolidate the nucleus of a Trotskyist party, that they did not want to put out a newspaper. But these arguments couldn't stand up, because the LM/LQB members were determined to carry out the fight to drive the cops out of the union, to launch their paper, which they published only a few weeks after the break by the I.S. (which claimed they "refused" to publish it), and to recruit from other layers of the oppressed.

So as for what happened in June and July 1996, it is clear that the LQB waged a struggle to expel the cops from the union, and all the facts prove that it was impossible for the I.S. not to have been aware (once again!) of the union general assembly of 19 June 1996 where the question of throwing the cops out was to be debated and voted on. Clippings from the union press of Volta Redonda clearly show what happened. Their union bulletin of 6 May 1996 says: "The Rank and File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union"; the 13 June MEL leaflet contains a specific point on the municipal *guardas* (cops); another union bulletin dated 18 June 1996 is explicit that "the affiliation of *guardas* and police to workers' unions is incompatible with a class program"—this leaves no margin for maneuvering or feigned ignorance by anyone. It is clear that the I.S. knew, but at that moment it wanted above all to be out of the "boiling water," no matter what the cost, and thus it *betrayed* the principles which it claimed to defend.

Yes, these documents are reproduced in the dossier on Brazil published by the Internationalist Group. Where else could one have found them? Certainly not in *WV* or in the documents circulated by the I.S. At the same time, a union bulletin [of the SFPMVR] dated 17 June 1996 had an editorial on "Capitalist Offensive and Crisis of Leadership," and articles which raised the need to mobilize the workers to throw the cops out of the unions. This is the proof and the reflection of the fact that there was a real nucleus of Trotskyist worker cadres in Brazil, including a sizeable component of black members. The I.S. can play with words and dates in *Workers Vanguard* to deny the struggle to expel the cops, declaring "13 June? 19 June? 25 July?" This attitude is no longer surprising when we know that the I.S. has instilled in a lot of militants the idea that intervening in the unions with a communist program in order to build fractions to wrest the leadership away from the reformists is synonymous with betrayal, fake mass work and economism.

To justify its desertion and its refusal to defend the LQB members under fire from the bourgeois state, the I.S. declares that the dossier published by the IG on repression in Brazil is nothing but "camouflage," and that "the entire subsequent trajectory of the LQB was predictable, and we did predict it. We warned where their unprincipled combinationism at the top of

the union and their recourse to bureaucratic methods against their opponents in the union could lead" (*Workers Vanguard*, 11 July 1997). This declaration tries to whitewash the I.S. by making believe that since LM didn't follow the I.S.'s instructions to "pull their hands out of the boiling water," it is therefore facing repression which it brought upon itself. Thus the victims of state repression who have waged a struggle against state intervention in the unions are presented as maneuvering bureaucrats who are only trying to consolidate their positions at the head of the union. And when in the same article it is stated, "Having taken up this fight, they then tried to use it as a factional club against their rivals for the union presidency," this is also intended to whitewash people like Fernandes and the LBI, presenting them as respectable opponents with whom one can discuss and have relations, as was the case during the last CUT congress in Brazil (see report by S.).

In this framework, a whole piece of history has been rewritten on the question of fraternal relations. *WV* says that "If we had known that this was how LM operated, *there would have been no fraternal relations.*" This is grotesque! The IEC knew that there were cops in the union in January 1996; why were relations not broken at that time? It's simple—this argument was used several months later in order to cover up the fact of the flight by the I.S., which decided that there were "unacceptable risks to the vanguard."

Parks complains that the LTF writes polemics which simply *invent* positions in order to polemicize against them. Nelson repeats that "not being able (or willing) to do real combat they resort to superficial or false polemics." Where could the LTF have learned such a practice? Anyone who can read can see the answer. Over the past year and a half, the ICL press has been full of "polemics" which invent or simply falsify positions of the IG, from ridiculous lies that they are opposed to polemical struggle and support economism to the absurd invention that they reject permanent revolution to the kaleidoscope of slanders against the LQB. If the leadership of the LTF thinks that it is acceptable and even beneficial to write lies, they learned this from their schoolmasters in the I.S.

### VII) The New Line of the I.S. on Mexico: Denial of the Popular Front and Prostration Before the PRD!

If in France the I.S. was dead set against our proposal to intervene in the truckers strike with propaganda which would provide an axis for struggle by the strikers and the advanced elements of the working class to confront and break with the popular front, before that in Mexico the I.S. simply resolved this contradiction by denying that there is a popular front around the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). The latter had won the post of governor of the federal district (Mexico City), which it has just occupied, and made a strong showing in the chamber of deputies without our Mexican section lifting its little finger. Why fight against the popular front if the I.S. has decided that it doesn't exist?!

Mexico is another case where the abstentionist policy of the I.S. goes hand in hand with the brazen revision not only of

a position defended by the ICL for the last decade, but of elementary principles of the Trotskyist program regarding popular fronts. An I.S. motion of 28 June 1997 declared that: "The IG's formulation that the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—a bourgeois nationalist party—is a popular front, or in the leadership of a popular front, is false because there is no mass workers party that exists in that country," and because the proletariat "has historically remained subordinate to bourgeois nationalism."

First, to put matters in their proper place, the formulation that the PRD is at the head of a popular front was a unique position of the ICL until quite recently—i.e., for nearly ten years—and one can't dispose of that by trying to impute it solely to the IG, deducing that because the IG defends this point (which moreover is part of the programmatic heritage of the ICL), therefore this point is intrinsically false.

Secondly, it took the I.S. ten years to recognize that there is no mass workers party in Mexico, which certainly gives us an idea of the interest that the current elements of this body pay to what goes on on the other side of the Rio Grande/Río Bravo. And let no one say that for ten years another line was carried because a certain Norden slipped it in, since that is a stupid confession by the rest of the international leadership as if it had been hidden from them (once again) that there was no mass workers party in Mexico! Fortunately, ridicule doesn't kill, since the Mexican masses would certainly have laughed in the I.S.'s face if its lucubrations on the popular front didn't involve very serious questions, where the struggle for the class independence of the Mexican proletariat is at stake, and where it is a matter of life and death for the future of the Mexican revolution and beyond that throughout the Americas.

Thirdly, we can cite a host of examples where our International spoke of popular fronts in semi-colonial countries, where the permanent revolution applied, where there "is no mass workers party," and where the proletariat "has historically remained subordinate to bourgeois nationalism." So where was the mass workers party in El Salvador, the indispensable element for a popular front according to the new version? Or is it the case, according to the I.S., that our tendency hoodwinked not only the Mexican workers for almost a decade but also the Salvadoran workers in the midst of a civil war, by insisting that they must break with the popular front? Going through the pages of *Le Bolchévique* and *WV*, we find that we characterized the FMLN/FDR as a popular front. And when Reagan visited France and met Mitterrand in June 1982, one of the slogans of the LTF was "El Salvador: Break the Popular Front!" (*Le Bolchévique* No. 33, May 1982). This demand was vehemently contested by the Pabloites at the time, when the LCR saw itself as the fourth component of Mitterrand's popular-front majority.

We could cite other examples like Bolivia in 1952 and 1970-71, where our International attacked Lora's POR for its support to the popular front, i.e., its alliance with a supposed anti-imperialist wing of the army and of the Bolivian bourgeoisie. Even in Algeria where there was and is no mass workers party, where the union movement is still under the baton of the nationalists and the military, where the proletariat "has historically remained sub-

ordinate to bourgeois nationalism,” we said in the January 1992 *Le Bolchévique*, referring to a demonstration called by the FFS [Front of Socialist Forces, a bourgeois party based in the Berber regions], that it was “supported by a broad class-collaborationist coalition, a popular front, the National Committee to Save Algeria, bringing together the UGTA union federation, which has long been and still remains partially controlled by the FLN, the employers associations of the private and public sector, and the Stalinist party (PAGS).” At the same time, we ferociously attacked the (Pabloite) PST when it wanted to put together an FOP (Workers and People’s Front), i.e., a class-collaborationist coalition, in other words, a *popular front*.

Thus we have the proof that long-held positions of the ICL are now being systematically revised, and this is accompanied by a revisionism which therefore necessarily affects positions developed by Trotsky. The latter talked about the existence of popular fronts in countries of belated capitalist development, and he was far from renouncing the theory of permanent revolution—quite the opposite. In a discussion of problems of Latin America (4 November 1938), Trotsky characterized in this way Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomintang [KMT], Lázaro Cárdenas’ Party of the Mexican Revolution [PRM], and the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance [APRA]—which are all bourgeois parties: “The Kuomintang in China, the PRM in Mexico, and the APRA in Peru are very similar organizations. It is the People’s Front in the form of a party.” You can’t accuse Trotsky of paying tribute here to the “myth of ‘workers and peasants parties’” or “the bloc of four classes” [as the ICL leadership wrote of the IG]. The popular front can be built around certain bourgeois parties in the absence of mass reformist workers parties. Even when he defined the PRM as a “People’s Front in the form of a party,” Trotsky noted (January 1939) that “At the present time in Mexico there is no workers party, no trade union that is in the process of developing independent class politics and that is able to launch an independent candidate.”

Barbara, in her 14 June 1997 report, notes a point from Jim [Robertson] that “class collaboration is as old as the existence of classes themselves, whereas the popular front is but one specific historical expression of class collaboration, in the period between the 1935 Seventh [Comintern] Congress and the Hitler-Stalin pact.” The I.S. motion of 28 June 1997 explains that this is “a particular form of class collaboration, in which a bourgeois workers party, linked up to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, seeks to head off the threat of proletarian power.” A lot of centrists have used similar arguments. Thus in order to justify its support to the popular front and its vote for Mitterrand, one of the arguments of Pouvoir Ouvrier, was that we were not in the presence of a popular front because this was characteristic of the late 1930s when such coalitions were put in place to head off the development of a revolutionary situation. This kind of argument, which seeks to limit the scope of a concept to the strict limits of its first appearance, was used by the Mandelites who insisted that Pabloism was only capitulation to the Stalinists like Pablo did in the 1950s.

Ever since Cárdenas broke with the PRI and stood for election as president in 1988 with the support of the left, opposition unions and student organizations, etc., the ICL warned the workers, peasants, women and all the oppressed against the new popular front, and called on them to break with it. Thus in July 1988 we wrote in a superhead in *Workers Vanguard* No. 456, “Left Peddles ‘Unity’ with Cárdenas Popular Front.” In the following issue we said in another article: “The Cárdenas popular front seeks to channel the massive discontent into the framework of bourgeois politics. Its aim is to restore credibility for pro-imperialist capitalist rule in Mexico.” Similarly, at the time of the 1994 elections in Mexico, *WV* [No. 604] of 5 August 1994 reproduced a supplement to *Espartaco* (back when the GEM put out propaganda against class collaboration) which notably said in big letters, “No to Cárdenas Popular Front! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!”

The role of the popular front headed by the PRD is to erect a dike to contain the popular anger and mobilizations of the working class, as well as poor and landless peasants, women and indigenous Indians. PRD wall slogans in 1994 proclaimed: “Neither marches nor demonstrations, Cuauhtémoc will offer solutions.” To accomplish this, the PRD gathered around itself a popular front, receiving the support and subordination of union bureaucrats, reformist and centrist parties, Zapatistas whose bullets were turned into ballots for the PRD, and groups of poor peasants in the countryside. This is what our International denounced for years, but has stopped saying.

In the last elections, some union leaders were also “external candidates” presented by the PRD, i.e., candidates who were not members of the PRD. These candidates came from precisely those unions which had been active in their opposition to the corporatist control of the workers movement by the PRI, and which adhered to the Cárdenas popular front. The popular front around Cárdenas controls the unions which have broken with the rigidly PRI-controlled corporatist CTM (Mexican Workers Federation). Thus it chains sections of the working class, the peasantry and radicalized youth to a so-called “anti-imperialist,” “democratic” and “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie, in order to better defend capitalism and ensure the interests of the imperialists and their local valets, and to prepare a bloody defeat for the working class and all the oppressed, as was the case in Chile. Today our International no longer warns the Mexican workers of this danger, thanks to the so-called absence of the popular front!

One of the arguments on which we have based ourselves, since 1988, in saying that there is a popular front around Cárdenas is the miserable support that he receives from the whole spectrum of the Mexican “left.” This support can be electoral as well as trade-union in nature, or in the form of a pressure bloc: from the Stalinists to the partisans of Ted Grant’s Militant group (and including a part of the Pabloists), all of whom liquidated into the PRD, to organizations such as the Morenoite POS-Z, their LTS offshoot (currently linked with Workers Power) and the pro-USec LUS. The latter three groups, while not having voted for the PRD in the last elections, nevertheless have capitulated to the PRD in practice. They did not call on the workers to break with the PRD,

nor to vote against it, but called instead to cast a blank ballot in order to avoid appearing as electoral sponsors for Cárdenas, freshly returned from Wall Street. On the other hand, in the “autonomous” unions they don’t hesitate to offer themselves up as brokers for the popular front. The PRT, formed by Mexican supporters of the USec, not only supported the PRD but even presented a candidate (who was elected) on the PRD slate, and had election posters supporting Cárdenas which included the symbol of their party and that of the PRD. In the September 1997 issue of *Inprecor*, a PRT resolution stated: “the PRT is thus part of an electoral alliance with the PRD and various social and civic organizations,” and that “for the PRT the question is posed of eventual participation in the Cárdenas government.”

After all that, those who refuse to see that there is a popular front led by the PRD might as well not have any eyes at all. Because the role of a Trotskyist vanguard worthy of the name is to show to the working class the dangers of the popular front and to fight for the class independence of the proletariat, for it to break with this class-collaborationist alliance, so that it can take the leadership of all the oppressed masses for the conquest of power. Permanent revolution is not a compilation of verbose phrases, but begins with this concrete struggle for the class independence of the proletariat, not only breaking the corporatist stranglehold of the PRI but also breaking with the popular front around Cárdenas.

After having called upon Mexican workers for a decade to break with the popular front led by Cárdenas, and at the precise moment of the victory of the latter in last July’s elections in Mexico City, the I.S. stopped putting forward this slogan. Yet it isn’t the nature of the PRD that changed, nor the popular-front policy of the entire spectrum of the Mexican “left.” What has changed is the policy of the I.S., which now spits on the fights that our international waged in the past. But why does the I.S. insist that there is not and cannot be a popular front around the PRD? The new line is the pretext for an abstentionist policy. In denying the existence of this popular front, the political struggle to break the proletariat and the oppressed from the Cárdenas popular front is swept under the rug. With this subterfuge, the ICL leadership has proven again that it is not at all interested in the struggle to provide a revolutionary leadership for the working class. It’s not surprising that the GEM didn’t have a leaflet or any other kind of propaganda at the time of the last elections in Mexico. Either the “battle” against Negrete and Socorro cut them off from the real world and its struggles, to sink into suicidal navel-gazing, or they learned early on the lesson drawn by the I.S. and the LTF leadership in France that “you have to know how to stop a leaflet”!

### VIII) Forward to the Revolutionary Rectification of Our International!

All of the questions dealt with in this document add up to the conclusion that the problem is a situation of generalized crisis in the ICL today. The deep crisis in the LTF has parallels in most of the other sections of the International, and is reflected in the policy carried out by the I.S. in Brazil, its new line on Mexico, and the abandonment of the “Iskra” perspective toward North Africa. In short, it is a mutilation of the

Trotskyist program on which the ICL always fought. This drives the party today to withdraw from the convulsions of the class struggle, reducing the idea of the party to something amorphous and sterile. The difference that we have is fundamentally on the question of the party. A party of passive commentators which hides behind “revolutionary” phraseology (which, moreover, is less and less orthodox and less and less faithful to the positions of the ICL) or an active Trotskyist party which seeks to struggle against the treacherous leaderships to wrest the working class and the oppressed from their grip. The object of this battle is the fundamental question of our epoch, that of the revolutionary leadership. The coming International Conference cannot afford to ignore or arrive at an impasse on these questions.

In his letter to Janis of 2 October 1996, Jim Robertson criticized the Founding Declaration of the Internationalist Group for having stated:

“The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional Program of the FI fully retains its validity today: ‘The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind’s culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International’.”

In characterizing this as “insufficient,” Robertson writes: “Today, the crisis is not limited to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes across the world are qualitatively politically more disoriented and organizationally more dispersed. Today, to put it roughly, we have been forced back before 1914 and without the mixed blessing of an assured, complacent, mass Social Democracy.” This is a deeply idealist, and at the same time empiricist vision of history. If Pabloism was Cold War impressionism, this new perspective—which seeks to “junk the old Spartacism,” as it were—is “New World Order” impressionism, which renounces, as the former did as well, the central conclusion of the fundamental program of Trotsky’s Fourth International.

The Internationalist Group criticized the I.S. for its new line, which partakes of the bourgeois/reformist lie of the “death of communism.” This is confirmed, almost word for word, in the letter of comrade Jim Robertson, who accuses the IG of “insensitivity” to a “qualitative change which had occurred and which is part of a larger change which has been trumpeted around by the ruling classes as the ‘death of communism,’ i.e., as the overriding Soviet experience showed, the children of Stalin’s bureaucracy essentially made a mass abdication in favor of capitalism and imperialism.” We won’t go into the fact that this quote admits that the bureaucracy *abdicated* to imperialism and didn’t *lead* the counterrevolution, as the I.S. has vociferously asserted.

When Trotsky declared that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, he did so on the basis of a materialist analysis of the development of capitalism in its period of decay—imperialism. He emphasized that the objective conditions were more than ripe, that they had begun to get rotten, and thus the subjective factor was key. This key thesis has been *confirmed* by the collapse of the Stalin-

ist regimes and the destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe, which was not the product of a bloody defeat of the working class but of the absence of serious resistance by the latter. In this situation, we insist once again that it is the question of the crisis of leadership which is at the root of this defeat. But according to the new line, it is the working class which has become the problem as well as the leadership. Are we seeing a new variant of the thesis that the proletariat gets the leadership it deserves?

It should be noted that while the Transitional Program begins with the statement that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership, as does the document of the Second International Conference [of the ICL] and the Declaration of Principles of the SL/U.S. (in its point 2), *this reference has simply disappeared in the new declaration of principles [of the ICL].* It is obvious that for the I.S. it's not a question of having a new declaration of principles simply to update it and extend it to the international level, but rather in order to truncate its principal element. For our part, we believe that as far as the current period is concerned, we are still living in the era of imperialism, that is the period of wars and revolutions, and the task of the vanguard is fundamentally the same: to forge in the class struggle a revolutionary leadership for the working class and the oppressed. Yes, "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership." This key phrase of the Transitional Program and of the Declaration of Principles of the SL is not outdated or diminished today, quite the contrary.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a historic defeat which has greatly affected the consciousness of the workers, youth and left militants around the world. But this impact has not been uniform, it varies not only from one place to another but also from one class to another. What collapsed is not the will to struggle of the workers; those who have been deeply demoralized are the whole gamut of Stalinist and pseudo-Trotskyist militants who believe the bourgeoisie's propaganda that "communism is dead."

The defeat in the USSR has led many workers to question the viability of a planned economy. But the constant attacks of the bourgeoisie and the manifest decay of capitalist society today lead millions of people to see that capitalism is more and more brutal. Important sectors of the working class and the oppressed in various countries have thrown themselves into arduous class struggles. The turbulence of the objective situation offers an opening for the intervention of the subjective factor: the revolutionary party. It is wrong to characterize the present *contradictory and volatile* state of consciousness as a "decisive" regression that will endure. Moreover, it is false to think that prior to the destruction of the USSR the consciousness of the masses was somehow "adequate." There was one or another form of reformist consciousness, depending on the leadership which dominated the proletariat. Whether then or now, the working class cannot arrive at *revolutionary* consciousness without the successful intervention of the revolutionary vanguard.

It is important to recall that the Transitional Program was written at a time that Victor Serge called "Midnight in the Century." Hitler's taking of power represented the greatest defeat that the proletariat had suffered; the Spanish Revolution was stabbed in the back and defeated; in France a major defeat was being prepared; in the Soviet Union, the darkest period of the Stalinist purges was under way; in the United States the overwhelming mass of workers were chained to Roosevelt; in much of the colonial world the consciousness of the proletariat was barely awakening. Trotsky thought that it was very possible that the USSR would be destroyed in the Second World War. It was against the widespread skepticism and despair of left-wing petty bourgeois that Trotsky wrote his two classics, *Stalinism and Bolshevism* and *Their Morals and Ours*.

And in the last chapter of the Transitional Program, Trotsky responds to the "skeptical" pessimists in these terms: "The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership." He continues: "The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption.... Long live the Fourth International!"

The Transitional Program *is not based on the existing consciousness* of the workers, but rather on the objective situation. The idea of a system of transitional demands goes back to *before* the October Revolution, particularly to Lenin's work, "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," which aided in the preparation of the revolution. This conception had been applied by the early Comintern. In a discussion held before the founding of the Fourth International, Trotsky declared:

"We have repeated many times that the scientific character of our activity consists in the fact that we adapt our program not to political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the masses as this mood is today, but we adapt our program to the objective situation...the mentality, the mood is a secondary factor—the prime factor is the objective situation.... This program is a scientific program. It is based on an objective analysis of the objective situation."

—"Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program" [1938]

It is on this *basis* that Trotsky insisted that the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. This fundamental conception is true for the entire *imperialist epoch* of wars and revolutions.

And here is what Cannon said in his speech against Pabloism, "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership" (3 November 1953):

"Leadership is the one unsolved problem of the working class of the entire world. The only barrier between the working class of the world and socialism is the unsolved problem of leadership. That is what is meant by 'the question of the party.' That is what the *Transitional Program* means when it states that the crisis of the labor movement is the crisis of leadership.... It is the most important of all questions—the question of the party.

"And if our break with Pabloism—as we see it now clearly—if it boils down to one point and is concentrated in one point, that is it: the question of the party.... The essence of Pabloist

revisionism is the overthrow of that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part—the conception of the crisis of mankind as the crisis of the leadership of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party.”

The Call for the Third International Conference [of the ICL] notes the wear out of experienced cadres. Practically all of them honestly admit that they are demoralized. But why? Has the class struggle disappeared, are the workers and oppressed afraid to defend themselves against the attacks of the capitalists and their states? On the contrary, in Italy in 1992 and 1994, in France in 1995, in 1996 and again quite recently, as well as elsewhere we have seen struggles which are without precedent in recent decades. Latin America is boiling, there are repeated revolts in Argentina like the strikes by public sector workers, in Brazil there are important struggles by workers and peasants, and opportunities for recruitment in Mexico directed against the left flank of the popular front. Southeast Asia is no different, there are waves of struggles by the South Korean proletariat, a restive proletariat in China. One could also cite South Africa, etc.

In the face of a situation which is a real field for battle and intervention by Marxists, the I.S. is incapable of giving hope to the members of the International because its line expresses, reflects and feeds this defeatism. In characterizing this period as one of defeats everywhere, it abandons concrete perspectives of intervention for the cadres, who, logically, then become demoralized. The resignations by leading cadres as well as middle-level cadres, the repeated cases of working during a strike, flow from this line of the international leadership. No, what has been spiked following the historic defeat suffered by the proletariat with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union is not the class struggle but the opportunist left, both ex-Stalinist and social-democratic, and also the demoralized tendencies claiming to be Trotskyist. And if this umpteenth “crisis of Marxism” has had such an impact on the ICL, it is because it is itself evolving in the direction of centrism and abandoning in practice the Trotskyist program. This is an unfinished process, but a real one.

The Permanent Revolution Faction opposes the abstentionist and ultimately liquidationist course of the I.S., which despite its many phrases about the importance of the party is in fact carrying out a policy of self-destruction and liquidation of the party. What is striking is the contempt of the I.S. for the members of the International, characterizing one section after another as “centrist” when the source of the centrist line is the I.S. itself. This contempt for the ranks of its own organization goes together with the statement that the problem isn’t “limited” to the leaderships which defend capitalism, but extends to the proletariat itself.

In repeatedly refusing to intervene in workers struggles to put forward a revolutionary perspective and demands capable of wresting the ranks from the grip of their present reformist leaders and exposing the centrists, the I.S. liquidates the party as an active factor fighting to win the leadership of the working class and to be recognized as the champion of all oppressed layers. The recent fights in the LTF, placed in the

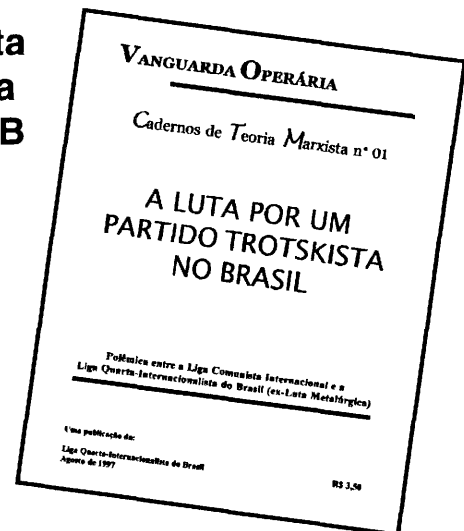
international framework of the bankruptcy of various sections of the ICL, should lead us to undertake a global and deep-going analysis of the work and line being pursued by the international leadership. The fight to bring our program into the working class and to win the proletariat and the oppressed masses to the banner of a reformed Fourth International is as current as ever, and with each day that passes it is posed even more acutely.

This is the objective that the Permanent Revolution Faction has set for its struggle. This will necessarily take place through a battle to rectify the present political line of our International and to renew links with the program which recruited us to the ICL, a Trotskyist program of struggle rather than prostration: a program which was the pride of all ICL members because of our historic combat for the continuity of the Trotskyist program, of the communism of Lenin and Trotsky and the traditions of Cannonism. We call upon our comrades in all sections of the International to study this document, to seek the causes of the present political disorientation of the International, and to join us in waging this fight. And while we do not know at first hand the activity of the Internationalist Group, it appears from what we have read of their publications that they have remained faithful to the authentic program of the ICL and we encourage comrades to read what they say. Their expulsion from our party was in fact a means to get rid of obstacles so that the international leadership could clear the way for a centrist and abstentionist course. Return to the communism of Lenin and Trotsky! For the struggle for the Trotskyist program and the continuity of the struggles and traditions of the ICL! Two, three, many October Revolutions!

Communist greetings,  
Djura and Zakaria

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# Once Again on the Permanent Revolution

by the Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

29 December 1997

The following points were prepared for the class on the permanent revolution which was scheduled for the plenary meeting of Saturday, 12 December 1997. In fighting for the authentic perspective of Trotsky, we are also defending the fundamental political heritage of the Spartacist tendency. In order to do this successfully, we must oppose the great confusion and disorientation which the I.S. is sowing today.

There is much to be said on the question of the permanent revolution, over and above the points we have raised on the "Iskra" perspective, Brazil and Mexico, but for the moment we want to emphasize the following points:

1) The program of permanent revolution is applicable to a whole series of countries: from pre-revolutionary Russia and China to India, Turkey, Iran and the Maghreb; from South Africa to Mexico, Brazil and the other countries of Latin America.

What do these countries have in common? "Feudal peonage" or "semi-feudal" economic and political conditions? No. In reality, the particular histories of these countries vary enormously. For example, *Russia*, where Trotsky first formulated the theory of the permanent revolution, had a feudal past, as is the case with some other countries as well. But in *China*, where he extended the theory of permanent revolution to the international plane, Trotsky ridiculed the references by Bukharin and Stalin to "Chinese feudalism," characterizing them as an attempt to "justify collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the revolution (i.e., the Menshevik policy)" ("New Opportunities for the Chinese Revolution, New Tasks and New Mistakes," September 1927). This class collaboration was called the anti-imperialist united front, or the "bloc of four classes."

But despite this profound difference between Russia and China, the permanent revolution applied to both countries—and it also applies to Latin America or India, which have very different histories.

The characteristic which all these countries have in common is that they are all *countries of belated capitalist development*, characterized by uneven and combined development; they combine, often at the same time, the most backward social conditions with the most modern industry; and *they have never had a victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution*. The national oppression of Mexico or Algeria is not the product of vestiges of the Middle Ages, but an integral part of the modern epoch of imperialism. The agrarian question in Mexico or Bra-

zil is not one of "feudal peonage," an expression which in itself is a contradiction. The main obstacle to integral economic development in the semi-colonial countries is not "feudalism" but the highest stage of capitalism, imperialism, which is the epoch of capitalist decay.

The real struggle to resolve the unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks in the semi-colonial countries is not, as the International Secretariat insists today, always a struggle against "feudal remnants." It is above all a struggle against the 20th-century bourgeoisie and its modern institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; it is a struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie and its servants, the bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial countries.

2) Did Trotsky say that the permanent revolution depends on the existence of feudal remnants? No, he did not. In the theses that he wrote to sum up the content of his book *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), he stated:

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

This all depends on the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party which fights to extend this revolution to the advanced capitalist countries.

One notes that in his theses, "What Is the Permanent Revolution?", Trotsky makes no reference to "feudalism," "semi-feudalism" or "remnants" of feudalism. Was it that he "forgot" to mention this in his "basic postulates"? No, this absence is explained by the fact that the permanent revolution does not depend on the existence of feudal or semi-feudal conditions, remnants or structures of this kind in a given country.

3) As an example illustrating the programmatic dangers of the position put forward by the I.S., let us take the case of South Africa.

The permanent revolution is decisive for the proletarian struggle in that country, as indicated by the title of an important issue of the *Black History and the Class Struggle* series: "South Africa and Permanent Revolution." But it should be clear that in South Africa, the revolution will not be directed against feudal or semi-feudal vestiges. A brief look at its history and social structure shows this. The Dutch East Indies Company, a symbol of mercantile capitalism, founded a colony at the Cape in the 17th century. The British later conquered the country, not to impose "feudal remnants" but to establish

diamond and gold mines and extend their colonial empire in Africa from the Cape to Cairo. (Recall that Holland and Britain were the first countries to undergo bourgeois revolutions, well before the colonization of South Africa.)

The apartheid system was built on this basis, because of the capitalists' need for a cheap labor force, with no rights or means of defending itself, in the gold and diamond mines. As for the land question in South Africa, it will be resolved not through a struggle against feudal remnants but through a struggle against capitalist farmers, above all against the capitalist system as a whole. Trotskyists in South Africa must mercilessly fight anyone who says the permanent revolution would be directed against "feudal peonage" or feudal remnants, because such a position would not only cause political confusion but lead to the worst defeats. This is the logical extension of the "theory" of the I.S., which pretends that the permanent revolution is dependent on the existence of elements inherited from feudalism.

4) The *agrarian revolution* is a central part of the permanent revolution. But what does this really mean? In his letter to Preobrazhensky on China [March-April 1928], Trotsky emphasized: "The agrarian revolution in China is aimed *against the urban and rural bourgeoisie*." The emphasis is Trotsky's. In the discussion on "Latin American Problems" (1938), where he talked about popular fronts in Latin America, he said: "we especially oppose the proletariat to the bourgeoisie in the agrarian question." In his September 1927 article on China, he repeated in a more detailed way:

"But as it turned out, the bourgeoisie did not put forward a single political group that would agree to participate in revolutionary struggle against Bukharin's feudalism. And it is not accidental. In China there are no noble lords standing in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The landholder as a general rule is the urban bourgeois. The small landholder—the kulak, the gentry—is closely linked with the usurer and the urban bourgeois. "Unless one is playing with words, there is no feudalism in

China. In the Chinese village there are serf-owner relations which are crowned, however, not by feudal, but by bourgeois property forms and a bourgeois sociopolitical order. This type of serf-owner relationship, which is a result of agrarian overpopulation, given the overall lag in capitalist development, can be found—of course in much more 'mild' forms—in several Balkan countries, which have known neither feudalism nor the noble estate since their emancipation from the Turkish yoke. Of course, in China poverty and bondage take inhumane forms such as were hardly to be encountered even in the age of feudalism. Nonetheless, the attempt to create feudalism in China, still more its prevalence, relies not on facts, but on the naked desire to justify collaboration with the bourgeoisie."

As in the case of the Mexican popular front, while the reformists want to insist on the existence of feudalism or feudal remnants, where they do not exist, in order to justify their class collaboration with a so-called "progressive" and "anti-imperialist" wing of the bourgeoisie, the I.S. insists on this myth in order to justify its abstentionist policy—as if these countries were so backward that it is not possible to have a popular front, and proletarian revolution were a very remote perspective because of the supposed predominance of elements inherited from feudalism.

The I.S. is also burying the program of permanent revolution insofar as it is abandoning, in deeds, the struggle to forge Bolshevik parties in various semi-colonial countries and among those who form a "human bridge" with the metropolis (immigrants and exiles). This policy also makes impossible the construction of authentic Trotskyist parties in the imperialist countries, resulting at best in the construction of centrist parties. If we do not find the means to reach these strategic layers, then as Trotsky said about the black question in the United States, "the permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie."

—Permanent Revolution Faction

## Letter to the Comrades of the International by the Permanent Revolution Faction

translation

Paris

11 January 1998

With the latest about-face on the question of "remnants of feudalism" and permanent revolution, notably over Mexico, we have once again experienced the abrupt twists and turns of the winding and tortuous centrist road on which the international leadership has placed the entire party today. In the latest I.S. mailing, you could read a transcription of the intervention by comrade Jim Robertson during a pre-conference discussion in San Francisco on 20 December 1997; the transcription was received at the beginning of this year. Here is what the comrade said on this question:

"I believe that it is a mistake, and a mistake that is easy to make, to say, when we are talking of Mexico, that there are

pre-capitalist survivals. The only pre-capitalist survivals that there could be there would be if there were still human sacrifices. Because the arriving Spaniards, even if their heads were full of feudal ideals, practiced mercantile capitalism, whether they wanted to or not. The system of haciendas, which as far as I know no longer exists almost everywhere in Latin America, produced for the world market. They corresponded to the slave plantations in the U.S. South, for example. These are not pre-capitalist survivals but the product of a division of the world...."

The point would be harmless if it was a simple rectification of an unfortunate formulation which accidentally appeared in our press. But that's not what we're dealing with here. Moreover, it is not even mentioned that these points were raised as the main lines of critiques and attacks against the IG, in order



to impute to it a supposed denial of permanent revolution. The point would even have escaped notice if we hadn't put the question to the leaders of the majority in Paris to demand some explanations, especially since a class had been scheduled for January 4 precisely on the question of permanent revolution, just before the text of Jim's remarks arrived. During the class, the majority reporter himself sought to avoid speaking about it. These comrades opposed our document of 28 December 1997 "Once Again on Permanent Revolution," but as could have been expected, without any reflection on their part, they were instantly converted. This time the leaders learned to zag when they were supposed to (although about ten days late).

As we have emphasized, we reject the false position put forward in the public press of the party and repeatedly defended that "feudal peonage in the countryside" continues to subsist in Latin America in general and Mexico in particular. We point out that this statement was accompanied by an incorrect definition of the nature of Spanish colonialism, characterizing it as "feudal." It is fundamental to reject the position that claims permanent revolution depends on the so-called existence of feudal, semi-feudal or pre-capitalist remnants.

On several occasions, whether in *Spartacist*, *Workers Vanguard* or *Le Bolchévique*, the main argument raised to "prove" that the IG "rejected" permanent revolution was based on an insistence on pretending that in the backward capitalist countries of Latin America (notably in the case of Mexico) vestiges of feudalism subsisted, that Spanish colonialism in the Americas was fundamentally feudal and going so far as to claim that the economy of the U.S. South before the Civil War was pre-capitalist. Now it is said that all this was a mistake. All right. Where are the explanations?

Yet in the article on Mexico in *Workers Vanguard* [No. 672] of 8 August 1997, we read: "In Mexico, elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage survive in the countryside—the *hacienda* (landed estates), peonage and the *tienda de raya* (stores that take scrip instead of money, to which many peasants are indebted for generations)... In an earlier polemic, the IG took exception to our having pointed to the heritage of feudal peonage in the Mexican countryside. In our response, in 'Potemkin Village Idiocy,' we pointed out that the only reason for the IG to bridle at this elementary Marxist observation is to shed the theory of permanent revolution."

In the introduction to No. 30 of the French edition of *Spartacist*, we also read: "The latter [the Reformation] lent its character to the British mercantile colonial empire, as opposed to the more feudal and priest-ridden Spanish and Portuguese empires which colonized Latin America.... [The] questions of national liberation, or the emancipation of civil society with regard to the church and the destruction of the feudal system of peonage in the countryside, [are] questions which continue to beset the countries of Latin America. The resolution of these questions will be through the application of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.... In Latin America, the heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism is overlaid with a century of North American domination."

Prior to that, in Spring 1997, the article "Potemkin Vil-

lage Idiocy" in *Le Bolchévique*, translated from *WV* [No. 663, 7 March 1997], published well before the revision of our line on the popular front in Mexico, said this against the IG: "Citing our call for 'the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside' and our reference to 'the inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism' in Latin America, the *Internationalist* goes on to declaim: 'The myth of Latin American 'feudalism,' now repeated by the Spartacist League, was invented by the Stalinized Communist parties to justify their stagist politics. 'Is the IG arguing that there are no remnants of pre-industrial society in Mexico and other Latin American countries?... If the IG denies that Latin America remains saddled with an inheritance of Spanish feudal colonialism, then it is theoretically dismissing the program of permanent revolution for that region outright.... In practice, this can only mean that the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard party cede leadership of the struggle around this and issues such as debt peonage and racism against the Indian peasant population to peasant-guerrilla populists like the Zapatistas.'"

Thus, for a year the I.S. insisted that one had to recognize the existence of feudalism or at least remnants of feudalism in order for permanent revolution to apply, something that Trotsky never said. In our document of 28 December 1997, we took apart this kind of argument, and we have demonstrated the idiocy of this feudal village which only existed (or still exists?) in the heads of some people. We have stressed that the agrarian revolution, as well as the other democratic tasks, cannot be realized other than by the taking of power by the proletariat, drawing behind it the peasant masses, not in a confrontation with imaginary feudalists but against the power of the capitalist class of the bourgeoisie.

During the plenary meeting of the LTF on 4 January 1998, comrades of the majority justified (they didn't explain) this change of tack by saying that it was "just an error of analysis, which doesn't have any programmatic or practical implication." Yet what is now called an "error of analysis" was certainly used as a sledge-hammer argument to prove not only that the IG "is theoretically dismissing the program of permanent revolution" outright, but also that "In practice, this can only mean that the revolutionary proletariat must cede the struggle" over the agrarian question "to peasant-guerrilla populists" (our emphasis). One can very well see that it was said that this position certainly had practical political consequences, but now these comrades seek to remove this with a cheap sleight-of-hand.

The point is that this is not a secondary or academic question. Permanent revolution is a central question of Trotskyism. A false conception on permanent revolution can only lead to political disorientation and ultimately to capitulation before non-proletarian class forces, in Mexico and internationally. In his preface to his book *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky said of the practical extent and the political consequences of theoretical points: "this proves to us once again, and to a very high degree, that everything in the theoretical part of Marxism plays an important role for practical activity. If one takes theoretical disagreements which at first glance seemed abstract through to the end, one always comes to their practical mani-

festations: reality does not pardon a single theoretical error.”

What the comrades of the majority present as being an “error of analysis” has weighty consequences in the part of the world this “theory” was intended for. What this is about is defining what enemy to fight, against “feudalism” (as the Stalinists repeated ad nauseam for decades) or against capitalism. And in Mexico that is what this is all about, it’s what the comrades were directed toward, i.e., a bad line. Perhaps for some of the majority here in Paris, paper can take anything that is written on it, and thus this can change according to the prevailing winds, but in Mexico, taking one line or another has consequences. It is the Mexican comrades who have responded vehemently, defending the line of the so-called remains of feudalism which are supposed to exist in Mexico, beginning with the document by Sacramento, “Clueless” (21 October 1997).

The comrades should cast a glance at the responses to our declaration of a faction by comrades Oscar and Martha in Mexico. One of the points they base themselves on to attempt to counter our argumentation was their defense of the position of the I.S., for whom not recognizing the predominance of remnants of vestiges of feudalism would be to deny permanent revolution. In his letter of 23 December 1997, Oscar writes: “The enormous distance which separates them [the Permanent Revolution Faction] from reality becomes even clearer with their denial of any feudal remains in the capitalist countries of belated development. Not to recognize these remains implies recognizing a final or completely triumphant character to the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in striking contradiction with all the foundations of the theory of permanent revolution, whose name the comrades D. and Z. steal in such a cynical and vile manner.” Thus Martha writes in her letter of 20 December 1997, “the slogan of the Magonistas-Zapatistas, ‘land and liberty,’ is a manifestation of pre-capitalist conditions in which the largest part of the people of Mexico and Latin America live.”

For the comrades of the GEM [Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the ICL] who defended this position tooth and nail—which is quite respectable, since they thought they were defending a fundamental position of the party, before they found out that it had been changed (and perhaps they still hold this)—it is clear that this is not just a question of analysis, for them it has a precise implication and meaning for their daily political work. Since they are now told that what they were fighting for was a simple error, they should be given, and we all should be given, convincing explanations. Because we believe that normally an international leadership encourages critical thought by its members, and doesn’t limit itself to serving up ready-made thoughts.

Now on the question of “Spanish feudal colonialism” of which “Latin America still carries around a legacy” according to *WV* and *Spartacist*. The colonization of the Americas, with the genocide and pillaging that accompanied it, far from leading to the installation of duchies in America, instead gave rise, as Marx described it, to the primitive accumulation of capital which served as the basis for the later development of capitalism. The same with the character of the slave plantations of the American South. It was claimed that the economy of the slave South was not capitalist. Marx asserted absolutely the opposite. Slavery in the Southern states, he said, was integrated

in the capitalist mode of production, it was not only part of the world market but was created by it. He pointed out that the slave trade was conducted by capitalists, and that in this case the same person was a capitalist and a landowner.

In the document “Once Again on Permanent Revolution” of 28 December, we quoted statements by Trotsky against those who insisted on the existence of feudalism in China, a country which at the time showed even more signs of backwardness than the countries of Latin America today. Following the teachings of Marx and Trotsky, we wrote against the line of the I.S. concerning pre-capitalist remnants in the backward countries: “The common feature of all these countries is that they are *countries of belated capitalist development*, characterized by unequal and combined development. They sometimes combine at the same time the most backward social conditions with the most modern industry, and *they have never had a victorious bourgeois-democratic revolution*. National oppression in Mexico or Algeria is not the product of vestiges of the Middle Ages, but is an integral part of the modern epoch of imperialism. The agrarian question in Mexico or Brazil is not one of ‘feudal peonage,’ an expression which is a contradiction in itself. The principal obstacle to integral economic development in the semi-colonial countries is not ‘feudalism’ but the highest stage of capitalism, imperialism, which is the epoch of capitalist decay.”

Why did the majority have this wrong line which contradicted Marx on the primitive accumulation of capital and the nature of slavery in the United States, Lenin on imperialism and the position of Trotsky on China and the summary which he provided of permanent revolution in his book of the same name? As Alexis suggested, this was motivated by factional reasons against the IG. If the IG said one thing, it was necessary to say the opposite in order to differentiate oneself. The implications of this line point in the direction of supporting the idea that in the capitalist countries of belated development it is impossible to fight today for socialist revolution in view of the weight of nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, etc. This was the same anti-Marxist idea put forward by Xavier (member of the majority) last October when he said: “what is an Algerian worker going to understand of the October Revolution?” He admits today that this was wrong, but what induced him to say such a thing? Perhaps he saw too clearly the implicit logic of the arguments which he had read coming from the I.S.

We want to place this discussion in the context of the debate, such as it presently exists, between the majority and the Permanent Revolution Faction. In recent days, a whole series of lies and insinuations have been circulated by the majority. When they have been presented in a meeting, for example in an abject motion in the plenary meeting of the LTF on 4 January 1998, we have responded to them and introduced a counter-motion to reject these absolutely false and highly irresponsible allegations. We suppose that the comrades in the other sections of the international are or will be informed of our motions, including those of the meeting of 7 January 1998.

We have to register as well the lack of seriousness on the part of the majority, i.e., the leadership, which is reflected in the way the discussion has developed. In the absence of a written response by the majority, what we have instead is a bizarre dis-

play of photos of Stalin, Castro, Norden and Negrete. Lately this display has multiplied, spreading from one room to the next. Is the majority itself aware of how this little spectacle demeans it in the eyes of any serious Marxist? It is in the process of humiliating itself, and its demoralization will come in the course of time. Because being a Trotskyist means not fooling around with serious questions and then changing the line from one day to the next, but thinking and then fighting for a coherent Marxist policy. And the majority today is far from being guided by a coherent line.

We want to say frankly to the comrades that what's at stake in this fight is not invented stories but the basic political orientation. One must think about the implications of the new lines that have appeared in the ICL in the last two years. Consider the comrades in Mexico. We suppose that they were convinced by the line that to deny that one is fighting against the "feudal heritage" of Spanish colonialism, etc., would be to deny the permanent revolution. Certain of these comrades fulminated against us on this theme. The others must have been in agreement. Why? Because this is a central question in Mexico. And now? What are they going to do now that they are told today the opposite of what they were told yesterday? Say they agree and be silent? That is not how one educates cadres capable of thinking for themselves and capable of being revolutionary leaders.

The least that one can say is that the light-mindedness which the I.S. has shown in discarding the old line on supposed feudal survivals and replacing it with a new line like one changes a suit of clothes will seriously damage our Mexican comrades, who must have serious difficulties in orienting themselves now. But we must pose the question to all the comrades of how they could have changed their views so swiftly without discussion and without having a fight about it? The explanation given is that it isn't a really important issue with programmatic implications; that it is ultimately just a trifle, and if they made an error, it was corrected. But we are speaking here of a fundamental error on what was presented yesterday as *the* criteria for permanent revolution.

And those who defended the old line as furiously as they will defend the new one should nevertheless think about their political future in following the present leadership, which is pursuing a profoundly self-destructive course for the ICL. If this happened with one of the main lines of the struggle against the IG, what will happen tomorrow with the others? Today you insist that there is no Cárdenas popular front in Mexico, even though many of the comrades for nine years defended the opposite position of fighting against this popular front. But tomorrow will you have to reorient yourselves on this question as well, because there certainly is a popular front in Mexico today, and the consequences of its existence could be dramatic. Or take a third issue, that the Stalinist bureaucracy is supposed to have "led" the counterrevolution in the DDR and elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. Many comrades seem uneasy about defending this anti-Trotskyist thesis. But think about it, will this new line be maintained even though it was never raised either before, during or even after the destruction of the degenerated and deformed workers states until last year? Will there be a reorientation on this as well?

Or maybe the new line won't be changed, "clarified" or

"modified." In that case, one had better reflect on where this line is leading the ICL. We have already said it: this leads toward a coming together with the anti-Soviet anti-Spartacists who held precisely that the bureaucracy was the leader of the counterrevolution. That was the justification of the Pabloites and quite a few others for making a bloc with Walesa, Yeltsin, etc. It is on these questions of fundamental political orientation that the discussion must focus, and this is what the majority wants to avoid with its ridiculous games. We say outright that the orientation of the present leadership of our international is leading to a disaster. It already did so in Brazil, it fundamentally disoriented the Mexican section, and it is in the process of turning cadres into cynics.

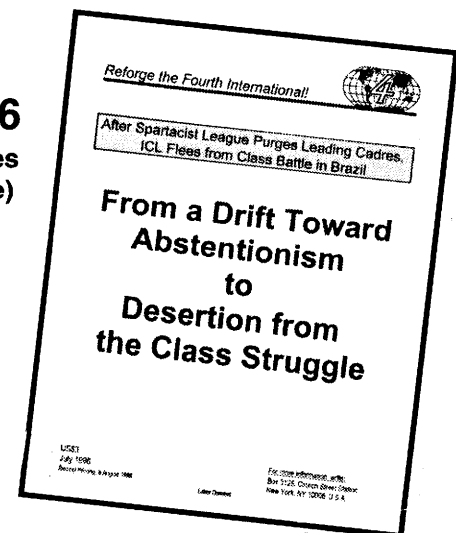
In any case, the latest turn by the I.S. surely presages even more abrupt ones, the zigzags will continue, the members would do well to buckle their seat belts if they don't intend to fight against it. Our struggle is intended to undo this line, and that is why we appeal to the comrades to join us in this fight, otherwise the centrist tendency which today prevails in the international will continue its course irremediably.

Communist greetings,

Permanent Revolution Faction

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# We Are Still, and Always, the Party of the Russian Revolution

## Majority Faction Draft, 11 January 1998

[translation]

For the minority faction, the I.S., our international leadership, has swallowed the campaign of the bourgeoisie on the death of communism. From that they deduce that the leadership of the ICL “has embarked upon a centrist course that threatens to dig the grave of the revolutionary program defended by the Spartacist tendency for three decades.” With the help of a “historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally,” and of a “universally reactionary period,” the I.S. is said to justify a defeatist line, “its tendency...to turn away from class struggles,” to “hamper Marxist thought by the leaderships of the national sections” and the fights it wages with deeply destructive effects.

The ICL has nowhere developed such a political line, and this dishonest falsification by the minority is an admission of inability to polemicize against our real political line.

What is true, on the other hand, is that the minority faction seeks to minimize or even deny, as Djura did in her intervention on January 4, the impact on the consciousness of the proletariat internationally of the counterrevolution in the USSR and in the countries of East Europe. This allows the minority faction to rationalize its line of militant economist intervention, of being left tails of the capitalist popular front of Jospin which they put forward in the last big strike by the truckers, and their abandonment of the construction of a Leninist party which seeks to intervene to raise the level of consciousness of the most conscious workers to an understanding of their historic tasks.

The PRF explains that we exaggerate the importance of the defeat in the USSR, and compares the present situation with the period that followed the defeat represented by the taking of power by the Nazis. Indeed, after that terrible defeat, there were revolutionary crises in France or in Spain, where a period of dual power developed between the revolutionary workers and pro-capitalist forces, posing the question of revolutionary consciousness.

The difference with today is that at that time, hundreds of thousands of workers were still enthusiastic for the October Revolution, even if, for the most part, they identified the Russian Revolution with Stalinism.

In order to understand the impact on consciousness of the counterrevolution in the USSR, one must be aware that one of the key points in the destruction of the USSR was that the most conscious workers or militants (those who in an often confused and partial way saw in it their class state) felt this as a betrayal from within, and what is experienced as a betrayal has a much more demoralizing impact than a defeat in a frontal confrontation with the class enemy.

Moreover, the anti-Soviet campaigns of the bourgeoisie, like that waged by the Mitterrand popular front—supported by all the

reformist organizations, including the PCF (so beloved of the minority faction which characterizes it as the most pro-Soviet CP in the world!) and the pseudo-Trotskyists—which was the spearhead of the Cold War ideological campaign of the imperialists in Europe, were accompanied by campaigns to strengthen chauvinism, nationalism and everything that paves the way for reaction. This also weighed on the consciousness of the class.

Now, following the destruction of the USSR, we find skepticism toward the parties which represent Marxist traditions among the most militant workers. Revolutionary syndicalism and, among the youth, anarchism are growing. As we said in paragraph 11 of the IEC memorandum:

“Across West Europe, the working class has engaged in some of the largest and most militant battles in years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or program of socialist revolution. The most conscious militants still defiantly march under the red flag of revolution and sing the *Internationale*. But the mass is justifiably skeptical, thanks to the crimes of the Stalinists, Socialists, and their pseudo-Trotskyist tails who sold out the October Revolution and paved the way for the capitalist onslaught today. This change in consciousness must inform our propaganda; the identification of class struggle with Marxism must be motivated, not assumed.”

In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, in the former workers states, there is an increase in national oppression by the imperialists in the colonial or semi-colonial world, and thus a strengthening of nationalist ideology. This means ethnic cleansing and fratricidal struggles. These are the concrete results of the effect on the level of general consciousness.

The minority faction is forced after all to blurt out toward the end of its document that “The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a historic defeat which has greatly affected the consciousness of the workers, youth and left militants around the world,” but it immediately seeks to temper this observation by writing that “what collapsed is not the will to struggle of the workers; those who have been deeply demoralized are the whole gamut of Stalinist and pseudo-Trotskyist militants who believe the bourgeoisie’s propaganda that ‘communism is dead’.” For them [the minority] there is an equation between the will to struggle of the workers and the level of consciousness of the struggles, and this is how they minimize the impact. This desire to minimize the impact of the counterrevolution which we find among all our pseudo-Trotskyist opponents such as Pouvoir Ouvrier, VdT, etc. aims at denying their own responsibility (for having taken part in the Stalinophobic campaigns of the bourgeoisie) and goes hand in hand with militant economism, on the basis of which they seek to join together to be

the left wing of the popular front, seeking in this way to use the working class as a bargaining chip to support their appetites. Just like them, the minority faction doesn't see the question of understanding what has happened to the consciousness of the workers as a central question, because for the minority faction this question is now superfluous.

For our part, we pay great attention to the shifts in consciousness of our class because we want to understand the questions that it poses in order to better be able to write propaganda responding to this and to thereby lead it to an understanding of its historic tasks. For example, we understand that the bourgeoisie is perfectly conscious that communism is not dead, and notably with its campaign around the *Livre noir du communisme* (Black Book of Communism), it seeks to increase the disorientation in the proletariat. They would have it believe that what it saw as its emancipatory ideal gave rise to "red fascism," whose supposed 80 million dead are without equal in the century. This is a question that we seek to address, in order to overcome that which aims at having the workers accept the system in which they are exploited as the best of all systems.

We not only recognize the existence of struggles, but we face reality squarely and say what is. And thus proceeding from what is we will be able to rearm our class in order to move toward its historic tasks.

But if we exaggerate the impact of the destruction of the USSR on the consciousness of the working class, the comrades of the PRF must very quickly arrive at the conclusion that we also exaggerated the importance of defense of our workers state against the imperialists and internal [capitalist] restoration. They would have to strongly oppose the point in the declaration of principles according to which "the 'Russian question' has been the defining political question of the 20th century and the touchstone for revolutionaries."

As James P. Cannon said, "Who touches the Russian question touches a revolution." For us, the Russian question was not only the question of defense of the USSR against the imperialists and internal counterrevolution on the basis of our program of political revolution, it is the need to construct a world party of the revolution, as the continuity of the Bolshevik Party, a reformed Fourth International whose sections seek to raise the level of consciousness of the proletariat to its historic tasks. For us, the Russian question is the party question. A party which fights for the independence of the proletariat, to mobilize it on the basis of its historic interests for the seizure of power. Just as the Russian question was a central question to demarcate ourselves and to differentiate us from our political opponents, with the USSR destroyed, today this differentiation is carried out more particularly around the heart of capitalism—i.e., the state. For that it is essential, as we have always done, to unmask all those who seek to weaken the workers movement by saying, as Militant does, that "cops are workers in uniform," those who like LM [Luta Metaúrgica] and their lawyers in *The Internationalist* go to the bourgeois courts against their political opponents, and all those like the USec (United Secretariat), LO, etc. who receive, or whose sections receive, state subsidies.

As Cannon said of the Russian question:

"We want to advance the world revolution of the proletariat. This determines our attitude and approach to the Russian question. True, we want to see reality, but we are not disinterested observers and commentators. We do not examine the Russian revolution and what remains of its great conquests as though it were a bug under a glass. *We have an interest! We take part in the fight!* At each stage in the development of the Soviet Union, its advances and its degeneration, we seek the basis for revolutionary action. We want to advance the world revolution, overthrow capitalism, establish socialism. The Soviet Union is an important and decisive question on this line."

Today, whoever wants to advance the world revolution must address the question of the revolutionary defense of the deformed workers states (China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea). China (which has more than a billion inhabitants!) is today especially under fire from reaction and that is certainly why, in 35 pages, it is remarkable that the minority faction, which gets excited over "Latin America which is boiling" completely neglects the question of the defense of our Chinese deformed workers state and its proletariat. There is only one sentence about the "restless proletariat in China"! (The minority faction, in the corridors, argues that the ICL is defeatist everywhere, but that in China it does good work! I would really like to hear Zakaria and Djura explain this contradiction to us. Moreover, they think that the ICL has not put defense of the Chinese deformed workers state in the center of its work!!! Not only does the minority faction not understand to what degree China is central for us today, but it doesn't realize that in *fact* it justifies its abstentionist line in its document.)

The Chinese proletariat gave rise to the beginnings of a political revolution in 1989, but it was not crushed. Today it is standing up to the intensification of pressures by the imperialists, who having won on the Russian front are turning all their strength on China, and it also confronts the bureaucrats who seek to restore capitalism. Since 1991, the number of strikes and workers demonstrations in state industry as well as in private industry has risen each year. What the Chinese proletariat cruelly lacks is a Leninist vanguard party which reintroduces the internationalist class consciousness which imbued the founders of Chinese communism in the 1920s.

That is why in the IEC memorandum of January 1996—and contrary to the story put out by the minority faction that it provided no perspective—we insisted that we "can thus foresee monumental class battles leading either to proletarian political revolution or capitalist counterrevolution in the most populous nation on earth. Translation [into Chinese] of key documents such as our Declaration of Principles is essential preparation to provide the ICL some means of political intervention in the coming class battles." This was not only done, but a *Spartacist* was produced to fight against the false consciousness imparted to the Chinese proletariat by the bureaucracy, and today all our sections internationally seek to organize intervention around this in order to recruit and to provide the Chinese proletariat with a revolutionary leadership.

The minority faction, like all the other organizations (PO,

etc.), has deserted the terrain of battle in China, and this goes hand in hand with its desire to minimize the impact of counter-revolution in the USSR. As Cannon said, defeatism in the USSR goes together with defensism at home. It is exactly the same with China.

Today the Russian question is *centrally* posed through revolutionary defense of the Chinese deformed workers state. Far from being defeatists like Workers Power, as the minority faction would have it, and far from not seeing that the period opened by the destruction of the Soviet Union is uneven and offers us opportunities for intervention, we Trotskyists are at our posts.

As a matter of fact, the clamor of the bourgeoisie over the "death of communism" has had a varying ideological impact around the world. Our opportunities for development are not uniform. For example, in the ex-colonial world, unbridled exploitation by "democratic" imperialism has attenuated the impact of bourgeois triumphalism, and bourgeois democracy—where it exists—does not imply the recognition of any rights whatever for the workers. This especially is one of the reasons why we have consciously reinforced our work in certain parts of the world, such as in South Africa and Asia, and why we are notably seeking to recruit in immigrant milieus.

This means that the program of permanent revolution will be crucial in the coming period for the intervention of revolutionary parties, in order to penetrate the working class and oppressed with revolutionary consciousness.

The central obstacle which we will encounter in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is nationalism, nationalism which is today reinforced by the exacerbation of inter-imperialist rivalries. Thus while in France, in this imperialist center, the minority faction does not want to talk to the truckers about Jospin's capitalist popular front, in Mexico as if by magic it exults in the question of the popular front as if this were central question. This is a good way to avoid the struggle against nationalism in Mexico, as well as the centrality of permanent revolution. The minority faction strongly insists on the capitalist character of Mexico, explaining that just as in France, the question of the popular front is posed in Mexico. This way of placing an equal sign between an imperialist country and a semi-colonial country under the yoke of the imperialists would completely disarm a Leninist vanguard party in Mexico, for which it is programmatically crucial to address the specificities linked to the uneven and combined development of that country.

Militant economism in the truckers strike, defeatism as far as fighting for a program of political revolution in China, abandonment of the perspective of permanent revolution in Mexico: this is what the minority faction has come to in large measure as it directs its fire against comrade Nelson and the IEC memo.

This is an expression of an acute awareness on their part of the central role Nelson has played in this period, which was mentioned by Jim [Robertson] in his document "Some Major Considerations that the New I.S. Confronts" [ICL *International Bulletin* No. 38, July 1996] where he said that he [Nelson] has been "that comrade among us who most farsightedly and clearly blew the whistle in this latest round of revisionist threat by

Norden and his co-thinkers, mainly in Germany, to destroy us as a revolutionary Marxist tendency."

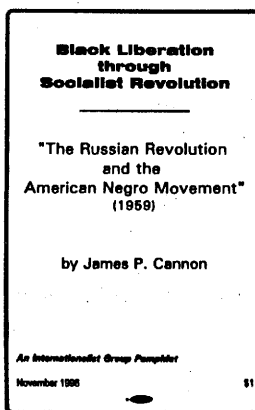
This is also an expression that you [the Permanent Revolution Faction] are conscious of how this meeting of the IEC tolled the bell for the person you now consider your historical "father," i.e., Norden. It is also for us a confirmation of what we said in the IEC memo:

"Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions, the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: it must swim against the current. If an unfavorable relation of forces prevents it from holding the positions that it has won, it must at least retain its ideological positions, because in them is expressed the dearly purchased experience of the past. Fools will consider this policy 'sectarian.' Actually it is the only means of preparing for a new tremendous surge forward with the coming historical tide."

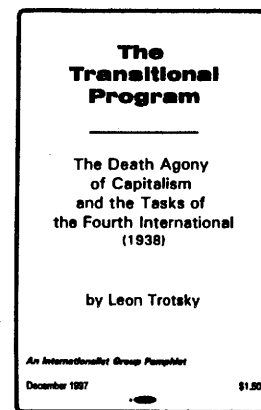
[the quote is from Leon Trotsky, "Stalinism and Bolshevism," August 1937]

As for us in the majority faction, we will continue to fight as a section of the ICL. We take as our own the expression of Liebknecht that "the main enemy is at home." We know that our program for new October Revolutions will face the bourgeoisie and all its military might in the form of a capitalist popular front under Jospin or in some other form. Whatever the cost, we will keep in the center of our propaganda "full citizenship rights for immigrants," our demand for "workers mobilizations to crush the fascists and fight against racist terror" and our intransigent opposition to our own imperialism. It isn't surprising that in your document the worst aspects of the popular front—racist terror and the fascists—are given short shrift or greatly minimized. You are already working to give them a democratic cover.

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# Letter to the LTF Conference and the Comrades of the International

by the Permanent Revolution Faction

[translation]

Paris

17 January 1998

We have finally received a document of the majority faction of the LTF, or rather something described as the "Majority Faction Draft," dated 11 January 1998, together with the "Draft Tasks and Perspectives Document for the LTF from February to June 1998." It is instructive to read and compare these two documents, since they fully confirm what we have written on the contradictory and incoherent line of the leadership, its abstentionism and its centrist course. Perspectives? Tasks? Clearly, the LTF has only one, and that is to fight the IG and the Permanent Revolution Faction. While the document ends with a reference to Liebkecht's phrase, "The main enemy is in our own country," it seems that for the majority "the main enemy is in our own party." While stating that after this conference of the LTF the discussion cannot be reopened without authorization from the leadership, it prepares to continue the discussion externally, stating that "the emergence of IG sympathizers in France, even if they are still members of our organization, shows the central need to produce propaganda on the IG"—that is the projected task and perspective.

We would like to make some observations on these documents as well as on some of the documents written by other comrades against the Permanent Revolution Faction during this struggle. We note in passing that while we were waiting for the majority's first document, its method of argumentation was to set up one display after another which were as ridiculous as they were revealing of the poverty of its political "arguments." The posters of Stalin, Castro, Honecker, multiplied and spread from one room to another in the local hall, in inverse proportion to the weight of the political arguments. This kind of argumentation is reminiscent of Maoism, not Trotskyism. What will the next chapters be, *dazibaos* [big character posters] and then dunce caps? Spare yourselves this self-humiliation.

Let us begin with some striking inconsistencies. The "[Draft Tasks and Perspectives Document]" says: "the IG can be characterized as a post-Soviet BT" [Bolshevik Tendency]. This characterization is the latest fashion in the new style of "polemics" carried out by the I.S. and its representatives, which consists of multiplying displays and characterizations, even if they are mutually contradictory. Previously, as well as in this same document, the I.S. characterized the IG as "Pabloism of the second mobilization." Let's analyze these two phrases. What is the BT? They are *Stalinophobes* who deserted from Trotskyists' duty of defending the USSR and the deformed workers states during Cold

War II (notably on Poland and Afghanistan). The charge of Pabloism was launched by the I.S. in order to accuse the IG of "Stalinophilia." So now they are to be accused of both things at the same time? This is not dialectics but the arguments of people who couldn't care less whether their statements make any sense. For the majority this is of little importance, given that the point is to "humiliate," and the characterizations put forward are meant as insults rather than Marxist analyses; they are bogeymen used to scare people off and intimidate them rather than to advance the members' understanding.

The majority wants to claim that we underestimate the impact of the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. This is also the argument put forward by Bonnie, who writes that "the PRF/IG's worldview...has everything to do with denying the centrality of the Russian Question and the lessons of October." What is the proof of this accusation? Here is the reasoning of the majority draft: "But if we exaggerate the impact of the destruction of the USSR on the consciousness of the working class, then the comrades of the PRF must rapidly arrive at the conclusion that we exaggerated the importance of the defense of our workers state against the imperialists and internal restoration." One can see the contortions and distortions the majority uses to attack us, not for what we have written but for what we "must" think. The majority invents a straw man to destroy in place of the PRF, a classic technique to try to avoid a response to what we have really said.

Bonnie tries to make people believe that we said the counterrevolution did not affect the class struggle. Nothing could be more false. Here is what we wrote:

"The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a historic defeat which has greatly affected the consciousness of the workers, youth and left militants around the world. But this impact has not been uniform..."

"The defeat in the USSR has led many workers to question the viability of a planned economy. But the constant attacks of the bourgeoisie and the manifest decay of capitalist society today lead millions of people to see that capitalism is more and more brutal. Important sectors of the working class and the oppressed in various countries have thrown themselves into arduous class struggles. The turbulence of the objective situation offers an opening for the intervention of the subjective factor: the revolutionary party."

After her gross falsification of our position, Bonnie cites, by way of example, the struggles of the working masses of Latin America, Africa and Asia. It is not we who deny these struggles. What we wrote is precisely that these struggles make the crisis of revolutionary leadership more than ever the syn-

thesis of the crisis of humanity, and this is denied by the majority, which considers the fundamental problem to be a “decisive” retrogression in the consciousness of the working masses.

Let’s look at one of the examples Bonnie cites: the “all-sided bloodletting” in the Balkans. Was this the product of a qualitative retrogression of the consciousness of the working masses, who were suddenly converted into bloody nationalists? No, this carnage is the direct product of the counterrevolutionary leaderships who seek to instigate nationalism in order to build capitalist nation-states.

It is with this skewed logic that the majority seeks to accuse us of being the new BT. In reality, it is the I.S. which has adopted the BT’s position on Germany, according to which it was the Stalinist bureaucracy which “led” the counterrevolution. The BTers in Germany at the time put forward the slogan that Modrow (the last prime minister of the DDR) was the main danger, whereas the ICL correctly wrote that it was the social democracy that served as the spearhead for the counterrevolution of German imperialism’s Fourth Reich. This is also what we say today, but this position has been abandoned by the I.S., which is in the process of adopting positions closer to those of the anti-Soviet anti-Spartacists whom we fought in the past.

Let’s continue our reading. The majority accuses us of “silence” regarding the defense of the Chinese deformed workers state. We know this type of argument. This is the same method by which the IG was accused of opposing permanent revolution in Mexico. One year later, that argument has fallen to pieces. The majority itself had to abandon the basis of its accusation: the supposed “feudal remnants.” (Nevertheless, this has not led them to admit that the IG was right, even though it is clear that the majority distorted the permanent revolution.) The second version of this subterfuge will meet the same sorry end, since it is thoroughly false. In reality, this dishonest method of argument serves a specific purpose: to divert debate and avoid answering everything we have written about the crisis of the ICL.

Next we encounter the argument of “anti-internationalism.” The majority states that it is in the process of “integrating” the LTF into the international. This method has already beaten a path for itself; it was used to “clean out” the SpAD and the GEM [the German and Mexican ICL sections, respectively]. To disagree with the I.S. was equivalent to being anti-internationalist, to not being an integral part of the international. One of the “proofs” put forward to demonstrate our supposed “national narrowness” was that we contradicted the genuinely anti-internationalist remarks by Nelson, who said the French Trotskyists had a “sordid history.” Against this falsification of history, we cited the French Trotskyists’ struggle during the Second World War to recruit German soldiers and sailors. This was called a “nationalist” appeal against the I.S. Because of their work of winning over German militants—while the Stalinists pursued a chauvinist policy of cooperation with “their own” bourgeoisie in the Resistance, to the cry of “*a chacun son boche*” [everyone kill a “Kraut”]—the Trotskyists struggling in France were condemned to Nazi concentration camps where many of them were annihilated by Hitler’s extermination machine, while others were victims

of Stalinist repression. It is this highly internationalist tradition which Nelson is spitting on.

What is genuinely anti-internationalist is the shameful flight by the I.S. from a key class battle at the crucial moment of the struggle to throw the cops out of the union in Brazil, and the excuses it has invented after the fact to justify this betrayal; as well as abandoning the Iskra perspective towards North Africa while denouncing all work among exiles and claiming that the Algerian working class is dominated by Islamic fundamentalism or, as the majority of the LTF Central Committee claimed, is politically dead.

Throughout, the majority seeks to excuse its own abstentionism with references to the “lowering of the proletariat’s consciousness.” Thus, in its Tasks and Perspectives draft, it writes: “The proletariat is carrying out defensive struggles with a very low, economist level of consciousness, notably in France where a very important strike wave in December 1995 led to the installation of a capitalist popular-front government in 1997.” So according to them, the existence of the popular front is due to the workers’ economist struggles, whereas in reality this popular front was formed to contain and break these struggles in order to prepare new defeats. These kind of idiocies, which blame the proletariat itself for the leadership’s betrayals, are a constant for opportunists of all stripes. Was proletarian consciousness in France higher when a large part of the workers believed that Brezhnev’s USSR was “real existing socialism”? Their real consciousness was reformist, and remains so today.

To present its picture of a “historic retrogression in the consciousness of the workers movement,” in its “Majority Faction Draft” the majority declares: “after the destruction of the USSR we have seen skepticism towards the parties which represent Marxist traditions among the most militant workers. Revolutionary syndicalism is developing, together with anarchism among the youth.” So you would expect to see a whole section in the majority’s “Draft Tasks and Perspectives Document” on the struggle against the anarchist tendencies which, according to them, are flourishing today and bearing witness to this backward leap in consciousness. But no. What it says is the complete opposite. The one line devoted to the anarchists in the second document says: “In comparison to December 1995, the anarchists seem seriously weakened and do not represent a priority opponent at the present time.” Clearly, the majority does not hesitate to preach one thing in one document and the opposite in another written at the same time. So which document are we supposed to take seriously?

Continuing with the “Majority Faction Draft,” we read that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, as well as the former deformed workers states, “This means ethnic cleansing and fratricidal struggles. These are the concrete results of the effect on the level of general consciousness.” In fact, this simply confirms what we said in our faction’s document regarding the prevailing worldview in the international today. It is the view of a world without perspectives, the perspective of a world without battlefields for communist intervention; it is the opium served up today to the members while waiting for “to-



morrows that sing." This is the course we are fighting against.

E.'s report on her visit (29 December 1997) and Parks' letter of 27 December make the utterly false claim that Zakaria "refused the offer which was made to him to try to win over the members of the LTF to his recently revealed agreement with Norden's infamous Humboldt speech" [the foregoing is retranslated from French]. On the contrary, he answered that this speech was the product of a decade of political struggles by the ICL against the anti-Spartacist and anti-Soviet fake left, and that it is increasingly evident that what is going on is that now the I.S. wants to get closer to those the ICL fought against in the past. Zakaria added that the I.S.' recent discovery that the Stalinist bureaucracy supposedly "led" the counterrevolution in East Europe is an invention that contradicts everything the ICL wrote at the time—that is, that the Stalinist bureaucracy paved the way for and capitulated to the counterrevolution, that it sacrificed the deformed workers states to imperialism, which was the real protagonist of capitalist restoration.

He also remarked that as Marxists, we know that in the bourgeois revolutions of the past as well as the proletarian revolution of our epoch, leadership corresponds to one of the fundamental classes, that is the bourgeois class in the former case and the working class in the latter, and that the intermediate strata (such as the peasantry, for example) do not have the clear class interests that would allow them to make a revolution that transforms society in their own interests. To carry out a counterrevolution, there must be a class to lead it. So, he asked, what was that class in the DDR? Was it the bureaucracy, a petty-bourgeois caste based on the collectivized economy of the degenerated and deformed workers states, contradictory and torn between the proletariat and imperialism, while finally bowing down to the latter? No, it was the imperialist bourgeoisie, and that is what the ICL wrote at the time. When Zakaria asked E. exactly where the ICL had previously written (before 1996) that the bureaucracy led the counterrevolution, she admitted that she could not remember such formulations and said that perhaps there had been weaknesses in the ICL's propaganda!

It is now claimed that the fight against Norden was a decisive struggle for the SpAD, which "integrated" it into the international as is now supposedly being done with the LTF. So let us look at the results of this "integration." In our 26 December note to the I.S., we raised a request to see the documents and reports on the SpAD's intervention, or lack thereof, in the November 1997 student strikes [in Germany]. In his letter of 2 January 1998, M. says this made him laugh because what they have experienced there is an example of intervention by the I.S. and IEC to "maintain a Trotskyist razor edge on our sections." He then goes on to show just how dull the SpAD's edge has been. He states clearly that the SpAD had been "avoiding battle with the opponents at the one campus in the world where we have a significant concentration of students." In addition, "By declaring the student occupation at the Humboldt University the 'gate to scabbing,' we excluded ourselves from winning a handful of class traitors" to the Spartacist youth. He reports that they even denounced the ex-mem-



Issues of French Trotskyist paper put out illegally both under the Nazis and under Allied imperialist "liberators."

ber F. as a "scab" because we went into the occupied part of the university in order to participate in the occupation!

What is behind this is complete political disorientation. We excluded ourselves from the struggle, claiming that when students occupy a university this means there is a picket line. And when it was a question of a workers' strike, and there was a member who really did work during this strike, what did the I.S. do? It accepted his resignation rather than expelling him. In her report of 29 December, E. attacked Zakaria, claiming he had said that Herbert B. crossed a picket line, when in reality he only "worked in a struck shop (I wonder if Zakaria knows the difference)," adding: "it is possible that the comrade did not know it was a struck shop." What Zakaria said is that Herbert B. scabbed on a strike, that there was a picket line and Herbert knew this. Now we read M.'s letter, where he confirms that Herbert knew perfectly well that there was a strike. But M. makes the same distinction, saying that Herbert B. insisted there was no picket line, and that he cried when he had to turn his keys in to the local hall. Is this how we want to train new members?!

In many countries around the world, we are witnessing a revival of popular fronts: this is the case in France and Italy, as well as Mexico and Brazil. Trotskyism is the revolutionary program which waged a bitter struggle against the French and Spanish popular fronts in the 1930s. The Spartacist tendency

was known for its refusal to vote for any party in a popular front. In France in the 1980s, the LTF constantly called for proletarian opposition to Mitterrand's popular front. In Latin America, the international Spartacist tendency/ICL warned against popular fronts in Chile, Mexico, El Salvador, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic. Today these warnings are more necessary than ever, but in Mexico the I.S. and GEM deny the very existence of a Cardenista popular front, and consequently do not fight against it. In France, where the two big reformist parties are part of the popular-front government of the "plural left"; where the far left of yesteryear wants to join this governmental majority; where the small centrist groups try to pressure the Jospin government with their rotten economist combinationism; and where the popular-front regime sends the CRS [riot police] against striking truckers, the unemployed and second-generation youth of the working-class suburbs, wielding riot sticks against those who voted for it, *the objective situation cries out for the intervention of an authentic Trotskyist party.*

But in this situation, the majority faction has repeatedly refused to intervene in the class struggle to seek to organize the proletarian opposition to the popular front which the LTF has talked about for years. This was the case with its refusal to put out a leaflet with slogans of struggle during the truckers strike, and this was repeated a few days ago when it refused to participate in a national day of action of the unemployed on 6 January 1998. (The leadership finally participated in the march of 14 January, since it could not persist in its abstentionism without looking ridiculous.)

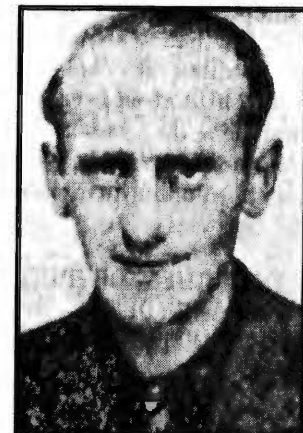
In their Tasks and Perspectives draft, the majority faction only raises the question of the popular front in order to try to prove that we supposedly deny the racist character of this popular-front government or that we have capitulated to this popular front. They will have a hard time convincing even themselves of this, since they know they are consciously lying. The interesting point here is that the majority does not address the question of the popular front in its perspectives document except to use it as a club against us, and does not address it with the objective of putting forward a program of struggle against this popular front. At no time are the workers and all the oppressed called on to break with this popular front. Why not? Because, in line with their view of the world, this is the least of the concerns of the majority and the I.S. What interests the majority is not the struggle to win over the most advanced elements among the workers, the youth and immigrants by offering them a revolutionary class perspective against class collaboration and the popular front. This is because they are not interested in building a party which can win the leadership of the working class, drawing the oppressed behind it, in order to sweep away the bourgeois order. But why would the majority present perspectives against this popular front, when during the truckers strike it did everything it could not to confront the popular front, thereby capitulating to it backhandedly? Talk about perspectives!

<sup>1</sup>A meeting that was called by several of the left oppositions in or recently expelled from the major pseudo-Trotskyist parties, LO, LCR and PT.



**Issues of Arbeiter und Soldat (Worker and Soldier), clandestine publication put out by French Trotskyists and others appealing to German soldiers and sailors during World War II. Editor Martin Monat (below) was assassinated by the Gestapo in 1944 as were dozens of French Trotskyists involved in this internationalist work. ICL claims hailing these heroes is "capitulating to French chauvinism."**

Today, the radicalization and polarization of French society today pose once again, point blank, the need to build a multi-ethnic revolutionary workers party. With the strikes of December 1995, the demonstrations in support of the *sans-papiers* and against the racist laws, workers and youth are seeking an alternative to the rotten dishes served up to them by the reformist parties, not only the Communist and Socialist parties but also the LCR [Mandelites], Lutte Ouvrière and PT [Parti des Travailleurs--Lambertistes], as well as the myriad groups of the centrist swamp (noting as well that the plate the LTF offers them is deplorably empty). In this context, the intervention of a Trotskyist organization with a program of principled opposition to the popular front—with transitional slogans to mobilize against



the racist terror of the popular front and against fascist terror, for doing away with the Chevènement-Debré-Pasqua [anti-immigrant] laws, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants (slogans the majority rejected at our 7 January 1998 meeting for our intervention in the “conference of militants”<sup>1</sup>)—is key for winning them to the program of revolution, without which all the majority’s fanfare on the party is nothing but hollow incantation and lying publicity.

### Chauvinism? On Whose Part?

And now, one day before the LTF conference, we have seen a majority document that goes from the ridiculous to things which are genuinely repugnant. The accusation of French chauvinism, hurled at comrades from an ex-colonial country who fought against the murderous military regime and the Islamic throat-cutters, goes beyond the limits of exaggeration and enters the realm of complete delirium. After all, it is the I.S. which renounced the Iskra perspective, abandoning any struggle directed at potential cadres from North Africa, and it is the Permanent Revolution Faction which has sharply criticized this.

But what was the pretext for this lying accusation? The fact that the PRF objected to Nelson’s statement that “our French section can find little inspiration in the sordid history of French Trotskyism.” We said that Nelson had repeated “a correct point on the continuity represented by Cannon” as well as on “the absence of this tradition among the petty-bourgeois leadership of the French Trotskyist movement.” But because we said that heroic French Trotskyists published *Arbeiter und Soldat* to recruit German soldiers during the Second World War, we are accused of capitulating to French chauvinism. No, French chauvinism was the CP with its slogan “*a chacun son boche*,” which served as a basis for a national alliance with its own bourgeoisie. The work of these Trotskyists was highly *internationalist*. And this shameful document claims only one French person participated in this work!

This is entirely false, and it is almost incredible to read something like this written by members of the ICL. Among the French militants who were killed by the Nazis and had directly participated in the work directed towards German soldiers were Georges Berthomer and Robert Cruau, while among those who survived the concentration camps were Marcel Beaufrère and Yvonne Filiatre; in addition there were other French Trotskyists (including several who worked at the arsenal) who fell victim to the same repression at Brest, among them Yves Bodenès and Albert Goavec, both of whom were killed at Dora; the survivors of Buchenwald André Charpentier, André Darley, Anne Kervella and Gérard Trevien; and there was also Jean Miechler, editor of *Unser Wort*, who was shot by the Wehrmacht in 1942 and to whom James P. Cannon referred in his

speech “The Workers and the Second World War” as “a noble fighter for international communism, one of the founders of the French section of the Fourth International.” As for us, we honor these comrades and the more than 30 Trotskyists of diverse national origins who were active in France and were murdered by the Nazis or the Stalinists, as in the case of Pietro Tresso, because of their heroic work in opposition to the imperialist war, just as we honor the eighteen American Trotskyists imprisoned for their courageous opposition to the imperialist war.

We note as well that the Spartacist pamphlet *Trotskyism: What It Isn't and What It Is!* was dedicated to the memory of many of these heroic internationalist Trotskyists, among them Marcel Hic, the leader responsible for organizing the European Secretariat in clandestinity, and the German Trotskyist Martin Monat (Widelin), a member of the secretariat and editor of *Arbeiter und Soldat*. To spit on these comrades, to say that citing their heritage as an internationalist model constitutes a proof of French chauvinism, is to turn one’s back on three decades of struggle for Trotskyism by the Spartacist tendency. The imprisoned American Trotskyists would have been horrified to read this kind of slander of their comrades who fought against all the imperialists and against the Stalinists’ chauvinism in France. In 1945, after the war, when the newspaper of the French Trotskyists had once again been banned by the authorities, James P. Cannon wrote hailing it: “*La Vérité* was the first organ to be published in the underground in resistance to the Nazi invader.” Cannon, a French chauvinist? We think not.

The international leadership which guides the majority is sowing disorientation and demoralization regarding the past and the present of our movement, and it is politically incapable of preparing the future of a reformed democratic centralist Fourth International.

Communist greetings,  
Permanent Revolution Faction

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